Bible Study Exploration: Week #2
Exploring Apostle Paul's Five Missionary Journeys

Apostle Paul's First Missionary Journey Map
Footnotes from Paul’s First Missionary Journey

The Apostle Paul and Barnabas are considered prophets (teachers) in the early New Testament church like several others. The brethren of Antioch in Syria lay hands on both men and ordain them as apostles in the late Spring of 44 A.D.

While they (the church in Syrian Antioch) were serving the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said to them, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul, to do the work to which I have called them.' (Acts 13)

From Antioch Paul, Barnabas and John (surnamed Mark) begin a missionary journey (Acts 13:4 - 52, 14:1 - 25). It is the first such extensive evangelistic tour taken by Paul. The evangelism team travels to Seleucia then sails to Salamis, the principle city and seaport of the island of Cyprus.

Why did Paul choose, as the first place he would evangelize on his initial missionary journey, to travel to the island of Cyprus? While the Bible is silent regarding the exact reasons why Cyprus was chosen, we can understand why it was visited first based on the following facts.

1. The island, the third largest in the Mediterranean, was fairly close to the mainland. At its closes point Cyprus is only about 63 miles (101 kilometers) from mainland Syria.

2. Cyprus’ proximity to the mainland made it a good migration destination for Jews, who had probably begun to settle there even before the time of Alexander the Great. When Paul visited he was able to preach the gospel in not just one but several synagogues (Acts 13:5).

3. The island was the home of fellow traveling companion and apostle Barnabas (Acts 4:36). It may have also been a former residence of John Mark, who was a cousin of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10).

Paul and company cross the island by foot and arrive at Paphos. While in Paphos the island’s Roman governor requests Barnabas and Paul meet with him so that he can personally hear the word of God. Accompanying the governor to the meeting is a sorcerer and false prophet known as Elymas the magician.

Acts Ch 13: 9-12  Saul's name now is known as Paul

But Saul, also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, “You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? And now listen—the hand of the Lord is against you, and you will be blind for a while, unable to see the sun.” Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he went about groping for someone to lead him by the hand. When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was astonished at the teaching about the Lord.
Footnotes from Paul's Second Missionary Journey

Paul's second missionary journey began in the spring of 49 A.D. when he set out from Antioch, Syria, to visit the churches he had established in Asia Minor on his first journey.

Some time later (after staying in the city of Antioch for about three years) Paul said to Barnabas, 'Let us go back and visit the believers in every town where we preached . . . ' (Acts 15)

During this second journey Paul was inspired to take the gospel to Europe for the first time. This second missionary journey ended forty months later with Paul's arrival at Jerusalem during the fall festival season in 52 A.D. This journey is covered from close to the end of Acts 15 to Acts 18:21 - 22.

The New Testament also reveals that the Corinthian fellowship was established by the apostle Paul during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-11; 1Corinthians 2:1 - 2).
Three years after establishing the church Paul wrote an epistle to the Corinthians that we now refer to as 1 Corinthians. This was, however, not the first epistle Paul had sent to them. We know there was at least one previous epistle because of Paul's comments in 1 Corinthians 5:9.

This letter, apparently a relatively short one, was written to address the corrupting influence that the Corinthian believers were being exposed to by permitting a fornicator to assemble with the church (see 1 Corinthians 5). The fornicator was apparently a young man who was cohabiting with his father's wife (his stepmother).

Paul visited Ephesus for a short time on the return leg of his second missionary journey, planting a fellowship at Ephesus and leaving Aquila and Priscilla in the city to serve the brethren there (Acts 18:19). Some of these brethren may have been believers since Pentecost of 30 A.D.

Paul stayed on with the believers in Corinth for many days, then left them and sailed off with Priscilla and Aquila for Syria . . . 19 They arrived in Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. (Acts 18).
Footnotes from Paul’s Third Missionary Journey

Priscilla and her husband Aquila attend an Ephesians synagogue and hear a man named Apollos. Born a Jew in Alexandria, he had a special talent as an eloquent and forcible speaker. He was likely trained in the rhetorical schools near the city of his birth. The scriptures state that he was "mighty" in regard to understanding and explaining the Scriptures. He was also very zealous for God and for preaching the truth. Although no doubt eloquent in speech, Apollos had a major flaw that was not necessarily of his own making. His deficiency was that he only knew about Jesus through the preaching of John the Baptist (see Acts 19).

Aquila and Priscilla decide to help Apollos by giving him more complete information regarding the Messiah. They introduce themselves to him and are soon filling in all his gaps of knowledge in the "way of the Lord."
Apostle Paul’s Five Missionary Journeys

Apollos, after coming to a much broader understanding of the gospel message, expands his service into Achaia. The brethren in Ephesus even write a recommendation letter encouraging other disciples to accept and listen to what Apollos has to say. Wherever he goes he preaches about the Messiah. His ability to explain and expound the scriptures is such that the Jews cannot counter his arguments that, indeed, Jesus is the Messiah of man.

The apostle Paul ultimately meets Apollos and considers him a fellow preacher of the gospel. The next few times Apollos is mentioned in the Bible is in the book of 1Corinthians. In 1Corinthians 1 Paul chastises the Corinthian church for their party spirit of aligning themselves behind particular preachers like him, Apollos or Peter (verse 11). He reiterates his point regarding their immature behavior of ‘playing favorites’ by again mentioning Apollos (1Corinthians 3:4). In his closing remarks to the church at Corinth, Paul states that his fellow laborer is not all that eager to revisit them (no doubt due to the party spirit he saw for himself when he visited - see Acts 19:1).

Now, about brother Apollos. I have often encouraged him to visit you with the other believers, but he is not completely convinced that he should go at this time. (1Corinthians 16:12)
Apostle Paul's Fourth Missionary Journey

After spending roughly two years in Caesarea's prison Paul requests, in 60 A.D., that Roman Governor Festus send him to Rome to have the case against him heard by Caesar. Festus obliges Paul and soon a Roman soldier named Julius is charged with taking him to the empire's capital. Julius befriends Paul and allows him certain liberties such as seeing friends in Sidon.

They delivered up Paul and certain other prisoners to a centurion named Julius, who was of the band of Augustus . . . And Julius treated Paul kindly, allowing him to go to his friends to refresh himself. (Acts 27)

The first part of Paul's journey to Rome is somewhat uneventful. After boarding another ship in Myra bound for Italy, however, the trip begins to take a turn for the worse. The ship leaves Myra with 276 total people aboard her (Acts 27:37). Since strong winds forbid the vessel from sailing in a westerly direction directly toward Italy, it sails South toward the shelter of the island of Crete.

. . . so we sailed down the sheltered side of the island of Crete, passing by Cape Salmone. 8 We kept close to the coast and with great difficulty came to a place called Safe Harbors (called 'Fair Havens' in other translations), not far from the town of Lasea. (verses 7-8)

The ship docks for a short period in Fair Havens until it is after the holy day known as the Day of Atonement ('the annual fast day'), which fell in 60 A.D. on September 24th.
The optimal period for navigating the Mediterranean Sea was, in the first century, from April to October. Because of the winds, stormy weather and inability to see either the sun or moon for long periods, most ships that plied the sea docked for the winter. Paul, sensing that those operating the ship wanted to continue the voyage during a notoriously dangerous time of the year, warns them not to leave port (Acts 27:9-10). His warnings go unheeded and the ship leaves port, hoping to reach the far western side of Crete and the harbor of Phoenix.

Paul’s ship never makes it to Phoenix. Strong winds and a stormy sea out of the North and North-East blow the vessel away from Crete. Unable to control the ship she is allowed to go wherever the wind takes her. Since it was impossible to keep the ship headed into the wind, we gave up trying and let it be carried along by the wind. (verse 15)

It is only after wandering the sea aimlessly for two weeks that the ship finally runs aground near the island of Malta. The vessel is very soon abandoned. All those on the ship make it safely to the island, in fulfillment of what God told Paul (Acts 27:22-25).
Footnotes from Paul's Fifth Missionary Journey

After Paul was freed from a Roman prison he traveled to the Island of Crete, where he met his fellow evangelist Titus. Paul was quite familiar with the island, having landed on it during his fourth missionary journey. According to Adam Clarke's Commentary, the island was originally settled by people from Palestine. Modern Crete, the largest of Greece's nearly 2,000 islands, has a total area of roughly 3,200 square miles.

Paul found that the believers in the churches of Crete were not organized in a manner that would promote spiritual growth. The Cretan brethren were sorely lacking instruction for conducting themselves in their daily lives as well as their Sabbath assemblies. Unlike the churches in the Gentile regions where Paul had preached, the churches of Crete had no elders to serve as overseers and teachers.

Paul set about to resolve this problem. Paul and Titus traveled from city to city, establishing elders in each local fellowship. Those who were chosen to serve as elders were required to meet the qualifications that were set forth by Paul.
Paul did not remain in Crete long enough to complete the process in every city. After leaving he wrote a letter to Titus (the book we call Titus in the Bible). In this letter, Paul exhorts Titus to be diligent to complete the task they had begun.

I left you in Crete, so that you could put in order the things that still needed doing and appoint church elders in every town (Titus 1:5).

Titus was to see that elders were appointed, or established, in those fellowships that had none. It should be noted that Paul did not confer upon Titus authority to unilaterally choose elders and ordain them by the laying on of hands. The Greek text does not support this radical interpretation and imposition of ecclesiastical tradition. Paul’s instructions to Titus were not a directive to set up a hierarchical ministry. Rather, as Paul and Barnabas ordained [appointed] elders (Acts 14:23) who had been chosen by the people, so Titus was to do, keeping in mind the proper qualifications.

The establishing of elders in the churches of Crete was completed by Titus exactly as Paul had directed.

This journey that took Paul to Spain is found in Romans Chapter 15: 25-28. This is the only reference to Paul's journey to Spain.

Summary of Paul's Missionary Journeys

Even Paul's fiercest enemies could not deny his extraordinary energy. It is estimated that he traveled 20,000 km and travelled through 21st Century states of Turkey, Greece, Lebanon, Israel, Italy Malta, Cyprus and Spain.

DVD - Apostle Paul and the Earliest Churches

This brief, 48-minute film contains an archaeological treasury: mosaics, frescoes, statues, amphitheaters, agoras, temples, and more. Yet Apostle Paul and the Earliest Churches is more than a historical survey; this production's reenactment of the miracles Paul performed, the difficulties Paul encountered, and the persecution Paul faced beckons the viewer to experience with the Apostle himself the birth of the Christian Church.