

***RAISING THE SON OF THE WIDOW OF NAIN  
THE TRAINING OF PAUL***

**October 10, 2010  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Luke  
Revision E**

**GOSPEL: Luke 7:11-16**

**EPISTLE: Galatians 1:11-19**

Today's Gospel lesson is used in the West at about this same time of year for the 26<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity or sometimes for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost.

**GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 7:11-16**

Whereas many of the accounts of events in Jesus' life are recorded in several, if not all four, of the Gospel accounts, today's lesson is recorded only by Luke. The setting for this event is early in the second year of Jesus' public ministry. Jesus had just finished the "Sermon on the Mount" (Matthew 5:1-7:29) and the "Sermon on the Plain" (so called from Luke 6:17) shortly thereafter (Luke 6:17-49). The Twelve Apostles have been selected by Jesus, (Luke 6:12-16) but have not yet been sent out two-by-two to heal the sick and cast out demons (Luke 9:1-6). John the Baptist had been imprisoned (Luke 7:18-23) but not yet beheaded by Herod (Luke 9:7-9). Shortly after this Gospel account, John the Baptist's disciples came to Jesus and asked if He was the One to come or if they should look for another. Jesus replied that they should look around, for the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. Today's Gospel lesson was the illustration He gave them for the dead being raised.

Following the "Sermon on the Plain," Jesus went to Capernaum, which is at the Northern end of the Sea of Galilee (Luke 7:1). The next day, He went to the city of Nain (Luke 7:11) which is about 20 miles distant as the crow flies and is about 5 miles Southeast of His hometown of Nazareth. This was a good day's journey, since it meant crossing the mountain range near Mt. Tabor (1800 feet elevation).

As Jesus arrived outside Nain, accompanied by a large crowd, He encountered a funeral procession coming out of the city. Carried in an open coffin in the procession was the body of the only son of a widow. The funeral procession also had a large crowd, and the widow was openly weeping.

From the events described in Luke, it appears that the widow of Nain was not well off financially. First, the dead man was being carried in an open coffin (v.14). Secondly, when Jesus spoke to him, "Young man, I say to you, arise" (v.14), he sat up and began to speak immediately. There was no need to "unbind him" as was necessary for Lazarus when he was raised (John 11:44). This is because Lazarus and the Lord Himself were given a rich man's

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burial. For example, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea bound Jesus' body with strips of linen mixed with 100 pounds of myrrh and aloes, creating a mummy or cocoon (John 19:39-40). This is why Peter and John believed He was risen as soon as they saw the burial clothes; the mummy was empty and undisturbed; Jesus rose right through the burial wrappings.

For the son of the widow of Nain, there were no burial wrappings like Lazarus or Jesus. He was being carried to a pauper's grave. These circumstances put the widow in very difficult financial straits. Under Mosaic Law, no special provisions were made for widows (except for a share of the triennial third tithe) because the oldest son – who had the birthright or extra share of the property – had the duty to provide for her. This is why Jesus asked His second cousin John to care for His mother just before He died (John 19:26-27). In addition, the Scribes and Pharisees of that day were well known to foreclose on widows' houses when the poverty-stricken widows ran out of money (Matthew 23:14).

Of the three people Jesus is recorded as raising from the dead: Lazarus (John 11:38-45), Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:21-24, 35-43) and the widow's son, in each case there is implied a considerable amount of compassion of Jesus toward the bereaved. In Lazarus' case, Jesus, Himself, wept (John 11:35). In Jairus' case, Jairus "begged Jesus earnestly, saying 'My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live'" (Mark 5:23). However, she died before Jesus arrived. In the case of the widow's son, Jesus came to the funeral procession uninvited, for "He had compassion on her" (v.15).

The above three cases represent three different stages of death. Jairus' daughter had just died and was still lying on her bed (Mark 5:40). The widow's son had died recently and was being carried to his grave (v.12). Lazarus had been dead four days and was beginning to decompose (John 11:39).

When the Lord saw the widow, He had compassion on her, raised her son from the dead and presented him to his mother. The response of both large crowds was one of being seized with fear glorifying God and saying, "A great prophet has risen up among us," and "God has visited His people" (Luke 7:16). Word of this event spread throughout Judea and all the surrounding neighborhood, including Nazareth (Luke 7:17).

This account in Luke is very similar to one that occurred during the life of the prophet Elijah. Elijah had prophesied that there would be no rain for 3 ½ years (1 Kings 17:1, 18:1, Luke 4:25). During most of that period, he lived in Zarephath (just south of Sidon) in an upper room at the house of a widow who had one young child (1 Kings 17:9-10). The widow was expecting to starve to death due to the famine (v.12), but Elijah saw to it that the jar of flour and the jar of oil never ran out (v.16). Near the end of the 3 ½ years, the widow's son died, and Elijah raised him from the dead (vv.17-24). According to tradition, the widow's son was Jonah the prophet, whose three days in the belly of the sea monster prophesied about the Lord's death and resurrection (Velimirovic, Prologue, Sept. 22).

With this background in mind, it was no accident that Jesus went to Nain at this time. A few months earlier, He quoted the above account about Elijah to people in the synagogue of Nazareth (5 miles away) in response to their unbelief (Luke 4:24-26). This made them so angry that they tried to throw Him off a cliff (Luke 4:28-30). They had wanted him to do in Nazareth what He had done in Capernaum (Luke 4:23), but Jesus said that "no prophet is accepted in His

own country” (Luke 4:24), and He could do few miracles there (Mark 6:1-6). The response of the people of Nain was quite the opposite. This is a very interesting comparison. Even the Son of God can be limited in His performing of miracles depending on the faith of the people present. Why? In His mercy, He is reluctant to bring increasing judgment on them for rejecting Him.

Comparing Nain with Nazareth is a study in light versus darkness. John Chrysostom calls death and error, darkness: “For the light which our physical eyes see does not shine in darkness but apart from it; but the preaching of Christ has shown forth in the midst of prevailing error, and made it disappear. And He, by enduring death, has so overcome death that He has restored those already held by it,” (Homily V on John 1). Nazareth’s response to One who had grown up in their midst was to try to throw Him off a cliff; that’s darkness trying to overcome the Light. Nain’s response was to receive Him as a great prophet; that’s darkness disappearing when the Light arrives.

One might note that there is a difference between resuscitation and resurrection. The widow’s son in Nain was resuscitated; eventually he would die again. The same is true of other recorded cases in the Scripture: Jairus’ daughter (Luke 8:41-56), Lazarus (John 11:38-46), many saints at Jesus’ crucifixion (Matthew 27:51), Tabitha raised by Peter (Acts 9:36), Jonah raised by Elijah (1 Kings 17:17-24) and even the dead man who touched Elisha’s bones (2 Kings 13:20-21).

The resurrection of the Son of God was different from all these. He rose, never to die again (Romans 6:9). His appearance in His resurrected body looked different in some way, yet He was still recognizable (John 21:12). His body was still flesh and bones, and He ate food in their presence (Luke 24:39-43). Yet His resurrected body passed through solid walls and appeared to His disciples when they were huddled behind locked doors (John 20:19).

Those who are raised by the Son of God at the Second Coming will be like Him. There will be a transfiguration where “the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matthew 13:43, Daniel 12:3). These will never die again either “but have passed from death to life (John 5:24). May we all be found worthy of this resurrection and thus avoid the second death (Revelation 20:14).

# THE TRAINING OF PAUL

October 10, 2010  
20th Sunday after Pentecost  
Revision D

## EPISTLE: Galatians 1:11-19

Today's Epistle lesson is also used in the Eastern lectionary for the 20th Sunday after Pentecost. In the West, the Epistle text is sometimes used for the 5th Sunday of Trinity.

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Today's Epistle lesson is also used in the Eastern lectionary for the 20th Sunday after Pentecost. In the West, the Epistle text is sometimes used for the 5th Sunday of Trinity.

The subject of today's Epistle is the early life of the Apostle Paul between his conversion and the beginning of his First Missionary Journey where the Church in Antioch sent him out. During this time, Paul also had a "flight to Egypt" experience where he had to escape from a garrison of soldiers (about 400 men, Acts 21:31, 23:23).

The context of the Epistle lesson is just how the Apostle Paul came to be an Apostle and how he got to know what he knew. To explain this, we need to go beyond just the Epistle text and cover Paul's life prior to 45 AD.

### Some Dates as References

Paul's life as an Apostle began in 45 AD when Barnabas went to Tarsus to get him and brought him to Antioch. Paul and Barnabas then taught in the Church in Antioch for a year (Acts 11:25-26) before being sent out by the Church on their First Missionary Journey (Acts 13:1-4) in about 46 AD. Upon their return, they went up to Jerusalem for the Council of Jerusalem in 48 AD (Acts 15, Galatians 2:1-10).

There are three places in Paul's epistles that give us some dates prior to 45 AD. Two of them involve the context of the Epistle lesson:

- Galatians 2:1 - Paul's conversion occurred 14 years before the Council of Jerusalem or 34 AD<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The context is his going up to Jerusalem. He didn't go up to Jerusalem immediately following his conversion (Galatians 1:17), but he did three years later (Galatians 1:18) and 14 years later (Galatians 2:1).

- Galatians 1:18 - Paul went to see Peter and James in Jerusalem 3 years after his conversion or 37 AD
- 2 Corinthians 12:2 - Paul had a vision of heaven 14 years prior to writing 2 Corinthians. Since 2 Corinthians was written in 55 AD, his vision occurred in 41 AD

Let us look at these periods in the life of the Apostle Paul more closely.

### **Birth to 34 AD**

Paul was born in Tarsus of Cilicia probably about 2 AD and was a Pharisee along with his father (Acts 23:3, 23:6). His father was a Roman citizen, and thus Paul was also (Acts 22:27-28). As was customary, all Jewish boys learned a trade as part of their education. Paul's trade was tent making (Acts 18:1-3); this would prove very helpful later on (Acts 20:32-35, 1 Corinthians 9:6-12). Paul continued his education in Jerusalem under Gamaliel, the most respected Rabbi of that day (Acts 22:3, 5:34). This higher education usually began about age 13 for Jewish boys where some type of formal education usually began at age 6. Paul was an excellent student and advanced beyond many of his contemporaries, being "exceedingly zealous for the traditions of his fathers" (Galatians 1:14). In the late 20's AD, it is possible that Paul came with other Pharisees to be baptized by John the Baptist. John refused to baptize the Pharisees (Luke 7:30) and called them a brood of vipers (Matthew 3:7).

In 30 AD, when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, Paul began to persecute the Church. Paul may have been a junior member of the Sanhedrin; he mentions that he cast his vote in favor of putting some Christians to death (Acts 26:10). In 31 AD (almost a year after Pentecost), Paul was present at the stoning of Stephen (Acts 22:19-20, Acts 7:59-8:3).

The martyrdom of Stephen began as a dispute with the Synagogue of the Freedmen (people from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia and Asia). They were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which Stephen spoke (Acts 6:9-10). Since Paul was from Cilicia, he may have been personally involved in this dispute. According to tradition<sup>2</sup>, Paul was also a relative of Stephen.

For the next three years, Paul "persecuted the Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women" (Acts 22:4). He "punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, he persecuted them even to foreign cities" (Acts 26:11).

John Chrysostom pointed out<sup>3</sup> some interesting contrasts in the life of the Apostle Paul. Paul persecuted the Church out of ignorance (1 Timothy 1:13), but yet he was extremely knowledgeable in the Law. The Jewish leaders persecuted the Christians out of love for power, but Paul did it out of zeal for doctrine. Paul's teacher, Gamaliel, was not like the other Jewish leaders ( ), and does not seem to have a love for power like them; perhaps he instilled this in Paul. Paul was given mercy because of his ignorance; the other Jewish leaders were not given mercy because they did things willfully.

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<sup>2</sup> Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, December 27.

<sup>3</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Timothy, III, v. 13.

“‘But I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief’. Why then did other Jews not obtain mercy? Because what they did, they didn’t do ignorantly, but willfully, well knowing what they did. For this we have the testimony of John, ‘Many of the Jews believed on Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him. They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God’ (John 12:43). And Christ again said to them, ‘How can you believe, who receive honor one of another’ (John 5:44)? The parents of the blind man ‘said these things for fear of the Jews, lest they should be put out of the synagogue’ (John 9:22). The Jews themselves said, ‘Perceive you how we avail nothing? Behold, the world is gone after Him’ (John 12:19). Thus their love of power was everywhere in their way. When they admitted that no one can forgive sins but God only, and Christ immediately did that very thing, which they had confessed to be a sign of divinity, this could not be a case of ignorance. But where was Paul then? Perhaps one should say he was sitting at the feet of Gamaliel, and took no part with the multitude who conspired against Jesus. For Gamaliel does not appear to have been an ambitious man. Then how is it that afterwards Paul was found joining with the multitude? He saw the doctrine growing, and on the point of prevailing, and being generally embraced. For in the lifetime of Christ, the disciples consorted with Him, and afterwards with their teachers, but when they were completely separated, Paul did not act as the other Jews did, from the love of power, but from zeal. For what was the motive of his journey to Damascus? He thought the doctrine was pernicious, and was afraid that the preaching of it would spread everywhere. But with the Jews it was no concern for the multitude, but the love of power, that influenced their actions. Hence they say, ‘The Romans will come and take away both our place and nation’ (John 11:48). What fear was this that agitated them, but that of man? But it is worthy of inquiry, how one so skillful in the Law as Paul could be ignorant? It is he who says, ‘which He had promised before by His holy prophets’ (Romans 1:2). How is it then that you know not, you who are zealous of the Law of their fathers, who were brought up at the feet of Gamaliel? Yet those who spent their days on lakes and rivers, and the publicans, have embraced the Gospel, while those that studied the Law are persecuting it! It is for this he condemns himself, saying, ‘I am not fit to be called an Apostle’ (1 Corinthians 15:9). It is for this he confesses his ignorance, which was produced by unbelief. For this reason, he says, he obtained ‘mercy’ (1 Timothy 2:16). What then does he mean when he says, ‘He counted me faithful?’ (1 Timothy 1:12) He would give up no right of his Master’s; even his own part he ascribed to Him, and assumed nothing to himself, nor claimed for his own the glory which was due to God. Hence in another place we find him exclaiming, ‘Sirs, why do you these things to us? We also are men of like passions with you’ (Acts 14:15). So again, ‘He counted me faithful’. And again, ‘I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me’ (1 Corinthians 15:10). And again, ‘It is He that works in us both to will and to do’ (Philippians 2:13). In acknowledging that he ‘obtained mercy’, he admits that he deserved punishment, since mercy is for such. And again in another place he says of the Jews, ‘Blindness in part is happened to Israel’” (Romans 11:25).

## **Paul's Conversion**

Armed with letters from the high priest to the synagogues of Damascus (Acts 9:1-2), Paul headed north to seek out Christians that had scattered because of his persecution (Acts 8:4). On the road to Damascus, Paul met the Lord and was struck blind (Acts 9:3-8). In that encounter, the Lord told Paul to go into the city of Damascus where he would be told what to do. The Lord also told Paul that He would send him to the Gentiles that they also might have an inheritance among the faithful (Acts 26:16-18).

Meanwhile in Damascus, the Apostle Ananias also had a vision (Acts 9:10-12). Ananias was one of the original Seventy and was one of the people Paul was looking for, and Ananias knew it (Acts 9:13-14). The Lord told Ananias that Paul was coming and that:

- Paul had been told that a man named Ananias would lay hands on him to restore his sight (Acts 9:12).
- Paul would evangelize the Gentiles and proclaim Christ to kings and to Israel (Acts 9:15).
- The Lord would show Paul how much he needed to suffer for the Lord's Name's sake (Acts 9:16).

Ananias went right away to the house on the street called Straight where Paul was staying and laid hands on him, restored his sight and baptized him. Located at this address today is the Patriarchate of the Church of Antioch.

## **34 AD to 37 AD**

Paul spent some days with the disciples of Damascus after his baptism (Acts 9:19-20). Undoubtedly, Ananias and Paul talked about their visions: that Paul was a chosen vessel to evangelize the Gentiles and would suffer a lot. In our Epistle reading, Paul stated that he did not immediately confer with flesh and blood (Galatians 1:16), but he went to Arabia for a while (Galatians 1:17). The implication is that he spent the greater part of three years (34-37 AD) in Arabia (Galatians 1:18). See Figure 1 for a map of Paul's movement in and around Damascus and Arabia.

To a Jew in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century "Arabia" did not necessarily mean the entire Arabian Peninsula. Josephus wrote that Arabia could be seen to the East from a tower in Jerusalem. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century, the kingdom of Nabatea was established as generally to the East of Palestine. This area was generally referred to as Arabia by residents of Palestine (see map). Note that Nabatea includes both the area surrounding Damascus and the area of Decapolis evangelized by the healed demoniacs in Mark 5:20 (see also Matthew 8:28).

The politics of this area was somewhat in turmoil at the time of Paul's conversion. From an article<sup>4</sup> in Bible Review that gives a historical perspective to Nabatea:

“Although the mother of Herod the Great came from an eminent Nabatean family, he later fought the Nabateans in a war that he won only after suffering heavy losses. The Nabateans, in return, enthusiastically provided auxiliary troops

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<sup>4</sup> Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "What Was Paul Doing in Arabia?" Bible Review, October 1994

to aid the Roman governor of Syria in brutally suppressing the Jewish revolt that followed Herod's death" (about 4 BC).

"In order to calm the tensions between the two peoples, one of Herod's sons, Herod Antipas, married the daughter of the Nabatean king, Aretas IV. However, in about 23 AD he divorced her in order to marry Herodias, the wife of his half-brother Philip. John the Baptist criticized this marriage, as reported both by Josephus and the Gospels, with the result that John was imprisoned and then beheaded (Matthew 14:3-12; Mark 6:17-29, Luke 4:19-20). Using a disputed border as an excuse, the Nabatean king attacked Galilee to avenge the insult to his daughter."

"The Nabatean king knew from experience that Rome had little patience with warlike actions between the client kings who guarded the eastern frontier of the empire. He thus had every reason to feel anxious not only about Jewish reaction, but about Roman reaction to his attack on Galilee. The Roman emperor was perfectly capable of reacting quickly and decisively. All he had to do was to give an order to the governor of Syria, who had four legions at his disposition."

Just as the Nabatean King Aretas was expecting the reaction from Rome, Paul [a Jew, a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee] went to Arabia.

Prior to leaving for Arabia, Paul had begun to preach Christ in the synagogues of Damascus (Acts 9:20). Those who heard him were amazed since they knew that Paul tried to destroy Christians in Jerusalem, and had come to Damascus to do the same (Acts 9:21-22). After his return to Damascus from Arabia, the amazement and consternation turned into a murder plot against Paul. The Jews hatched the plot (Acts 9:24) and got the governor of Damascus under King Aretas to go along (2 Corinthians 11:32). With an Ethnarch guarding the city looking for Paul, the Christians let Paul down in a basket through a window in the city wall (Acts 9:25, 2 Corinthians 11:32-33) and he escaped, heading for Jerusalem.

The Twelve had divided the world up into different regions, and then they drew lots to see who would go where. The Apostle John had drawn the region of Asia Minor<sup>5</sup>, but he couldn't go there until after the death of the Virgin Mary, since the Lord had directed him to care for her (John 19:25-27). On Paul's missionary journeys, he filled in for John in Asia Minor until John could get there. Paul did something similar during his first three years as a believer in Arabia. Timon, of the Seventy and of the first seven deacons, was later Bishop of Bostra in Arabia. Paul laid the groundwork for Timon. John Chrysostom noted<sup>6</sup> Paul's fervent, yet extremely humble, character, as he began his life as an Apostle. He desired to go to places that the Twelve and the Seventy hadn't taken up the preaching of the Word yet.

"Paul was a fervent soul! He desired to go to regions not yet cultivated, which were in a wild state. Had he remained with the Apostles, since he had nothing to learn, his preaching would have been limited, for they needed to spread the Word everywhere. Thus this blessed man, fervent in spirit, undertook to teach wild barbarians, choosing a life full of battle and labor. He said, 'I went into Arabia', and added, 'and again I returned to Damascus' (Galatians 1:17). Observe his humility; he doesn't speak of his successes, or whom or the many he

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<sup>5</sup> We can see this from Revelation 2 and 3, where John addresses some of the Churches in this region.

<sup>6</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Galatians, Chapter 1, v. 17

instructed. Yet such was his zeal, immediately after his baptism, that he confounded the Jews, and so exasperated them, that they and the Greeks lay in wait for him to kill him. This would not have been the case, had he not greatly added to the numbers of the faithful. Since the Jews were defeated in doctrine, they resorted to murder, which was a clear sign of Paul's superiority. But Christ did not allow him to be put to death, preserving him for his mission. Of these successes, however, Paul says nothing. In all his writings, his motive is not ambition, nor to be honored more highly than the Apostles, nor because he is embarrassed at being taken lightly. He calls himself, 'one born<sup>7</sup> out of due time', and, 'the first of sinners', and 'the last of the Apostles', and, 'not fit to be called an Apostle' (1 Corinthians 15:8). The one who said this had labored more than all of them; which is real humility. For he, who is conscious of no excellence, and speaks humbly of himself, is candid but not humble; but for Paul to say so after such accomplishments, is to be practiced in self-control."

"What great things did he achieve in the city of Damascus? He tells us that the governor<sup>8</sup> under Aretas the king set guards about the whole city, hoping to trap this blessed man. This is a proof of the strongest kind that he was violently persecuted by the Jews. He says nothing of this, but, mentioning his arrival and departure, is silent concerning the events which occurred, nor would he have mentioned them (2 Corinthians 11:32) had not circumstances required it."

"He said that after three years he went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas' (Galatians 1:18). What can be lowlier than such a soul? After such successes, lacking nothing of Peter, not even his assent, but being of equal dignity with him, he went to him as his elder and superior. The only object of this journey was to visit Peter; thus he pays due respect to the Apostles, and regards himself as not even their equal. Which is plain from this journey, for Paul visited Peter for the same reason many of our brethren today visit with holy men. Or rather by a humbler feeling, for today they do so for their own benefit, but Paul, not for his own instruction or correction, but merely for the sake of honoring Peter by his presence. He says, 'to visit Peter'; he does not say to see (Greek: *ideio*), but to inquire about, (Greek: *istoresai*) a word, which those, who seek to become acquainted with great and splendid cities, apply to themselves. Worthy of such trouble did he consider the very sight of Peter. Paul did this again on his arrival at Jerusalem, after having converted many Gentiles; having reformed and brought to Christ Pamphylia, Lycaonia, Cilicia, and all nations in that quarter of the world, he first addressed himself with great humility to James, as to his elder and superior (Acts 21:17-19). Next he submitted to his counsel, and that counsel contrary to this Epistle. 'You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those which have believed; therefore shave your head, and purify yourself' (Acts 21:20-24). Accordingly he shaved his head, and observed all the Jewish ceremonies; for where the Gospel was not affected, he was the humblest of all men. But where by such humility he saw any injured, he gave it up, for that was no longer being humble, but that could destroy the disciples."

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<sup>7</sup> The Greek word *ektroma* means literally "an abortion".

<sup>8</sup> The "governor" under Aretas was an Ethnarch. Archelaus (Matthew 2:22) was an Ethnarch, which is a higher position than a Tetrarch, such as Herod Antipas, Philip and Lysanias (Luke 3:1). Thus it was a higher ranking official who was after Paul, trying to kill him, than was after Peter (Acts 12:3).

Chrysostom continued<sup>9</sup> to say that Paul, in his humility, referred to himself as “less than the least of all the saints” (Ephesians 3:8). In spite being a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man (1 Timothy 1:13), he was given the grace to communicate the unsearchable riches of Christ to the Gentiles. Paul didn’t call himself the least of the Apostles, but less than the least of all the saints. In his humility, Paul mourned his former sins, even though they were blotted out.

### **37 AD to 45 AD**

Arriving in Jerusalem, Paul met with Peter and James, the Lord’s brother (Galatians 1:18-19). This was his first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion and he only stayed 15 days. At first, the disciples in Jerusalem were afraid of him and didn’t believe he was a disciple. But Barnabas, who had also studied<sup>10</sup> under Gamaliel, took Paul in, introduced him to the Apostles, and declared to them concerning Paul’s conversion (Acts 9:26-27). When Paul spoke boldly in the Name of Jesus and disputed with the Greek-speaking Jews, they also hatched a murder plot (Acts 9:29). This is why he only stayed 15 days in Jerusalem. When the brethren in Jerusalem found out about the murder plot, they hustled Paul down to Caesarea and off to his hometown of Tarsus (Acts 9:30). With Paul out of the way and no longer organizing the persecution of the Church, Judea, Galilee and Samaria had peace and multiplied considerably (Acts 9:31). This peace lasted until about 44 AD when Herod (Agrippa) killed James, the son of Zebedee, and tried to kill Peter also (Acts 12:1ff) because it pleased the Jews.

Before leaving Jerusalem, Paul had another vision from the Lord that confirmed the one he had at his conversion (Acts 22:17-21). In this vision, which occurred while Paul was praying in the Temple, the Lord warned him to get out of Jerusalem quickly because:

- They will not receive your testimony in Jerusalem
- The Lord would send him far from there to the Gentiles.

Paul spent the next 8 years in Tarsus (37 AD - 45 AD). During this time Paul had at least one other vision, this one greater than all the others. This vision occurred in 41 AD (14 years before the writing of 2 Corinthians in 55 AD). In this vision Paul was caught up into Paradise and heard things that he couldn’t even speak about (2 Corinthians 12:2-4). This vision prepared Paul for his role as an Apostle since the Churches on earth are modeled after the Assembly of the Saints in heaven just as the Tabernacle in the wilderness was modeled after the Tabernacle in heaven (Exodus 25:9, 20; 26:30, Acts 7:44, Hebrews 8:5).

There was other foundational work that Paul did while he was in Tarsus that we don’t notice until later. A number of the members of Paul’s immediate family either came to know the Lord; or if they already did, the breach between them and Paul was repaired. According to tradition<sup>11</sup>, Stephen, one of the first seven deacons was a kinsman of Paul and therefore some repair work on family relationships may have been necessary.

Some of Paul’s kinsmen that are mentioned in the Scriptures are Herodion (Romans 16:11), Andronicus and Junius (Romans 16:7), Lucius, Jason and Sosipater (Romans 16:21).

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<sup>9</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, VII.

<sup>10</sup> Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, June 11.

<sup>11</sup> Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, December 27.

Herodian, Andronicus<sup>12</sup>, both members of the Seventy, and Junius were in Rome in 55 AD when Paul wrote Romans. According to tradition, they had been sent there by Peter and Paul to help get the Church started, and Paul addressed them by name in Romans 16. Herodian was later Bishop of Neoparthia and Andronicus was later Bishop of Pannonia (North of Dalmatia).

When Paul wrote Romans, he was in the middle of his Third Missionary Journey and was staying in Corinth at the time. With him in Corinth were Lucius, Jason and Sosipater (Romans 16:21), all members of the original Seventy and now doing apostolic work with Paul. Jason is also mentioned as working with Paul on Paul's Second Missionary Journey in Thessalonica (Acts 17:5-7). According to tradition<sup>13</sup>, Jason was later Bishop of Tarsus; Lucius, Bishop of Laodicea; and Sosipater, Bishop of Iconium. Jason and Sosipater later teamed up as apostles and evangelized the Island of Corfu (West coast of Greece).

After spending about 8 years in Tarsus, Barnabas arrived in 45 AD looking for Paul (Acts 11:25). The Church in Antioch had gotten started recently by some men from Cyprus and Cyrene (Acts 11:20). The men we know from the Scripture that were from Cyprus are Barnabas (Acts 4:36) and his brother Aristobulus (Romans 16:10). According to tradition<sup>14</sup>, Aristobulus was also Peter's father-in-law and later Bishop of Britain. Those from Cyrene were Simon of Cyrene and his sons Rufus and Alexander (Mark 15:21). Simon was pressed into service to carry Jesus' cross at the crucifixion. Rufus worked with the apostle Paul, was in Rome when Paul wrote Romans (Romans 16:13), and was later Bishop of Thebes<sup>15</sup>. Simon's other son, Alexander, became a traitor to the Faith and was largely responsible for Paul's martyrdom (2 Timothy 4:14, 1 Timothy 1:20). Another man from Cyrene was Lucius of Cyrene who was one of the prophets and teachers at the Church of Antioch (Acts 13:1).

When Barnabas found Paul in Tarsus, he brought him to Antioch (Acts 11:26). Along with the others, Paul and Barnabas taught at the Church in Antioch for a year before they went off on their First Missionary Journey. During this one-year period, Agabus, a prophet and one of the Seventy, predicted that there would be a great famine. During the famine, Barnabas and Paul hand-carried alms from Antioch to the Church in Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30).

As one can see from this brief history of the Apostle Paul's early life, there was considerable preparation and training he went through prior to his being sent out as an Apostle. He didn't have the opportunity to follow Jesus for three years like the Twelve and the Seventy. However, the Lord did speak to him personally and specifically in directing him what to do. When he said in Galatians, "I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood" (Galatians 1:16) following his conversion, he is not putting down the Twelve, nor is he saying one shouldn't confer with one's elders. He is simply referring to the visions he had that were necessary for him to be able to do what he had done.

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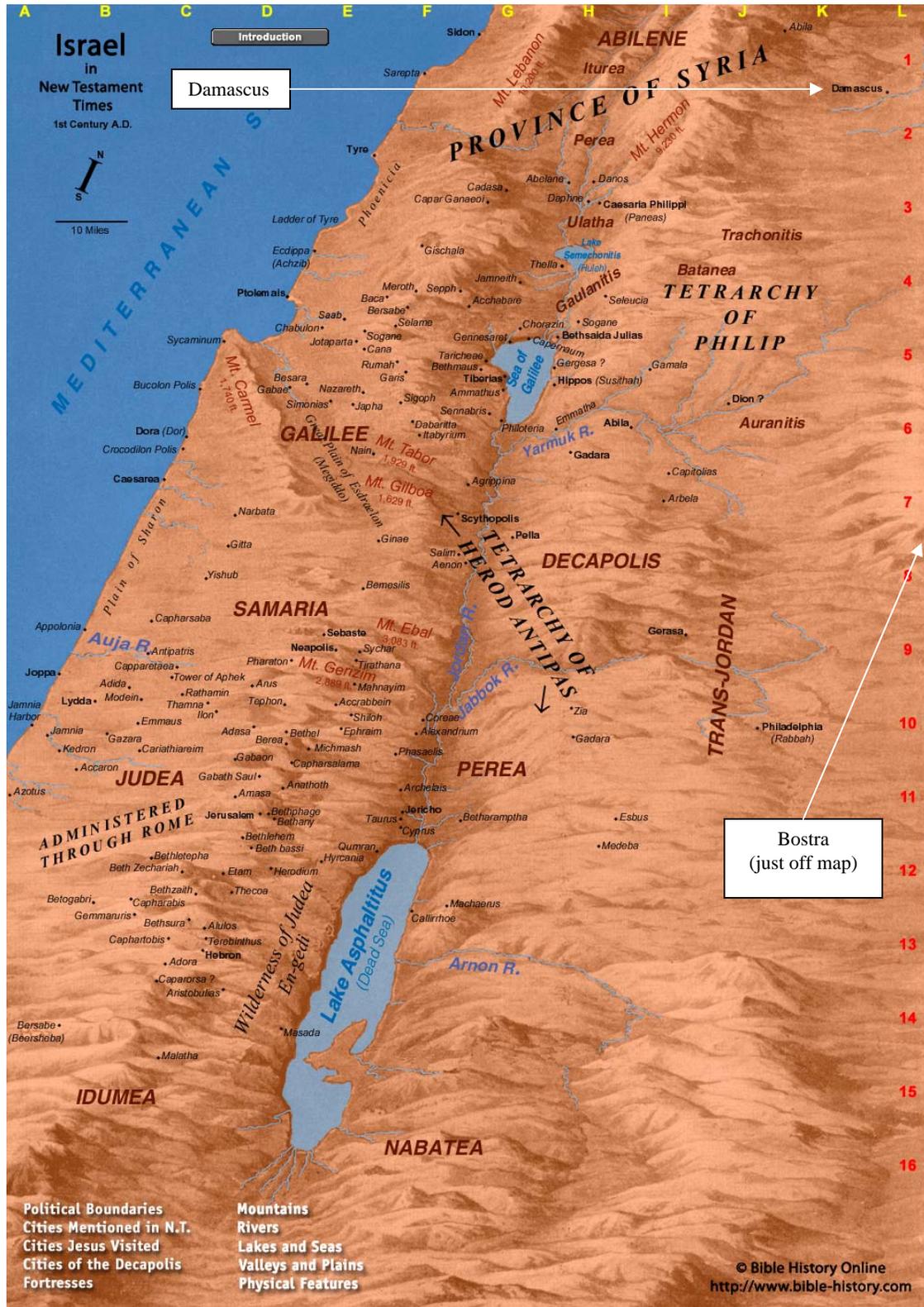
<sup>12</sup> Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, April 8, May 17.

<sup>13</sup> Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, April 28, September 10.

<sup>14</sup> Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, March 16.

<sup>15</sup> Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, April 8.

**Figure 1**  
**Map<sup>16</sup> of Paul's Movement Around Arabia and Damascus**



<sup>16</sup> © Bible History Online <http://www.bible-history.com>. Other maps also available.