

# Study 6: The Latter Period

## **Introduction**

Paul's first letter to Timothy suggests that after his release from prison, he travelled again for a short time. There are some traditions and evidence (outside of scripture) that he travels back into Asia minor, and then to Spain where he stays for a two year period. He then visits Asia Minor and Macedonia again, then visits Crete. He is then arrested again and sent to Rome where he is imprisoned.

During the second imprisonment he writes his last letter – 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy – “...*the time of my departure is at hand, I have finished the faith, I have kept the faith...*” (2 Tim 4:6-7).

Paul does not escape this time, and is put to death in Rome around AD 66 or 67.

## **Body of the Study**

### ***Introduction***

### ***The Fourth Missionary Journey***

### ***The Second Imprisonment***

### ***The Death of Paul***

## **Homework:**

- Read the notes as a review of the study
- Read the Pastoral Epistles, and think through the things that are on Paul's mind. Especially read the whole of 2 Timothy and try to understand how Paul was feeling as he was facing the end of the journey and being put to death.
- Read Philippians 1:22 – 24; 3:4-15

## Notes for study 6: The Latter Period

What happens to Paul after the end of the period described in Acts? It is observed that the period of writing that fits into the Acts narrative does not include “*The Pastoral Epistles*” – Titus, and 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy.

Second Timothy was the last letter that Paul wrote. He describes how the end of his life is drawing near “...*the time of my departure is at hand, I have fought a good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*” (2 Tim 4:6-7 NKJV)

But there are things in these letters that just don’t fit into the Acts narrative.

### **Introduction**

The letter to Philemon was written at the end of Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome. Paul has a very optimistic outlook. He describes how Onesimus is useful both to Philemon and to the aged Paul himself (Phm :9,11). He is confident that he (Paul) will be able to repay any debt that is owed to Philemon (vs 19). But even more so, when he instructs Philemon to prepare the guestroom for his arrival (vs 22).

The flavour of 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy is far more sombre. Paul knows that there will be no escape this time.

After release from his first imprisonment, Paul expected to go to Philippi again (Php 1:26; 2:24), with tradition also suggesting another trip into the Lycus Valley in Asia Minor.

Eusebius writes about Paul having been released from his first imprisonment, going on another missionary journey, and then coming back to Rome again where he was martyred. (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 2, Chapter 22). There is also a strong tradition that Paul went to Spain, and even to Britain.

### **The Fourth Missionary Journey**

There is overwhelming evidence outside of scripture, that Paul made a trip to Spain, and may have spent two years there.

Clement, a disciple Paul mentions in Phil 4:3 wrote from Rome to the church at Corinth, and tells how Paul had preached the gospel “In the east, and in the west” and had instructed “the whole world (The Roman Empire) in righteousness” and that he “had gone to the extremity of the west” before his martyrdom.

An unknown christian writer in AD 170 writes in what is known as Muratori’s Canon, concerning Luke’s account of Acts that “...he relates to Theophilus events of which he was an eye-witness...but he omits the journey of Paul from Rome to Spain”. This is not strictly correct, as we have noticed in our study of the book of Acts, that Luke writes in the third person for much of the time, as he was not there.

Chrysostom mentions as an undoubted historical fact the “Paul after his residence in Rome departed to Spain”.

Jerome also records that “Paul was dismissed by Nero, that he might preach the gospel in the West”.

Conybeare & Howson<sup>1</sup> suggest that Paul upon leaving Rome went to Macedonia, and then to Ephesus. Whilst there he visited Colossae and Laodoea. After this time he went to Spain by ship to avoid the political upheavals of Rome, where he stayed for two years. From Spain he returned to Ephesus again where his predictions of Acts 20 of apostasy were coming to fruition. [We should note of course, that subsequent visits of Paul to Ephesus are at conflict with his inspired revelation that the elders “*would see his face no more*”. However, the evidence from the Pastoral Epistles strongly leads to the conclusion that Paul in fact did visit Ephesus again on at least one occasion.] Whilst at Ephesus, Paul is thought (by Conybeare and Howson) to have made trips firstly to Macedonia, and then to Crete. After leaving Ephesus, he has gone to Rome by way of Corinth. After leaving Corinth, he spent the winter at Nicopolos, where he was arrested and sent to Rome for execution.

So, what do we know from the Pastoral Epistles?

Paul had visited Crete, and left Titus there to set things in order (Tit 1:5). After leaving Crete, Paul went to Miletus by way of Corinth (2 Tim 4:20). It was most likely during this time that Paul visited Ephesus again. Timothy had been left there to try to straighten out some of the apostasy (1 Tim 1:3) that Paul had warned about (Acts 20), and Paul was still hoping that circumstances might allow another visit (1 Tim 3:14,15). Whilst Paul was in Ephesus, Onesiphorus ministered to him (2 Tim 1:16-18).

During the time in Ephesus, Paul wrote the letter to Titus, and then travelled to Troas where he left some things with Carpus (2 Tim 4:13). He then went to Nicopolos where he planned to spend the winter (Titus 3:12). Nicopolos was a Roman Colony, and Paul would be safe from Jewish persecution in the city as a Roman Citizen.

### ***The Second Imprisonment***

Very shortly after this period, Paul is back under arrest in Rome. The usual implication of this is that Paul was arrested by the Romans during this time.

The politics of Rome had changed since the last time Paul had been there. The brutal, base, and cruel adviser Tigellinus had replaced Nero’s more moderate adviser Afranius Burrus. Both Nero and Tigellinus were heavily implicated in the fire in Rome of AD 64. In seeking to divert the attention away, Nero blamed the christians and them rounded up, tortured and put to death. This was considered to be punishment for the protests that the christians had made against the moral decadence of the leaders.

Against this background, the order was placed by Tigellinus for not only the arrest of the christians, but also of their leaders – especially Paul. Paul had for two years been recognised in Rome as being one of the leaders, and had access into “*Caesar’s household*” (Php 4:22). He was an obvious target.

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<sup>1</sup> Conybeare, WJ & Howson, JS “The Life and Epistles of St Paul” Eerdmans, Grand Rapids Mi. ISBN 0-8028-8086-X p.745

Being in a Roman Colony, the arrest was easy, and Paul was transported back to Rome to face charges that were trumped up by Caesar himself and his advisers. This time there could be no appeal.

Tradition has it that Paul was confined to the lower dungeons in the Mamertine prison.

Some of the brethren still manage to keep in touch with Paul, and send their greetings to Timothy. They include Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia, “*and all the brethren*” (2 Tim 4:21). But communication was not as easy as it had been at the earlier imprisonment. Some of his friends had forsaken him, including Demas (2 Tim 4:10), or had gone to other places – Crescens had gone to Galatia and Titus had gone to Dalmatia (2 Tim 4:10). Priscilla and Aquilla had moved back to Ephesus (2 Tim 4:19). Only Luke remained, and Paul wanted John Mark to come as well (2 Tim 4:11).

At the initial trial, everyone deserted Paul (2 Tim 4:16-17). But Paul knew that the end was near, and hence he wrote the second letter to Timothy. Paul can see the crown of joy that is set before him. The immediate future might be grim, but the future beyond the grave is filled with hope and joy.

### ***The Death of Paul***

Some traditions place the few months of Paul’s imprisonment at a time when Peter came to Rome and joined in the prison, and at that time wrote his two epistles.

The traditional evidence has Paul being killed in the last year of Nero’s reign in AD 68, and Peter and Paul being finally tried and condemned together. Paul was beheaded, and as a Roman citizen given a quick death whilst Peter is believed to have been crucified. Jesus told Peter that he would not die until was old, and that it would be under duress.

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. <sup>18</sup> I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." <sup>19</sup> Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!" (John 21:18-19 NIV)

As we look at the life of Paul, his sufferings, and the things he went through for the cause of Christ, his own words best sum up his life of dedication:

***“For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain”.*** Philippians 1:21