



Smithsonian Associates

In the Footsteps of St. Paul

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Thursday, August 15, 2024 - 6:30 p.m. to 7:45 p.m. ET

Our discussion focuses on parts of Acts and on the letters that Paul wrote to the communities that he established in key cities and areas in the Eastern Mediterranean, from Rome to Hellas to Galatia in Asia Minor (today's Turkey)—against three aspects of background and context: the pagan Greek and Roman world of which he and his community were part; the Judaeen community of which he was also part; and the contexts in which he evolved from Saul of Tarsus to Paul. How did he transform from a persecutor of the new Judaeen sect to its lynchpin leader and thinker as it reconfigured itself toward becoming early Christianity? The material of our focus offers a dynamic understanding of Paul and his associates as well as of the people to whom he was preaching and often changing.

What is our evidence for Paul and what he was about?

Acts of the Apostles; The Pauline Epistles (how much of which of them is genuinely Pauline?)

What did Paul look like? (what is our verbal and visual evidence?)

How was Paul

a Hellene, (cultural superiority)?

a Judaeen, (spiritual superiority)? and

a Roman Citizen (political superiority)?

What are the implications for this interweave?

How and where did he begin and how/why did he change (his conversion)?

How many journeys did Paul undertake?

Where and why did Paul go preach and/or why did he write to certain communities?

Thessaloniki, Antioch/Galatia, Corinth, Philippi, Athens, Rome (et al)
religion and politics

What are the key ideas that he introduced to the new “Judaicans for Jesus” group?

revelation and interpretation

Jesus as a messianic figure

the reality of the Torah (Pentateuch) as the consummate source for Covenant

circumcision as/as not a mark of the Covenant

the position of women among the community leaders

the idea of martyrdom (Gk *martyros* = “witness”)

ethnocentricity versus Universalism

What was the outcome of Paul’s teachings for emerging Christianity?

What was Paul’s own fate and why?

Some Further Reading:

- F.F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Eerdmans, 1977)
- James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Eerdmans, 2006)
- *Michael J. Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters* (Eerdmans, 2017)
- James S. Stewart: *A Man in Christ: The Vital Elements of St Paul’s Religion* (Pantianos Classics, 1934)
- Edward Stourton, *In the Footsteps of St Paul* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2004)