

EXECUTED

TO SUPPRESS HIS MESSAGE



Who Was the Apostle Paul?

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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 have a responsibility to share what historians and biblical scholars know about this man.

Students of the Bible have long known that many of Paul's writings contradict certain teachings of Jesus Christ. For example, our Lord taught a gospel (which means "good news") about the Kingdom of God; while Paul taught a gospel about grace. Then in John 10:27, Jesus said: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." And yet in I Corinthians 4:16, I Corinthians 11:1, and Philippians 3:17, Paul stated that he is the person Christians should follow and emulate.

Paul also appointed preachers to rule over and teach God's people – even though in Matthew 20:25-28, Jesus explicitly forbid this practice (see the New American Standard Bible for a more accurate translation). And there are several other areas of Christian doctrine where Paul disagreed with Jesus.

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## 1 — Relevant Biblical History

Many historians believe that Paul died in AD 64. And therefore, everything he authored had to be written before this date. So assuming that God gave Paul the amazing assignment of canceling out the Lord's gospel of the Kingdom of God – and then replacing it with a new gospel of grace – we would certainly expect that God would have would have preserved Paul's writings for the New Testament Church. And yet, not a single one of Paul's original letters has ever been found.

The earliest known copies of Paul's writings are found in a document known as Papyrus 46. And biblical scholars tell us this document was written between 175 and 220 CE, which is at least 116 years after Paul's death. What happened to all the other copies of Paul's writings produced during this 116 year period?

No one knows.

But there's a far more important question:

*Why were copies of Paul's writings suddenly available 116 years after he wrote them?*

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2 — How the World Acquired Paul's Writings

It turns out that around 120 CE (approximately 50 years before Papyrus 46 was created), a Gnostic Christian named Marcion published what he claimed to be all of Paul's writings. Gnostics like Marcion believed in two gods: a "good" god who is trying to save people and bring them to his world (heaven) – and a "bad" god who created the earth and all the evil within it. And therefore, Gnosticism was radically different from the religion of Jesus Christ. And yet, during the early years of Christianity, this religion spread rapidly and presented a major competition to the Catholic Church.

Marcion's family lived in Sinope, Turkey, which is located on the shores of the Black Sea. His family became very wealthy by building ocean vessels. And Marcion used much of his wealth to spread his Gnostic beliefs. History records how he 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. How did Marcion obtain these Pauline writings, approximately 60 years after Paul's death? History provides no record of this.

Furthermore, there is no historical record explaining why Marcion gave Paul's writings to the Catholics. And this gift was especially interesting, because Marcion's religious beliefs were definitely not Catholic. Some biblical scholars suggest that Marcion was trying to corrupt Catholicism with Pauline doctrine. But the Catholics didn't see things that way. They were literally ecstatic about receiving Paul's writings, and immediately set about to add them to their Bible.

And why were the Catholics so interested in Paul? Probably because Paul promoted the un-biblical 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 the authority of their popes, cardinals, bishops and priests – while the fact that Jesus prohibited such practices was carefully swept under the rug.

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### 3 — The Emergence of Paul

History suggests that until Marcion gave what he claimed to be 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 sparseness of Paul's writings seems quite unreasonable. We now possess copies of letters Paul wrote to nine churches and three individuals located in multiple geographical areas. While Paul asked some of these recipients to copy his writings and send them along to churches in yet other areas. And it seems unreasonable to accept that all of these original letters – along with the copies people would surely make – would have all 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 horse and foot travel), come to possess the only surviving copies of Paul's writings? No one has provided a reasonable answer to this question.

A few 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 were true, then why have these copies of Paul's letters also disappeared?

It's also interesting how many biblical scholars consider Acts and II Peter to be fraudulent writings produced by the Catholic Church – writings that may have been created to lend credibility to the existence of the apostle Paul.

While the rest of the Bible and world history remain 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 “Paul contradicts Jesus,” you will find several web sites sharing differences between the teachings of Paul and those of Jesus Christ. 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 of the Bible, Jesus is never quoted speaking the word “grace.”

Then there’s the previously mentioned problems with the origins of Paul’s letters. The archaeological record is very clear: none of Paul’s original writings have been discovered – or even mentioned in historical writings – until 120 years after Paul died. While all of the historical evidence indicates that Paul’s earliest letters were supplied by Marcion – a non-Christian Gnostic who lived over 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 even exist. While other scholars have concluded the 13th apostle was solely the invention of Marcion.

Let’s review the relevant facts:

- There is no mention of Paul in any apostolic writings that biblical scholars consider authentic;
- Paul’s doctrines and teachings are radically differently from those of Jesus. And they often contradict what our 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 writings is to share teachings of Jesus Christ that are not commonly heard in Christian churches. And when the teachings of Paul agree with Jesus, I often include what he wrote.

But all the historical evidence suggests that Paul never existed. And I do not believe the writings attributed to Paul can save us. Christians must remember that their 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

The following is quoted from “The Falsified Paul, Early Christianity in the Twilight” by Hermann Detering:

Outside of the Bible, there is no historical record of the Apostle Paul.

In Jewish writings of the first two centuries CE there is no mention of a rebellious student of Gamaliel named Paul or Saul. It is also very remarkable that the supposed student of Gamaliel, who certainly would have received instruction from him in the original Hebrew text of the Old Testament, cites passages from the Old Testament exclusively from the Greek version — as if in his life he had never learned Hebrew!

Tertullian, the church father, was not at all satisfied with the fact that the author of the Pauline letters represents himself in his letters as an apostle from early times (In this Tertullian was more critical than many New Testament critics today). Even if we do not regard by far everything that Acts tells us about the work of Paul as historical — even if one ignores his appearance before king Agrippa (Acts 25:13) or the high council in Jerusalem (Acts 22:30ff.), his marvelous release from imprisonment in Philippi (Acts 16:24ff), the uprising he caused in Ephesus (Acts 19:23ff), and the excitement he stirred up in Athens (Acts 17:18ff) — when all these elements, largely banished to the realm of legendary stories by present day scholars, are set aside, there nevertheless remains the bright reflection of an extraordinary personality who could hardly have remained unknown to a Greek or Roman writer or historian of that time.

Even if we limit our-selves to only the major letters of Paul, a person and events remain which the ancient world could not have ignored and which must also have attracted attention beyond the narrow circle of Christian churches. Where indeed do we encounter such a man, who like Paul in Ephesus was thrown to the wild beasts in the arena (1 Cor 15:23), who received “five times the forty stripes minus one” (2 Cor 11:24), who was ship-wrecked three times, adrift in the sea for a night and a day (2 Cor 11:25) — and survived all this! — who traveled from Jerusalem as far round as Illyricum [74] in order to preach the gospel and evangelize (Rom 15:122ff.), who was able to escape from Damascus in a dramatic way (2 Cor 11:32-33)...?

The figure of the apostle of the people, who is elevated in Acts to transcendent, almost divine status (Acts 14:11), obviously attracted so little notice among the

Greeks and Romans that they do not mention him with one word. In this regard, there was a number of ancient writers who could have been and must have been interested in the figure of the apostle: for example, Josephus, the Jewish-Roman historian, who is already met in connection with the question concerning the historical Jesus, who in his work *The Jewish War* relates the history and pre-history of the Jewish wars up to the fall of Masada in 73 CE and in his *Jewish Antiquities*, which appeared around 94 CE, described the history of Jews from the creation of the world until 66 CE. As already in the case of Jesus, so also with regard to Paul, Josephus, who otherwise displays the history of the Jewish people in great detail, and even somewhat garrulously, remains remarkably silent. Josephus, the friend of Romans, knows nothing about Paul, the Roman citizen, and also nothing about Saul, the zealot for “the traditions of the fathers” (Gal 1:14). The Saul known to Josephus is a relative of king Agrippa 64 and shares only the name in common with the Saul of the New Testament.

Josephus’ silence might seem strange, but it is nevertheless honest. The regretful lack of historical reports about the apostle Paul would have been easy to remedy through some insertions and interpolations. That Christians, for their part, did not succumb to this temptation might have something to do with the fact that it was easier to tolerate the absence of any kind of historical reports about the apostle than the disturbing silence that surrounded the person of Jesus by Josephus.

In addition to Josephus, one could think of a number of other ancient writers who could have referred to the apostle in one way or another: [75] Plutarch (c. 45-120 CE), who was open to all religious movements of his time, Pausanias (c. 115 CE), Aulus Gellius (2 century), Lucian (120-180 CE), to name only a few. They were all familiar with the theaters of the apostle’s activity and one or the other must have heard something about it—but they are all silent. If what follows from all this is that the figure of the apostle to the nations, who was portrayed in such radiant and gleaming colors by Christians, was fully unknown to the “nations” of the first and second centuries, a look at the Jewish sources from the first and second centuries shows that here as well nothing seems to have been known either in a positive sense about the Jew who surpassed all his contemporaries in his zeal.

However, not only the person, but also his work, namely, the letters written under the name of the apostle, are all obviously entirely unknown into the middle of the second century. As the majority of present day scholars recognize, the historical course of the Pauline letters in the first and second centuries is one

of the most obscure and puzzling chapters of New Testament research.

The elevated claim with which Paul appears in his letters in his capacity as an apostle called by God (Gal 1:1f) stands in curious contrast with the fact that the apostle seems to have been completely forgotten in the theological discussion from directly following his death until the time of Marcion. Not only were the churches supposedly founded by Paul further developed on a different, Catholic foundation, particularly strange is that the letters, to which the apostle is indebted until today for the largest part of his fame, seem to have been forgotten for almost an entire century, until we encounter them in the middle of the second century in the hands of a heretic, of all places, the heresiarch Marcion, who was excommunicated by the Catholic church in 144 CE.

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## **Information About This Book**

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