

Lesson 3
Study Guide
Formation & Struggles – The Birth of the Early Church Ad 33-200
Chapter 6
Apostle Paul’s Mission to the Diaspora

A Short Synopsis of Paul’s Life and Mission: The Apostle Paul was raised on the southeastern coast of Asia Minor in the town called Tarsus. He was raised in two traditions Jewish and Greek and a Roman Citizen by birth. In those days his primary Hellenistic cultural education included the writings of Homer. Paul spoke both Greek and Hebrew (Acts 22:2) and probably some Aramaic. His family must have been privileged for he was in a university town. At an early age he became very conversant in Holy Scripture quoting many from the heart. This adeptness in scripture became an important part of his exegeses whether arguing for Christ as Messiah with the Jews in the synagogues or with the Gentiles in his missionary work. After punishing Christians as a hardcore Pharisee, he was blinded and converted by Christ on the road to Damascus with the assignment to see a man named Ananias who will give him sight, baptize him and be filled with the Holy Spirit “to bear My name before Gentiles, kings and children of Israel.”(Acts 9:15).

After Barnabas went up to Tarsus to get Paul and bring him to the Apostles, they took off to Antioch for a full year. After a trip to Cyprus preaching in the synagogues, Paul left Barnabas and took Silas departing for Syria and Cilicia. Forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach in Asia, Paul, by a vision in the night, was called to Macedonia and its principle city of Philippi. Thereafter, he preached and taught at larger cities of Thessalonica, Athens and Corinth. Finally entering Asia he centered his efforts with the founders of the church at Ephesus. He spent 2 years there (AD 52-54) helping to missionize and establish churches in the smaller cities of Asia from the Ephesus hub. Another of Paul’s major contributions was his argument along with Barnabas and Peter not to hang too much Jewish yoke of circumcision and the law on the Gentiles at the first church council in Jerusalem.(Acts 15). Later, in Jerusalem again, he was attacked by the Jews for defiling the Temple by his teaching and was put into barracks and forced to present a defense in front of Sanhedrin. Later he was on trial with Felix and then even later with Festus, a Roman governor, and King Agrippa when he appealed to Caesar. His voyage to Rome was very difficult to say the least as he was shipwrecked before finally landing in Malta for the winter. On to Rome where he spent two years waiting for trial but receiving many and inspiring them all about the Kingdom of God and teaching things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul was an extraordinary person and evangelist in the life of the early church and recognized as the Apostle to the Gentiles. He spoke boldly and without hindrance to everyone about Jesus Christ the Messiah and savior of the world.

The First Century

The chief centers of Jewish settlement were in the scattered communities of Babylonia, Syria, Asia Minor and Egypt. The Jewish population at the time was 7% or about 4 to 5 million Jews. But fewer than 750,000 Jews lived in Palestine at this time. Obviously the Jews were widely dispersed in the Empire. In Rome most of the Jews were brought in as slaves after the destruction of the Temple 70AD. In Rome’s synagogues Jewish and Christian Jews prayed together. Soon

House Churches

11. Which of the following early Christian people had services in their houses and where?

- Philemon
 - Aristobulus
 - Gaius
 - Priscilla & Aquila
 - Philemon
 - Narcissus
- Cities:

Commentary:

In our study of Corinthians Fr. Lawrence Farley notes that they met during the week and then on Sunday for the Holy Eucharist. They not only eat a meal together but had each other company, talking, sharing, praying and chanting and/or singing psalms. At the end of the meal, the head spiritual person of the community (later a bishop) took the loaf of bread and a cup of wine and prayed over them. He then broke the bread and shared the sanctified body and blood of Jesus with everyone.

12. T or F. Paul's account of the institution of the Eucharist in first Corinthians 11:23-26 is the earliest evidence in the New Testament?

13. Why does Paul add his own commentary, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes," on the Eucharistic words proclaimed by Christ at the last supper?

14. What is the difference between a prophet and a teacher in the early church? Can you give an example in New Testament scripture?

15. Why did Paul appeal to the woman members of the church in Philippi "Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count other better than yourselves."? What will happen in the church if this is not a guidepost?

16. What is Paul's argument on immoral or homosexual behavior? Please cite scripture references where this behavior is quoted as unacceptable?

+++++The End+++++

