

Why is Paul in the Bible? – Part 3

Introduction:

1. One of the most significant events in the Word of God is the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, later known as the apostle Paul. **Acts 9:1-9**
2. The conversion of Paul marked the beginning of the unfolding of the mystery of God's purpose and grace for the past 2,000 years.
3. Paul wrote more books of the New Testament than any other author. He wrote thirteen books (Romans through Philemon).
4. In addition to this, most of the book of Acts chronicles Paul's salvation and ministry (**Acts 9, 13-28**). Paul was the first church planter in this present age of grace (**Acts 13**).
5. God raised up Paul and gave him a distinct message and ministry for the body of Christ today.
6. Why Paul? Why is he in the Bible? If Christ already had twelve apostles that he had trained for over three years, why was there a need for another apostle? Why would the twelve fade into relative obscurity in the book of Acts, and this "new apostle" dominate the scene?
7. These questions go unasked and unanswered in most churches today. There is a satanic-induced "turning away" from Paul that began in Paul's own day.
2 Timothy 1:15
8. Do you know what is sad about this? Until people understand the distinct message and ministry of Paul, they will never be able to rightly divide God's Word.
9. In this lesson, we will seek to answer the question from God's Word, "Why Paul?"

Paul was given divine truth that had previously been kept secret.

1. The twelve had been well-schooled in God's prophetic plan.
 - Israel would be converted and born again.
 - Christ would return to earth and rule as Israel's King.
 - Israel's kingdom would be restored.
 - Israel would be the vehicle through which the Gentile nations would have the knowledge of God and of Christ, as Messiah and King.
2. The twelve knew this plan and were anxiously awaiting its fulfillment. **Acts 1:6**
 - They knew that the prophetic plan had to begin with the conversion of Israel. **Matthew 10:23; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8**
 - Therefore, they worked diligently toward the conversion of Jerusalem, preaching the gospel of the kingdom and the risen Messiah to Israel. **Acts 3:19-26** is a key passage which reveals the twelve's understanding of God's prophetic plan.
3. When persecution arose in Jerusalem, and the believing Jews were scattered, the twelve bravely remained in Jerusalem, firmly committed to God's prophetic plan. **Acts 8:1**
 - I've heard preachers rip the twelve for this and claim that they lacked faith, and they were prejudiced and didn't want to take the good news of Christ to the nations, etc.
 - This is so unfair and ridiculous. Would you want to remain in a hostile environment where your life was in constant jeopardy? They were all beaten

(**Acts 5:40**), James was martyred (**Acts 12:1-2**), and Peter imprisoned (**Acts 12:3-4**) for remaining in Jerusalem.

- Jerusalem was **not** their hometown (**Acts 1:11**). They remained there for one reason: they knew the prophetic plan. The kingdom could not come and the blessing of God could not go to the Gentiles until Israel was converted, beginning at Jerusalem.
4. But hidden in God was a mystery time period that God did not reveal to anybody, including the twelve. Paul called it “...*the dispensation of the grace of God*...”
Ephesians 3:2
 5. This body of truth concerning God’s grace was kept secret. It was a mystery in previous time, but revealed in due time to the apostle Paul by direct revelation of Jesus Christ. **Ephesians 3:1-10; Colossians 1:25-27**
 6. Peter and the twelve certainly had good news that they proclaimed.
 - They proclaimed to Israel that Jesus Christ was risen from the dead and that He was, in fact, Israel’s Messiah.
 - Their sins could be blotted out and their promised kingdom would still come if they would simply repent and be converted to Christ.
 7. To Paul was given a different gospel. Paul was sent out to the Gentiles with the good news that God’s grace was available to them, too. **Ephesians 3:8**
 - The Gentiles, who had been cut off from God, could now be reconciled to God, apart from the nation of Israel.
 - It was revealed that Christ’s death was, in fact, a **blessing** and the source of God’s grace. Christ made a full atonement for the sins of all mankind on the cross.
 8. The twelve had never explained the cross in this light before. Why is this? Simply because it was not revealed yet. This was the good news that God revealed to Paul.
 - Paul made it clear that his gospel of grace did not come from the twelve or any other man, but by direct revelation of Jesus Christ. **Galatians 1:11-12**
 - Paul had to explain His gospel to the twelve and they recognized it as coming from God. **Galatians 2:2, 6-9**
 - Paul preached that through the cross work of Jesus Christ, God was now offering grace, peace, and reconciliation to individuals everywhere.
 - This grace could be directly appropriated by faith alone in the shed blood and finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Gentiles did not have to come through Israel, the law of Moses, or the rite of circumcision.
 9. All of this was new revelation that you will not find Peter or the twelve preaching until after the salvation of Paul in Acts 9.
 - Peter understood that the prophets had foretold Christ’s death, but they did **not** preach or understand the atonement for sin on the cross. They did **not** understand the redemption, reconciliation, or forgiveness that was to be extended to mankind through the death of Christ on the cross.
 - You will not find them preaching the cross in this light in the early part of Acts. They preached to repent of crucifying Christ, believe the message that He is raised from the dead, and identify with Him through water baptism.

- Examine carefully the following sermons and see if you can find any explanation of the blessedness of the cross work of Christ. **Acts 2:23-24, 37-38, 3:13-20, 4:2, 10-12, 33, 5:29-32, 7:52-53, 8:12, 35-37, 10:39-43**
 - There is a simple reason for this. **It wasn't revealed yet!** Peter and the twelve could only preach what had been revealed up until that time. **Acts 4:20**
10. Do you see now why God raised up Paul? God saved His chief enemy and extended to him grace. To this man God would make known the fact that God was now going to give to all of His enemies in the world a time of unprecedented grace.
 11. The prophetic plan for Israel in which the twelve had been schooled would be temporarily postponed, and God would send His grace **directly** to the world through the work of atonement that Christ made for sin on the cross.

Paul was given the special office of Gentile apostleship.

1. A Gentile is anyone that is not a Jew. Paul himself was a Jew, therefore his burden was to see his people (the nation of Israel) repent and accept Christ as their Messiah.
2. Soon after his conversion to Christ, Paul traveled to Jerusalem for this purpose.
 - Paul thought this made perfect sense. He had originally planned on going back to Jerusalem with Christians so that they could face punishment. **Acts 22:5**
 - Now he would go to Jerusalem with his incredible testimony regarding his conversion to Christ. Surely he could convince the religious leadership of Israel.
 - To Paul's amazement, Christ told him to "*...Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem...*" **Acts 22:18**
3. Then God made it clear that He had another purpose for Paul. God would send him to the Gentiles with special revelation that we talked about under point number one. **Acts 22:21, 26:16-18**
4. In the next few years, here is what would happen:
 - Barnabas brought Paul to the church at Antioch where a great number of Gentiles had turned to the Lord and believed. Paul ministered in this church which provided invaluable training for Paul. **Acts 11:19-26**
 - Paul and Barnabas eventually left this church for the purpose of going and preaching the gospel of Christ in other cities (**Acts 13:1-4**). Through their ministry, God opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. **Acts 14:27**
 - In Acts 15, Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem to defend their Gentile ministry and gospel. **Acts 15:3, 12; cf. Galatians 2:1-2**
 - Also at this time, Peter, James, and John agreed to confine their ministry to Israel, with Paul going to the Gentiles. They recognized Paul's office of Gentile apostleship. **Galatians 2:7, 9**
5. Over and over again, Paul affirms that his message and ministry were aimed directly at the Gentile church.
6. In fact, in **Romans 11:13**, Paul declares, "*...I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office.*"
 - It is important to understand that Paul was not magnifying his **person**, but rather his **office**. He was given the **office** of Gentile apostleship.
7. Consider the following verses carefully:
 - **Romans 15:16** - Paul is said to be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles.
 - **Ephesians 3:1** - Paul called himself the prisoner of Jesus Christ for the Gentiles.

- **Ephesians 3:8** - Paul's God-given mission was to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. **cf. Galatians 2:7-8**
 - **1 Timothy 2:7** - Paul was ordained a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.
 - **2 Timothy 4:17** - "*...that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear...*"
8. Paul obediently magnified his Gentile office so that others could readily recognize it. No person ever held this office before him, and Scripture does not record anyone replacing him.
 9. God personally ordained and appointed Paul to this office. **1 Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:11**
 - No other individual in the Bible is said to have the office of Gentile apostleship.
 - Many religious systems today run to Peter and proclaim Peter to be the one who is their chief spokesman and the one who laid the foundation of the church.
 - Yet Paul told the church, "*...as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation...*" **1 Corinthians 3:10**
 10. Peter and Paul both preached Christ, but in different ways.
 - Peter preached Christ as Israel's risen Messiah, who would come again to earth and usher in Israel's kingdom if they would repent and turn to Him. **Acts 3:19-21**
 - Paul preached Christ as the risen Head of a new organism, called the body of Christ. Paul preached that the cross provides a complete and full payment for sin and through faith alone in Christ's blood anybody can be saved and forgiven. Then Christ will come and dwell within them. **Colossians 1:26-27**
 - Peter did not know these blessed truths in early Acts, but learned these truths from Paul and we see certain elements of them in Peter's later epistles. **2 Peter 3:15-16**
 11. To Paul it was revealed that Israel had been temporarily cut off as the Gentiles were cut off. Now a Jew must come to Christ the same way a Gentile does, through the grace of God and faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. **Romans 10:12-13**
 12. There is so much confusion in Christendom today. The answer is for people to recognize who their God-appointed spokesman and apostle is - the apostle Paul.

Paul was given to be a pattern for the body of Christ today.

1. Who is the pattern for the body of Christ today? This is a great question and a crucial question if we are to understand our place in the plan of God.
 - Is Moses (and the law) our pattern?
 - Are the twelve apostles our pattern?
 - Is Peter our pattern?
 - Is Christ's earthly ministry our pattern to follow?
2. God saved Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus. Saul was the enemy of those who believed in Jesus Christ. Why was God merciful to Saul and show forth such abundant grace towards him and save him on that road?
3. The Bible is clear - it was for the purpose of making Paul a pattern to all those who would be saved by grace after him. **1 Timothy 1:16**

4. It has often been taught that the twelve apostles represent the church just as the twelve patriarchs represented Israel in the Old Testament. This conclusion is without Scriptural foundation.
 - **Matthew 19:28** makes it very clear that the twelve apostles represent the nation of Israel.
 - In the regeneration (Christ's earthly kingdom), Christ will sit upon a literal throne and will rule this earth after His Second Coming. **Matthew 25:31**
 - The twelve apostles will sit upon twelve thrones ruling and reigning with Christ. Who do they represent? They represent the twelve tribes of Israel.
cf. **Revelation 7:4**
 - This will be the fulfillment of the prophetic promise to Israel in **Isaiah 1:25-27**.
5. God raised up a separate apostle, distinct from the twelve to represent us, the body of Christ. This of course was the apostle Paul. **Colossians 1:24-25**
6. The great mystery revealed to Paul was that Jews or Gentiles (who were once at enmity) could now be reconciled into one body by the cross-work of Jesus Christ. **Ephesians 2:11-18, 3:6**
7. Paul is the pattern that aptly represents this one body of Jews and Gentiles. Think about the following facts:
 - Paul was born a Jew (Hebrew) of the tribe of Benjamin. **Philippians 3:5**
 - But Paul was born a Roman, too. (**Acts 22:25-28**) He was very much a Jew, but also very much a Roman. He was a Hebrew religiously, but a Roman politically.
 - Paul was a Jew and a Roman in one body! What a marvelous representation of the church - Jews and Gentiles reconciled to God in one body by the cross.
8. Not only this, but Paul was the former enemy of Christ, who was now reconciled to God by sheer grace. This, too, aptly represents the body of Christ today. **Colossians 1:20-21**
 - Paul was a sinner that deserved the wrath and judgment of God, but obtained abundant grace. What a picture of the body of Christ today. **1 Timothy 1:13-14**
9. **1 Timothy 1:15** is a verse that has been grossly misunderstood because it is so often lifted out of its context.
 - This verse is not teaching that Paul viewed himself at that time as the one who was sinning more than anybody else. Paul described himself as living godly in Christ Jesus. **1 Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 3:10-12**.
 - The word "*chief*" means "foremost in time, place, order, and importance."
 - In context, Paul is saying that he stands as the leader and chief of a bunch of sinners who have trusted Christ, the Savior of sinners.
 - Paul stands first and foremost (chief) in a line of sinners who have experienced the transforming work of God's grace. The next verse clearly explains this context (verse 16). Notice the words "*first*" and "*pattern*."
10. Paul declares that he is a "*...pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.*"
11. What do you do with a pattern? You follow it. **1 Corinthians 4:16-17, 11:1; Philippians 3:17, 4:9; 2 Timothy 2:2**
12. Paul stands as a pattern as to what God would do in this present dispensation of grace. God is taking heathen, hell-bound sinners, cleansing them, placing them in His Son, and giving them a new identity - saints in Christ Jesus.

13. Why Paul? Because that is where this message is found and made clear in God's Word.