

EXECUTED

TO SUPPRESS HIS MESSAGE



Who Was the Apostle Paul?

D. A. Taylor

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Introduction

Most Christians have a great deal of respect for the apostle Paul. And for this reason, I quote many of his teachings in my books. But I also feel a responsibility to share what biblical scholars and historians know about Paul.

Students of the Bible have long known that many of Paul's writings contradict the teachings of Christ. For example: Jesus taught the gospel (which means "good news") of the Kingdom of God, while Paul taught a gospel about God's grace. Then in John 10:27. Jesus said "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." But in I Corinthians 4:16, I Corinthians 11:1, and Philippians 3:17, Paul declared that *he* is the person Christians should follow. Paul also appointed preachers to rule over and teach God's people, even though Jesus explicitly forbid this practice (Matthew 20:25-26). And there are several other areas of Christian doctrine where Paul disagreed with Jesus.

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## 1 — Relevant Biblical History

Most historians agree that Paul died in AD 64. So all of Paul's letters to churches and Christian brethren had to be written before this date. And assuming that God gave Paul the amazing assignment of canceling out the gospel of the Kingdom of God and then replacing it with a new gospel of grace, we should expect that God would preserve Paul's writings for the New Testament Church. Yet not a single one of Paul's original letters has ever been discovered. In fact, the earliest known copies of Paul's writings are found in what is known as Papyrus 46, which according to biblical historians, was written between 180 to 220 CE – at least 116 years after Paul's death.

So what happened to all of Paul's writings? And where are the numerous copies that were produced during this 116 year period? And even more importantly, how is it that Paul's writings suddenly became available 116 years after he wrote them?

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2 — How the World Acquired Paul's Writings

It seems reasonable to ask how the only copies of Paul's writings ended up in Papyrus 46. And it turns out that around 120 CE (which is at least 60 years before Papyrus 46 was created), a Gnostic Christian named Marcion produced what he claimed were all of Paul's writings.

Let's take a moment to discuss Gnostic Christianity. Gnostics like Marcion believe there are two gods: a "good" god who is trying to save people and bring them to his world (heaven), and a "bad" god who created our earth and all the evil within it. Obviously, Gnosticism is quite a bit different than the religion of Jesus Christ. But during the early years of Christianity, the religion spread rapidly, and it presented a major competition to the Catholic Church.

Marcion's family was quite wealthy from building ocean vessels. And Marcion used his wealth to spread his Gnostic beliefs. History records how Marcion traveled to Rome during the early 2nd Century, where he gave what he claimed to be "all of Paul's writings" to the Catholic Church, along with a very large donation of money. Where and how did Marcion obtain Paul's writings, 60 years after Paul's death? No one knows.

There is no record of why Marcion did this. And his religious beliefs were most definitely not Catholic. Some biblical scholars have suggested that Marcion was trying to corrupt Catholicism with false Christian doctrine. But the Catholics didn't see things that way. They were literally ecstatic about receiving Paul's writings, and they immediately added them to their Bible.

Why were the Catholics so interested in Paul? Probably because they contained a doctrine of "pastoral authority," which is the concept that God places certain people in authority over Christ's Church. And thanks to Marcion, the Catholics now had what they quickly labeled as "Scripture" to back up the authority of their pope, cardinals, bishops and priests (while the fact that Jesus prohibited this doctrine was conveniently swept under the rug).

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### 3 — The Emergence of Paul

Until Marcion traveled to Rome and gave Paul's letters to the Catholics, Paul was completely unknown to Christianity. And not a single one of Paul's letters dated earlier than Marcion's copies has ever been discovered.

But this sparsity of Paul's writings seems unreasonable. Paul wrote letters to nine churches and three individuals located in multiple geographical areas. And he asked some the recipients to copy his writings and send them along to churches in yet other areas. So are we to believe that all of these important letters have simply vanished?

Then there's the issue of distances. Marcion lived in Sinope, Turkey – which is over 1,400 miles from Jerusalem. While Paul's journeys to Gentile churches never came closer than 400 miles from Sinope. So how did a non-Christian ship builder, living such great distances from the places Paul visited and wrote to (in the days of foot and horse travel), come to have the only surviving copies of Paul's writings? No one has provided a reasonable answer to this question.

Some biblical scholars have argued that since Acts and II Peter reference Paul, the authors of these books must have had copies of Paul's writings. But if this is true, then why have these copies of Paul's letters also disappeared? And we still have to ask how Paul's writings managed to reach a ship builder who lived 1,400 miles from Jerusalem.

We should also note how many biblical scholars consider Acts and II Peter fraudulent writings produced by the Catholic Church – writings that may have been created to lend credibility to a fictitious apostle Paul. While the rest of the Bible, along with world history, is completely silent about the existence of a thirteenth apostle.

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4 — Questioning Paul

If you go to the Internet and search for the words “doctrines Jesus verses Paul,” you will find numerous web sites that list over twenty contradictions between the teachings of Paul and those of Jesus. The chief of these is the definition of the gospel: Jesus taught the gospel of the Kingdom of God; while Paul taught an entirely different gospel about grace – something Jesus never mentioned. In fact, within the four gospels, Jesus never even spoke the word “grace.”

Then we have the previously mentioned problems with the origins of Paul’s letters. The archaeological record is quite clear: not a single copy of Paul’s writings has been discovered or even mentioned in historical writings – until 120 years after Paul supposedly died. Instead, all the historical evidence indicates Paul’s letters were supplied by Marcion: a non-Christian Gnostic who lived at least 400 miles from the paths traveled by Paul.

These problems, along with the ones listed below, have caused several prominent biblical scholars to conclude that Paul did not exist – while other scholars have concluded the 13th apostle was solely the invention of Marcion.

Here are some of the issues that have led biblical scholars to these conclusions:

- None of Paul’s original writings have been discovered;
- There is no mention of Paul in any apostolic writing that biblical scholars consider authentic;
- Paul’s doctrines and teachings are radically differently from those of Jesus – and often contradict what the Lord taught;
- The Book of Acts states that Paul was arrested and imprisoned in Rome. But Roman records make no mention of this event;
- The early Christian author Tertullian wrote that Paul was “The second apostle of Marcion and the apostle of the heretics.”

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## 5 — Conclusion

The primary objective of my books is to share teachings of Jesus Christ that are not commonly heard in churches. And when the teachings of Paul agree with Jesus, I include what Paul wrote.

But there is a great deal of evidence suggesting that Paul never existed. And I do not believe the writings attributed to Paul can save us. Christians must remember that salvation is the product of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ – a relationship where one learns and carefully follows all of *His* teachings.

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6 — Additional Sources Addressing the Apostle Paul

“Paul and Jesus: How the Apostle Transformed Christianity” (James D. Tabor)

“The Fabricated Paul. Early Christianity In The Twilight” (Hermann Detering)

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(comments and suggestions are appreciated)

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