

## Appendix: Paul or James' Church: Who Was The Most Successful Evangelist?

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**Introduction** Most people assume without any study of church history or careful examination of the Book of Acts that Paul was the key evangelist who spread Christianity outside Palestine to the Gentiles. Is this picture realistic? No. It is a complete myth.

First, Peter was the choice of the “Holy Spirit” to be the “Apostle to the Gentiles.” Who says so? Apostle Peter. (Acts 15:7.) See “Christian Evangelism of Gentiles Before Paul” on page 5.

Peter founded in 45 A.D. a church in Antioch, Syria.<sup>1</sup> It eventually had 66 local congregations functioning underneath its authority.

Incidentally, prior to Paul’s involvement and missionary journeys, Peter mentions in Acts this Gentile-outpost in Antioch began with “men of Cyprus and Cyrene” who brought the gospel to Gentiles at Antioch even before Peter did so. (Acts 11:19-20.)

Second, to fulfill the commission of the Holy Spirit that Peter was *the* Apostle to the Gentiles, Peter in the 40’s A.D. founded a church at Rome. Paul did not visit that church until after 58 A.D., and it was already flourishing. (Acts 28:14-15.) See “Christian Evangelism of Gentiles Before Paul” on page 5

**Paul’s Mystery Period** Paul meanwhile had a mysterious period where we know nothing going on for many years. Paul says for fourteen to seventeen years after his conversion, he stayed in Arabia. After that time, in about 47 A.D., Paul comes to Antioch where a church is already in operation. (Acts 11:27-30; Gal.2:1.)<sup>2</sup> Scholars all acknowledge this huge gap in Paul’s activities, negating him having any *demonstrable* role in the Christian movement for ***as much as seventeen years after his conversion***. After Saul goes to Tarsus in Cilicia, we learn:

His first years as a Christian, spent in Arabia *are a mystery*. Three years after his call Paul went to Jerusalem to visit; he saw Peter and James. Later

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1. The Greek Orthodox church that traces itself to this church (the Melkite church) says tradition is that Peter founded the church at Antioch in 45 A.D. See [www.mliles.com/melkite/apostlepete.html](http://www.mliles.com/melkite/apostlepete.html).

(after fourteen years), he returned to Jerusalem for a meeting often referred to as the ‘Jerusalem Conference’[Gal. 2:1-2].....<sup>3</sup>

**Paul’s First Missionary Journey in 48 A.D.** Then Paul has his first missionary journey — to Seleucia and Cyprus. (Acts 13:4.) Scholars put this first missionary journey as taking place in early 48 A.D.<sup>4</sup>

To repeat, rarely is it ever emphasized that if this is Paul’s first missionary journey, this means that Paul was *inactive* as a Christian missionary for fourteen-seventeen years. During that entire *mystery* period, Peter and the twelve are all over the earth in various missionary activities. Peter in particular is reaching out to Gentiles *all that time*. Paul is doing nothing so far as anyone knows.

**Paul’s Journey to Jerusalem in 48-49 A.D.** We will discuss Paul’s success (or lack therefore) in a moment.

After this journey, Paul will then return to the church at Antioch (Acts 14:27). Thereupon, Paul apparently raised at Antioch the question about circumcision. It was the elders at Antioch who then sent Barnabas and Paul to Jerusalem to ask the twelve apostles about the question whether the Gentiles had to be circumcised. (Acts 14:26; 15:2.) Using Paul’s chronology, this Jerusalem conference had to be no earlier than 47 A.D. — fourteen years after his conversion. Scholars put the Jerusalem Council at 48-49 A.D.<sup>5</sup>

2. Paul’s dates lead to incongruities that put his conversion to 30 A.D. Some arbitrarily solve this problem, and simply put Paul’s conversion to 34 A.D. See <http://www.xenos.org/classes/chronop.htm>. Paul writes apparently about the Jerusalem conference recorded in Acts 15 as taking place *fourteen years after his conversion*: “Then after the space of *fourteen years* I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus also with me. (2) And I went up by revelation; and I laid before them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles but privately before them who were of repute, lest by any means I should be running, or had run, in vain.” (Gal 2:1-2 ASV.) Prior to that time, Paul says he never met any other apostles at Jerusalem than Peter and James. Thus, Galatians 2 must be discussing the Jerusalem conference of Acts 15. If one assumes Paul was converted in 34 A.D., then the Jerusalem council would have to be in 47-48 A.D.

3. Watson E. Mills, *Acts and Pauline Writings* (Mercer University Press, 1987) at lvii.

4. “This journey would need to have been finished and Paul returned to Antioch by the fall of 48 A.D. in order to leave time for the council and related events. The length of his 1st Missionary Journey would have been anywhere from 4 to 10 months. This would put his departure for the *1st Missionary Journey no sooner than early spring 48 A.D.*” <http://www.xenos.org/classes/chronop.htm>

**Other Apostles Long Time Abroad.** Meanwhile, Apostle Thomas was spreading Christianity to Gentiles in India. This is mentioned in many ancient Christian texts, including by Ephraem Syrus, Ambrose, Paulinus, and Jerome. (“St. Thomas The Apostle,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*.) At Mylapore, not far from Madras, “tradition has it that it was here that St. Thomas laid down his life [in 72 A.D. which] is locally very strong.” (See “India” on page 6.)

And Apostle James, son of Zebedee, was travelling to Spain in 40 A.D., evangelizing there, before returning to Jerusalem in 44 A.D. where he was beheaded. (See “Spain” on page 7.)

It is also interesting to note that there were multiple traditions that overlapped on one theme. The tongues on Pentecost was to bestow the language on each apostle which represented the nation to which God would send them. Based on that, the twelve divided up their responsibility of what nations they should evangelize. There were multiple text traditions that supported this was the *true* nature of the gift of tongues, as we shall discuss below.

**The Key Question**

With that background, we have a broader understanding of the intersection of Paul with an expansionist apostolic church that *pre-dates* Paul. ***Several of the apostles are already evangelizing Gentiles.*** The apostolic church is in Rome, Cyprus, Antioch, Spain and India for many many years *prior to Paul’s emergence from the mysterious period* when he was in Arabia for *fourteen-to-seventeen years post-conversion*.

By looking at the Book of Acts, we now must ask carefully this question: was Paul a highly successful evangelist? A successful planter of *new* churches in Gentile lands?

If you only look at maps of Paul’s travels which are called “Missionary Journeys,” you would assume this to be the case. However, Luke in Acts ***hardly mentions any significant success in evangelism by Paul.*** This claim shocks most people, because they do not critically tally what Paul’s successes are as they review Acts. However, when you focus carefully, Paul’s missions depicted in Acts are largely *failures* with minor successes.

See “Paul’s First Recorded Conversion” on page 8; “Lydia & The Jailer and His Family” on page 8; “Athens” on page 9; “Ephesus”

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5. <http://www.xenos.org/classes/chronop.htm>.

on page 9; “Felix, Festus and Agrippa” on page 9; “Paul’s Evangelism is Rather Ineffective” on page 10; and “The Numbers Converted?” on page 10.

In fairness to Paul, Luke’s focus is on the *problems* Paul encountered repeatedly wherever he went. So Paul’s success might be understated somewhat. Yet, what is indisputable is that in Acts, ***relatively few people are described as having been converted by Paul.***

By contrast, Acts portrays the church under James as leading “many ***tens of thousands***” to Christ before Paul’s conversion. This was thanks in no small part to Peter, of course. See “Proof James’s Church (Not Paul) Was The Most Effective” on page 13.

Thus, who was the most successful evangelist in the early period of Christianity if we rely solely on Luke’s book of Acts? The church run by James whose chief evangelist was Peter.

If this credit certainly belongs to James and Peter prior to Paul’s emergence, even as Luke depicts the church’s early history, why do you think ***a modern myth*** was created making it appear Paul was the most successful evangelist?

### **Could Doctrinal Bias Explain The Exaggeration?**

Could ***doctrinal bias*** have something to do with taking the lustre away from James and Peter and giving it to Paul?

After all, Luther said it was obvious James’ emphasis on faith and works in James 2:14-17 contradicts Paul in Ephesians 2:8-9. It is evident too that Peter’s sermons in chapter two of Acts emphasized repentance from sin as the means of the blood of Christ washing the audience and imparting eternal life. This was at odds with Paul’s view that Abraham was saved by belief alone in Romans 4:3-5 while yet an (unrepentant) sinner.

Hence, could it be Paul’s efforts are exaggerated to overshadow the work of Peter and James, and thus marginalize their doctrine, and the importance of it on the success of Christianity?

Let’s examine Luke’s accounts in Acts in detail to assess Paul’s success in evangelism. Then let’s compare it to the work of the twelve apostles.

Christian  
Evangelism  
of Gentiles  
Before Paul

Peter explained at the Jerusalem Council that he was appointed by the Holy Spirit “a good time ago” to be the Apostle to the Gentiles. Paul was at Peter’s feet as Peter said this. Paul raised no objection. Peter’s exact words were:

And when there had been much questioning, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Brethren, ye know that a good while ago God made choice among you, that by *my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel*, and believe. (Act 15:7 ASV.)

**Antioch.** Peter founded also in 45 A.D. a church in Antioch, Syria.<sup>6</sup> It eventually had 66 local congregations functioning underneath its authority.

**Italy.** Peter then sent many emissaries from Antioch to evangelize Italy.

First, Peter in what can only be approximated as 42 A.D. (but which was obviously after 45 A.D.) founded a Church at Rome.<sup>7</sup>

Then Peter sent emissaries from Rome and Antioch to found other churches throughout Italy. For example, Priscus was the first Bishop of Capua in Italy, where he was sent by the Apostle Peter. By tradition he was martyred under Nero.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, Peter sent out Paulinus of Antioch to Lucca, Italy.<sup>9</sup> Also, Birillus came from Antioch with Peter, and became first bishop of Catania in Sicily.<sup>10</sup> So too Pancras came from Antioch, and was tasked by Peter to go to Taormina, Sicily.<sup>11</sup> Peter went to Naples, and converted Aspren (or Aspronas), and later made him bishop.<sup>12</sup> Ptolemy was a disciple of Peter and became a Bishop of Nepi in Tuscany.<sup>13</sup>

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6. As mentioned earlier, the Greek Orthodox church that traces itself to this church (the Melkite church) says tradition is that Peter founded the church at Antioch in 45 A.D. See [www.mliles.com/melkite/apostlepete.html](http://www.mliles.com/melkite/apostlepete.html).

7. Peter was crucified in Rome in 67 A.D. during the reign of Nero. Eusebius says that this was after coming to Rome twenty-five years earlier. (Eusebius, *The Chronicle*.) Peter thus arrived at Rome about 42 A.D.

8. <http://www.orthodoxengland.org.uk/s1centy.htm>

9. *Id.*

10. *Id.* <http://www.orthodoxengland.org.uk/s1centy.htm>

11. *Id.* <http://www.orthodoxengland.org.uk/s1centy.htm>

12. *Id.* <http://www.orthodoxengland.org.uk/s1centy.htm>

13. *Id.* <http://www.orthodoxengland.org.uk/s1centy.htm>

Paul first arrives in Rome sometime after 58 A.D., and finds a flourishing church. (Acts 28:14-15.)

**Corinth.** Aquila and Priscilla had a Christian church in their home at Corinth. (1 Cor. 16:19.) They arrive in Corinth in 49 A.D. because they left Rome that year due to the Roman decree exiling Jews in 49 A.D. While one cannot be sure, it is a reasonable inference they were Christians prior to leaving Rome. Paul never mentions converting them to Christ. It was this couple who received Paul into their home upon his arrival in Corinth. (Acts 18:1.)<sup>14</sup>

**India.** Meanwhile, in 46 A.D., Apostle Thomas was preaching Christianity to Gentiles in India, converting 3,000 Brahman in his first major sermon. Apostle Thomas' mission to India is mentioned in many ancient Christian texts, including by Ephraem Syrus, Ambrose, Paulinus, and Jerome. ("St. Thomas The Apostle," *Catholic Encyclopedia*.) At Mylapore, not far from Madras, "tradition has it that it was here that St. Thomas laid down his life [in 72 A.D. which] is locally very strong."<sup>15</sup> According to the apocryphal *Acts of Thomas*, the other eleven apostles were each allotted other nations to evangelize. India fell to Thomas.<sup>16</sup> The legends of

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14. "(a) After these things he departed from Athens, and came to Corinth. (2) And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, a man of Pontus by race, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome: and he came unto them; (3) and because he was of the same trade, he abode with them, and they wrought, for by their trade they were tentmakers." Act 18:1-3 ASV.

15. "Unfortunately, Portuguese adventurers destroyed precious documents that might have shed light on Thomas' history. The Portuguese thought that the Christians of Malabar were heretics. And so the writings of Christians who have an ancient church named for Thomas and who can point to a tomb where he was buried, are lost forever." <http://chi.gospelcom.net/DAILYF/2002/07/daily-07-03-2002.shtml>. See also, Cardinal Eugène, Cardinal Tisserant, *Eastern Christianity in India; a history of the Syro-Malabar Church from the earliest time to the present day*. (Authorized adaptation from the French by E.R. Hamby. (Westminster, Md., Newman Press, 1957).

16. Prof. M. M. Ninan in STORY OF ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE AND THE ST. THOMAS CHURCHES OF INDIA explains: "*Acta Thomae*, the apocryphal book is historically dated around end of first century soon after the martyrdom of St. Thomas. There are several ancient texts in existence in various languages such as Syriac, Greek, Latin, Armenian and Ethiopic. The original manuscripts are found in the British Museum. This book gives a detailed account of Apostle Thomas' labors in nine parts. The gist of the book is as follows: After the ascension of Jesus Christ, *the Apostles met in Jerusalem and portioned all the countries of the world among themselves. India which at that time included all Middle East to the present India fell to the lot of St. Thomas.*" <http://www.acns.com/~mm9n/marthoma/marthoma.htm>.

Apostle Thomas' arrival line up chronologically with events in India that date to 46 A.D.<sup>17</sup>

**Spain.** It should then not surprise us that Apostle James, the son of Zebedee and brother of Apostle John, is traditionally viewed as the first evangelist to Spain in 40 A.D. The town of Compostella keeps alive his memory there in a chapel, and he is the patron saint of Spain.<sup>18</sup> Since Apostle James died in 44 A.D. in Jerusalem, he must have been one of the earliest international evangelists among the apostles. Tradition has it that Apostle James was in Spain in 40 A.D., but then returned to Jerusalem for some reason whereupon he was beheaded by Herod Agrippa in 44 A.D.<sup>19</sup>

Is this history of Apostle James true?

*The Gospel of the Twelve Holy Apostles* (which dates from the first century) says that when the Holy Spirit descended on the twelve apostles, each apostle received the language corresponding to the land which each was destined to evangelize. On that occasion, Apostle James (son of Zebedee) was given Latin. This would imply his destination was *West* — into Roman territories such as Spain.<sup>20</sup> Thus, this corroborated the legend that “when the apostles divided the known world into missionary zones, the Iberian peninsula fell to [Apostle] James.”<sup>21</sup>

(Please note how *identical* this story is to the apocryphal book *Acts of Thomas* which records the same division of the world for each of the twelve apostles. Even though these are not canonical books, when they converge on the same point, we must give consideration that the point is historical.)

The second proof that Apostle James preached in Spain is that documents dating to the late 500's likewise state this. In what is called

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17. Prof. M. M. Ninan, STORY OF ST. THOMAS THE APOSTLE AND THE ST. THOMAS CHURCHES OF INDIA, reprinted at <http://www.acns.com/~mm9n/marthoma/marthoma.htm>.

18. *Id.* <http://www.orthodoxengland.org.uk/s1centy.htm>

19. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James,\\_son\\_of\\_Zebedee](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James,_son_of_Zebedee). Some dispute this is historical, but others defend it. See “St. James the Greater,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia* at <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08279b.htm>.

20. <http://www.csj.org.uk/2000-years.htm#tradition>

21. <http://www.csj.org.uk/apostle.htm>

the *Breviary of the Apostles*, it says Apostle James preached in *Hispania*.<sup>22</sup>

**Conclusion.** Thus, contrary to common presupposition, the Gospel of Jesus would not have died out in Palestine but for Paul's alleged success. Long *before Paul's first missionary journey in 47-48 A.D.*, Peter was in Antioch, Syria, and from there springboarding to Italy, including Sicily. Apostle James (son of Zebedee) was in Spain in 40 A.D. And Apostle Thomas was in India, evangelizing from 46 A.D. to 75 A.D.

**Paul's First  
Recorded  
Conversion**

Now let's turn to Paul and his evangelical record. Let's see if it compares at all to the widespread work of the twelve apostles.

Paul's first post-conversion appearance is in Acts 13:9 at Salamis. He casts out a demon. Luke then records Paul's message at a synagogue. Paul leaves without any mention of success. (Acts 13:42.)

Then Paul in Acts 14:9-11 heals a lame man. The audience thinks Paul is a god. (Acts 14:11-12.) Paul tries to restrain them by rebuking them. (Acts 14:15.) No converts are noted thus far.

Paul is then dragged out to be stoned by Jews. (Acts 14:19.) Paul passes to Derbe where it cryptically says "he made many disciples." (Acts 14:21.) ***These are the very first converts Luke records made by Paul!*** These are the only converts mentioned prior to the Jerusalem Conference of Acts 15. This is important because according to Paul's account, this is *fourteen years after Paul's own conversion!* (Gal. 2:1.)

**Lydia &  
The Jailer  
and His  
Family**

Paul's next success is with Lydia of Thyatira at Philippi. (Acts 16:14.) This leads to Paul's imprisonment there. Then the earthquake is mentioned which leads to the conversion of the jailer and his household. (Acts 16:33.)

So far Paul's converts are the unnumbered 'many' at Derbe along with Lydia, plus the jailer and his family at Philippi. If Luke is trying to emphasize Paul's success at evangelism after about 17 years of service, the numbers are meager.

**Thessalonica**

Next Paul goes to a synagogue in Thessalonica and preaches on three Sabbaths. "***Some*** of them believed," mostly God-fearing Gentiles and some women. (Acts 17:4.)

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22. <http://www.csj.org.uk/2000-years.htm#tradition>



**Athens** Friends of Paul then whisk him away from angry Jews by taking him to Athens. (Acts 17:15.) Paul there preaches at the Areopagus. The only response was that some mocked him, while others said: “We will hear you again concerning this.” Paul leaves with no record of success. (Acts 17:32.)

**Corinth** Next, in Corinth, things improve. It says Paul was preaching and “persuading Jews and Greeks.” (Acts 18:4.) But the text then says the Jews rejected him. As a result, Paul vowed from that day forth to go only to Gentiles. (Acts 18:6.) Then presumably by Paul’s preaching, Crispus, the synagogue leader at Corinth and “many Corinthians” believed. (Acts 18:8.) Then Paul settles there for a year-and-a-half. No mention is made of how many more come to the Lord.

**Ephesus** Then Paul goes to Ephesus. (Acts 18:21.) There Paul baptizes a group of twelve men who already were semi-converts, but they only had the baptism of John. (Acts 19:1-7.) Then Paul spoke three months at the local Ephesus’ synagogue, “reasoning and *persuading concerning the kingdom of God.*” (Acts 19:8.) Some presumably were persuaded to faith. Some, however, were “hardened” and rejected the Way (as taught by Paul). Paul then took his disciples from that synagogue and met in a schoolhouse. (Acts 19:9.) This went on for two years. No mention is made of how many were converted. Yet, possibly by Paul’s influence, a “considerable number” of magic-arts practioners later converted. (Acts 19:19.)

Various events follow at Ephesus. Paul’s next evangelistic speech is at Acts 21:40. But before he finished, the crowd erupted against him. (Acts 22:22.) No converts are noted. This event led to a court proceeding by the Roman authorities.

**Felix, Festus and Agrippa** Next we turn to Paul’s imprisonment in Felix’ custody. First, Felix for two years kept asking Paul to come out from his cell at Caesarea to talk, in hopes Paul would pay a bribe. (Acts 24:22-28.) Felix never is mentioned as being converted.

Then Festus took over the case. He asks Paul if he wants him to decide the case. Paul responds that he wants Caesar to make the decision, and he appeals. (Acts 25:11.)

King Agrippa then came to Caesarea and for some reason wanted to hear what Paul had to say. (Acts 25:13,22.) During the talk of

Paul, Agrippa jokes that Paul is trying to convert him, but he doesn't convert. (Acts 26:28.)

En route to Rome for a hearing, Paul is shipwrecked on Malta. (Acts 28:1.) No mention is made of any crewmember accepting Christ.

On the island, Paul is then bitten by a viper but does not die, which makes the Maltese think he is a god. (Acts 28:6.) Paul heals the father of Publius. (Acts 28:8.) No mention is made of the conversion of anyone at Malta. Instead, Luke mentions the Maltese were very grateful for healings by Paul. They give gifts of food to the soldiers and Paul for their trip to Rome. (Acts 28:10.)

Then in Rome, Paul found Christians already there, greeting them. (Acts 28:15.) At Paul's lodging, "*some* indeed were being persuaded," and some not. (Acts 28:24.) This concludes the accounts of Paul's missionary journeys in Acts.

Paul's own letters do not note any successful conversions.

Paul's  
Evangelism  
is Rather  
Ineffective

Hence the converts of Paul that Luke mentioned are few and far between. This does not mean it is impossible there were more. Again, in fairness to Paul, Luke's focus in Acts is not on Paul's success in evangelism. Yet, *one has to do a lot of presupposing to think Paul was very successful*. To recap, his converts mentioned in Acts were:

- 1 Derbe: "he made *many* disciples." (Acts 14:21.)
- 2 Philippi: Lydia and the Jailer and his family. (Acts 16:14, 33.)
- 3 Thessalonica : "Some of them believed." (Acts 17:4.)
- 4 Athens: none recorded.
- 5 Corinth: "*many* Corinthians" believed. (Acts 18:8.)
- 6 Ephesus: Paul was "*persuading [some] concerning the kingdom of God.*" (Acts 19:8.)
- 7 Caesarea none.
- 8 Rome: "*some*" were persuaded. (Acts 28:24.)

The  
Numbers  
Converted?

The number of people Paul led to Christ, based on Luke's account, would *approximate 41 people*, if we used fair assumptions. The description 'many' would appear to signify a handful. If the num-

bers were greater than ten people each time ‘many’ were used, Luke surely would note them so as to make Paul look good. This can be deduced also from the one time Luke gives a number. Luke says *twelve* quasi-Christians who had the baptism of John were rebaptized into Christ. Thus, if Luke elsewhere doesn’t use a number and instead uses the word *many*, the reasonable inference is that it is less than twelve. Luke’s mention of the *twelve* quasi-Christians needing rebaptism means that number is *more significant* than the numbers which ‘many’ represented. This is why Luke mentions *twelve*—representing a higher number than when *many* is used.

Accordingly, if you reasonably assume ‘many’ means ten persons each time, and ‘some’ means five persons each time Luke uses it, and you assume the jailer’s family were five people, then Luke records a total of 41 people led to Jesus by Paul. Not an amazing number, but still a worthy accomplishment that the angels rejoice over.

The Truly  
Greatest  
Evangelist

Compare this to James second encounter with Paul when he tells Paul that “many” *myriades*, *i.e.*, “tens of thousands”<sup>23</sup> of Jews have come to Christ at Jerusalem alone where James is bishop. (Acts 21:20.) James must mean a minimum of 30,000 (“many *myriades*”) at Jerusalem had come to Christ. *Two* *myriades* would not be *many*. Thus, the number must at minimum be 30,000. It could be much greater.

This is a realistic number too. Peter’s very first sermon led 3,000 to Christ at Jerusalem. (Acts 2:41.) Thus, a 30,000 figure probably over a dozen years later (*i.e.*, the date of the second encounter with Paul in Acts 21) makes sense. While there are no end of claims that Paul was the “most successful evangelist,” the evidence is to the contrary. ***James and James’ church (including Peter) alone has the right to such a title.***

Prior to Paul’s conversion, this church under James was expansive, and not limited to Jerusalem. When Paul became a Christian, there was already a church far from Jerusalem at Damascus in Syria, where Paul first joined the church. (Acts 22:12.) Paul later joins a Church at Antioch. This church was founded by Peter. When Paul

23. Inexplicably, most translations render this “thousands.” The Greek word has a very specific meaning: a *myriad* means 10,000. It comes from *myrios* that means “numberless, countless, 10,000” as an adjective. As a noun, it means specifically *ten thousand*. See “Myriad,” <http://dictionary.reference.com/wordoftheday/archive/2004/09/03.html>

goes to Rome, there are already Christians there even though Paul never before set foot in Rome. (Acts 28:15.) This church too was founded by Peter. These are the *prior fruits of James' church*<sup>24</sup> without any assistance from Paul.

Thus, it is pure myth that Paul was *highly* successful in evangelism. It is not based on any provable facts from the Book of Acts. His success was certainly nothing compared to that of James and the church James ran at Jerusalem. More important, there is little reason to believe that Peter and the other eleven apostles were *not* more successful than Paul. The history we do have outside Scripture supports that indeed they were far more successful than Paul. Thomas alone is said to have converted 3,000 in his first speech in India. Again, using Acts as our guide, Paul at best appears to have led 41 people to Christ!

### Why The Exaggeration of Paul?

We often hear “Paul was the world’s most successful evangelist in the early Church.” (*St. Paul’s Lutheran Church*.)<sup>25</sup> But we saw above that Paul had scant success and Luke records Paul perhaps led 41 people to Christ. By contrast, James and James’ church led “many tens of thousands” to Christ in Jerusalem alone, and had spread the church far and wide long before Paul appeared on the scene.

What do you think explains the exaggeration of Paul’s success and the complete forgetting of the success of James and his church (including Peter) *before Paul appeared on the scene*? Do you think it has to do with one’s *preference for Paul’s doctrine* over *James’ teachings*? Do you think it also might have a desire to downplay Peter as part of Catholic-bashing? (While I do not agree with many teachings and practices of Roman Catholicism, this does not permit me to denigrate the historical role of Peter.)

Next we will prove that the church universally was led between 125 A.D. and 325 A.D. by persons who shared James’ view of Jesus. They rejected all of the uniquely Pauline doctrines that we hear about today. This proves once more who was the leader of the

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24. Peter was the apostolic member of James’ church who founded the church at both Rome and Antioch. (Eusebius, *The Chronicle* (303 A.D.)

25. “Evangelism,” *St. Paul Lutheran Church* reprinted online at <http://www.stpaul-srq.org/Evangelism%20ministry.htm>

most successful evangelist movement of its time: James and those who shared his doctrines.

Proof  
James's  
Church  
(Not Paul)  
Was The  
Most  
Effective

East and West, the church leaders from 125 A.D. to 325 A.D.—known as the *Anti-Nicene period*<sup>26</sup>—all echo the teachings of James (which align with Jesus) and reject those of Paul. This proves that the churches were ***established by the evangelism that James (along with Peter) ushered in at Jerusalem*** rather than what Paul later tried to inject.

This disproves the other myth popular today that Paul was the true founder of Christianity. ***Paulinists delight in this designation which anti-Christian scholars try to affix to Christianity.*** The anti-Christian scholars' purpose is to marginalize Jesus. They know if Christianity *has always been Paulinism*, and not following Jesus, then the question arises: 'How can anyone say Jesus was an *important historical figure*?' Instead, the true founder of the Church after Jesus was his brother—James along with Peter as a key evangelist. They were tightly wedded to Jesus' doctrine. For Pauline Christians to accept the 'Paul was the true founder of Christianity' thesis is dishonest conniving to help bolster Paulinism at the expense of Christ.

Let's prove this by reviewing the doctrines in that *Anti-Nicene period*. We turn now to the leading church figures of that period: Clement of Rome, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Irenneus, Origen, Justin Martyr, Polycarp, Archelaus, and Papias. They all send one clear universal message: they accept all of Jesus' teachings (which coincide with James' doctrines) and reject all of those doctrines that are uniquely Pauline. They reject loud and clear that man has no free-will, total depravity, eternal security, predestination, and most important of all, salvation by faith without works.

Bercot, a Protestant attorney like myself, has done a comprehensive survey of the doctrines of the early Church, in his *Will The Real Heretics Please Stand Up* (1999). It is backed up by an exhaustive 705 page *Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs* (1998). He admits he discovered that the early church, in "***contradiction to***

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26. The Anti-Nicene period (125 A.D. to 325 A.D.) represents the post-apostolic period when the bishop of Rome, while influential, still was just one of many bishops. Other than James as the superior bishop over those of other churches, once he died there was no recognized shift of the superior bishop to the one at Rome *in that Anti-Nicene period*. See index entry on 'Roman Catholicism: origins.'

*many of my own theological views,”* taught doctrines that *universally* (i.e., with no dissent) rejected doctrines which we all recognize as part of Pauline teaching. Bercot, for example, explains:

- Paul’s Doctrine of Total Depravity** “[T]he early church never taught that humans are incapable of doing or overcoming sin in their lives. They believed that we *do* have the ability to serve and obey God.” (*Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up*, at page 53, quoting Origen, Clement and Lactantius.) “The early Christians didn’t believe man is ***totally depraved*** and incapable of doing any good.” *Id.*, at 64.
- Salvation by Faith without Works** “The early Christians universally believed that ***works*** or obedience play ***an essential role*** in our salvation.” (*Id.*, at 57, quoting Clement of Rome, Polycarp, the letter of Barnabas, Hermas, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Hippolytus, Cyprian, and Lanctatius.)
- Eternal Security** “[E]arly Christians...believed that a ‘saved’ person could still end up being lost.” (*Id.*, at 65, quoting Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Cyprian.) I would add quotes from *Scorpion’s Bite* by Tertullian to the list. Hence, the early church rejected eternal security.
- Rejected The Grace Alone Teachers** “As surprising as all of this may be to you, what I’m about to tell you is even more bizarre. There was a religious group labelled as heretics by the early Christians, who strongly disputed the church’s stance on salvation and works. Instead, they [*i.e.*, the heretics] taught man is totally depraved. That we are saved solely by grace. That works play no role in salvation. And that we cannot lose our salvation once we obtain it....” *Id.*, at 66.

Bercot is discussing Marcion who founded a Paulinist system of doctrine in 144 A.D. He said the twelve apostles were intended for a different dispensation, and the Jesus they present does not speak to us. Our only apostle to follow is supposedly Paul. Marcion was the first person to promote the doctrine of faith alone. As a result, the early church universally regarded him as a heretic.

Bercot cites the works by Tertullian and Irenaeus against Marcion and the Gnostics heretics. For more on Marcion, see my books *Jesus’ Words on Salvation* (2008), and appendix B: *How the Canon Was Formed in Jesus’ Words Only* (2007).

## Predestination and Free-Will

“The early Christians were strong believers in *free-will* [citations and discussion omitted.] Originally, it was the pagan world, not the Christian, who believed in *predestination*. Yet, in one of the strange quirks of history, Martin Luther took the side of the pagan Romans against the early Christians....[I]t was once again some of the Gnostic teachers who taught that humans are arbitrarily predestined for salvation and punishment....Although not believing in predestination, the early Christians believed in God’s sovereignty and in His ability to foresee the future.” (*Id.*, at 70, 72, 73, 76, quoting Justin Martyr, Clement, Archelaus, Methodius, and Origen.)

## Conclusion

If Paul were truly the successful evangelist we are told that he was, then what explains the early church between 125 A.D. and 325 A.D. rejecting almost every *uniquely Pauline doctrine*? Why were those holding to modern Paulinist ideas on salvation, predestination, and grace regarded as heretics?

What makes more sense than believing Paul was the second-founder of Christianity is instead to accept that the approximately **41 people identified in Acts** as having been led to Jesus by Paul is **close to the true total number**. This is one of the reasons why Paul had so little impact in the early church.

By contrast, Acts records that James and James’ church at Jerusalem were responsible for *many tens of thousands of Jews* coming to Christ. James and James’ church (including Peter) prior to Paul’s entrance is truly the greatest evangelical movement of all time—starting from nothing and growing internationally and at Jerusalem at a phenomenal rate. This explains why James’ doctrines *permeated* the early church right up through 325 A.D.

## Post-Script:

### What Changed Things?

Had it not been for the Emperor of Rome, Constantine, in 325-329 A.D. changing the direction of the church in Roman territories, there would never have been any notion that Paul had any influence. Thus, by the Roman church’s actions under Constantine’s influence, it gave an *illusion* that Paul had greater influence all along, and thereby created a myth of Paul’s influence which he previously never had.

This is because the Roman Catholic Church post 325 A.D. treated two unique teachings of Paul for the first time as officially valid:

- 1 The doctrine of Original Sin. This in turn spawned the Marian heresy that she had to be sinless<sup>27</sup> to prevent original sin tainting Jesus,<sup>28</sup> and
- 2 The abolition of Sabbath on Friday-Saturday as heretically legalistic, relying upon Paul's principle that the Law of Moses' was abrogated.<sup>29</sup>

These same two doctrines — Original Sin doctrine and Abolition of Sabbath as Friday-Saturday — were rejected by the remaining Christian bishops who lived outside the Roman empire.<sup>30</sup> These same Orthodox reject these two doctrines then as they still do today. These bishops trace their origin to James' church at Jerusalem by unbroken historical records of succession. They are known

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27. This is heretical because if sinless from birth, Mary needed no savior. Yet, Mary affirms God is "My Savior." (Luke 1:47.)

28. Mary-worship had already entered the church earlier. However, Mary-worship was later made respectable as a solution to the problem of original sin uniquely taught by Paul in Romans ch. 5. Roman Catholicism taught Mary's alleged sinless nature explained how Jesus did not suffer original sin in his flesh. Marcion resolved this dilemma differently in 144 A.D. He said Jesus only appeared to have human flesh. This was the heresy of docetism that Apostle John condemns. Both the RC and Marcion heresies derive from Paul's teaching on original sin in Romans ch. 5.

29. At the Council of Laodicea of 363 A.D.—one of the first church councils controlled primarily by the Roman Bishop—it was decided to deem heretical and anathema (cursed) the practice of keeping Sabbath. (Canon 29.) The Council claimed Sabbath-keeping was "judaizing." (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (1990), supra, XIV at 148.) This council ruling was never accepted outside of Roman territories. The Eastern Orthodox have always maintained Christians must keep the Sabbath (on Friday-sunset to Saturday-sunset) while worshipping on Sunday. The *Anti-Nicene* church records from 125 A.D. to 325 A.D. likewise show that keeping Sabbath on Friday/Saturday & then Sunday worship was the clear practice of universal Christianity pre-363 A.D. See the *Constitution of the Apostles* (ca. 200 A.D.) Book 7, ch. XXIII & XXX, Book 2, ch. LX, and Book 5, ch. XX, reprinted in *Anti-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers down to a.d. 325* (Ed. The Rev. Alexander Roberts, D.D., and James Donaldson, LL.D.) (Reprint of Edinburgh Edition of T&T Clark)(Grand Rapids: Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans). A reprint of Book 7 is at [http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/ANF-07/anf07-47.htm#P6620\\_2278762](http://www.ccel.org/fathers2/ANF-07/anf07-47.htm#P6620_2278762). A reprint of Book 2 and 5 are at the same webpage, except identified as ANF-02 or ANF-05.

30. Tertullian, a leading church member at Carthage (N. Africa) in *Against Marcion* around 207 A.D., does concur that Paul abrogated ceremonial laws from the Law, such as feast-days and the sabbath. However, he claims otherwise Paul did not abrogate the law. Some interpret James in Acts 15 that way too. However, James in Acts 21 tells Paul this is a misunderstanding of what his decision on circumcision meant.



to us today as the Eastern Orthodox Church (with 250 million members). They are primarily located in Israel, the Middle East, Ethiopia, Russia, Armenia, and Turkey. They always have kept the true Sabbath for the past 2,000 years while worshipping on Sunday. They are extraordinarily non-Pauline in all their teachings. (See my book *Jesus' Words on Salvation*, Chapter Nineteen.)

The pattern is clear. Paul had virtually no influence in the early church's doctrine apart from his influence to raise the issue over circumcision which then turned on a decision by James, not by Paul. See Acts chapter fifteen. This historically explains why Paul's doctrines are rejected in the original church. The only change in that pattern arose by the fortuity of Emperor Constantine's influence beginning in 325 A.D. He led the Roman Bishop to tamper with the universal doctrine of the church that *had no doctrine of Paul affixed to it*. The pope added what appeared then to be just *two minor Pauline doctrines*: Original Sin and Abolition of traditional Sabbath. These doctrines turned out to be the poison pill.

### The Irony Of Roman Catholicism

It is somewhat ironic that the Roman Catholic church would later be put on the run by Luther's citation to Paul. The irony is that the Roman Catholic Church then had to run back to James' Epistle and its clear teaching on salvation.

The mistake the Roman Catholic Church made way back in the 300's, which left it trapped in a fatal inconsistency, was that it let in Paul's teaching on original sin and the abrogation of the Law. As a result, then ***it had no plausible way to claim Paul's salvation doctrines should not also be the measure of doctrine***. Paul contradicts James. The Catholic church had somewhat retained James on salvation doctrine. Yet, the Roman Catholic church was wedded to the doctrine of original sin (which propped up Marianism) and abrogation of Saturday-Sabbath. It relied upon Paul for those two positions.

The Eastern Orthodox have no such problem. They never agreed on *any unique points of Paul*. They show a low regard for any of his unique teachings. In its own territories, the Orthodox are not subject to any vulnerability of inconsistency over Paul because they never have given him any serious credence.

As a result of the Roman Catholic church's totally different position, it has remained completely vulnerable to attack by Paulinists

for its inconsistency. The Paulinist asks Catholicism a clearly difficult question: how can Roman Catholics accept the unique teachings of Paul on original sin (Romans ch. 5) and the abrogation of Sabbath, but not also accept Paul's teachings on salvation by faith without works in Romans 4:4 and Eph. 2:8-9? The Eastern Orthodox alone can say they accept neither teaching of Paul. Yet, for the Roman Catholics, these are hard questions which deserve an answer. Roman Catholicism never offers a coherent answer. It just keeps citing James to "balance" Paul.

### A Solution for Roman Catholics

The solution for Roman Catholicism is to take a brave step. While it has kept up a stiff upper lip for 400 years, it must one day resolve this inconsistency between James' doctrine and Paul's teachings. The Roman Catholic Church needs to expel the uniquely Pauline doctrine of original sin (and get rid of all the Marian heresies that it spawned) and restore the Mosaic Law to the position it deserves, making the careful distinction between Gentile and Jew that James in Acts chapters 15 and 21 revealed. With a few other repairs, such as removal of doctrines about purgatory, infant baptism, calling priests *fathers*, and abrogation of anything that offends Jesus' teachings, that church can be restored to its original purity of the teachings under James. After all, they are identical to the teachings of Jesus. As a result, we will get back to Our Lord's true words.