

The Apostle Paul

“The Background of the Apostle Paul”

Introduction

- Before the apostle Paul’s marvelous conversion to Christ in Acts 9, there are no hints that he would become the greatest ambassador of Jesus Christ the church has ever had.
- Paul was the chief _____ and persecutor of the Christian religion.
- Yet, Paul was not a non-religious, atheistic, God-hating man.
- Paul was a deeply _____, well-educated man of excellent upbringing.
- In this lesson, we will study the background of the apostle Paul, so that we might obtain a greater appreciation of his unique ministry.

First, let’s look at Paul’s _____.

1. Paul was a full-blooded _____, “*an Hebrew of Hebrews.*” Philippians 3:5
2. Paul was of noble stock, yet, he was an _____ man, with ungodly behavior.
3. This teaches us that it is not our human heritage that begets _____ behavior. It is our heavenly heritage, obtained through salvation, that produces genuine _____ behavior in a person.

Second, let’s look at Paul’s _____.

1. Though a pure-blooded Jew, the place Paul called home was not a city in Israel, as would be expected. Rather, it was _____, a city located in the Roman province of Cilicia. Acts 21:39
2. Paul said in Acts 21:39 that Tarsus was “*no _____ city.*” This simply means that Tarsus wasn’t your average, common, ordinary city.
 - Tarsus was an important _____ town that was a focus of _____.
 - Tarsus was a center for intellectual and religious activity.
 - Tarsus was a city in good favor with the _____ in Rome and was a “free city.” This means it had the privilege of _____-government. This resulted in Roman citizenship for those in Tarsus.
 - Paul was a citizen of a progressive, important city, yet he held no citizenship in _____.

Third, let's look at Paul's _____.

1. The _____ apostles were unlearned, uneducated men (Acts 4:13), unlike Paul, who was very well-educated.
2. Paul received an extensive education:
 - His _____ education was obtained in Tarsus, one of the world's best learning centers in his day.
 - His _____ education was obtained in Jerusalem under Gamaliel. This was the best religious education obtainable in those days.
Acts 22:3
 - He was also taught the practical trade of _____. Acts 18:3
3. But education failed miserably to give Paul the right answers to the most _____ questions in life. Instead of pointing him to Christ, it drove him away from Christ.
4. Notice Paul's assessment of all this in Philippians 3:7-8.

Fourth, let's look at Paul's _____.

1. Paul's early life was not characterized by disinterest and hardness against religion. He was no atheist, nor even just a casual religious person. He was completely consumed in the religion of _____. Galatians 1:14
2. Notice also Philippians 3:4-6.
 - Paul was a _____, as was his father. Acts 23:6
 - Paul was a _____ pure man.
 - Paul was _____ in his religion.
3. Paul is an example of the fact that Christless religion is not the _____ to man's needs.
4. A person can be very religious, yet be as _____ as the most non-religious person in the world, if his religion leaves out Jesus Christ as the only _____ of mankind.