

In search of...

Truth & Right

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Trying to Find Paul

The Bible is consistent and inspired. However, many try to find "mistakes" or "contradictions" in the holy text. One area where this is the case, is that of Paul's whereabouts following his conversion. Important areas of text which cover this time frame are: Acts 9:17-30, Acts 11:19-30, Acts 15:1-4, Acts 22:16-21, Gal. 1:15-21, and Gal. 2:1.

The items to be examined for contradiction/clarification are:

1. **Does the Bible contradict itself regarding where Paul went immediately following His conversion?**
2. **Does the Bible contradict itself regarding how long Paul was away from Jerusalem?**

Question One: Where did Paul go immediately following His conversion?

Acts 9:18 – Paul was baptized.

Acts 9:19 – states for several days he was in Damascus.

Acts 9:20 – uses the word "Straightway" (immediately) he preached Jesus.

Acts 9:22 – Paul was proving Jesus as Christ (From Scriptures?)

Acts 9:23 – the Jews were plotting to do away with Paul.

Acts 9:24 – Paul learns of Plot

Acts 9:25 – Paul either shared this knowledge with disciples or they found out as well.

The next passage in this text, **Acts:26**, discusses "**when**" Paul had come to Jerusalem. The assumption by many readers is that Paul immediately went to Jerusalem from Damascus.

Let's now view text in Galatians concerning this matter.

Gal. 1:15-16 – Paul is converted and does not consult with men (learn their understanding of the gospel).

Gal. 1:17- Paul did not go up to Jerusalem but to Arabia, then returned to Damascus.

Gal. 1:18 – this states it was three years before Paul went to Jerusalem to get to know Peter.

Gal. 1:21 – Paul went to Syria/Cilicia which is the area of Tarsus.

The cries of "Biblical Contradiction" come at this point. For was it not Acts 9:26 that said Paul went to Jerusalem following his conversion? Well, no. Actually, the passage said "when".

That "when" could have been at any time. According to Gal. 1:18 states that "when" was three years following Paul's return to Damascus.

Let's look at more text confirming Gal. 1.

Acts 22:17 – talks about "when" Paul returned to Jerusalem (Thus his return would be the first time).

Acts 22:18 – Paul is told in a vision by Jesus that he is to leave Jerusalem.

Acts 22:21 – Paul is sent to the gentiles (Tarsus/Cilicia)

Acts 9:26 – This is the same time as Acts 22:17 and Gal. 1:18. The disciples were afraid of Paul.

Acts 9:30 – Paul is sent to Tarsus (Syria/Cilicia)

Acts 11:25 – Barnabas goes up to Tarsus (Syria/Cilicia) and takes Paul to Antioch.

Following this, we have very clear Biblical reference as to where Paul Goes.

Thus, No Contradiction exists. We have two confirmations of Gal. 1 from Acts 22 and Acts 9 about where Paul goes following His conversion. He teaches in Damascus and then goes to Arabia. We know as soon as he visits Jerusalem that he ends up in Tarsus. We have clear documentation about his travels following that. From Acts 11; he goes to Antioch, then a contribution to Jerusalem and back to Antioch. Finally, he goes on his first missionary Journey. Thus, he could not have went to Tarsus before he went to Arabia for three years. That would definitely be a contradiction of scripture.

Side Question: When did Paul receive the Holy Spirit?

Acts 9:17 – Ananias said he was sent to enable Paul's sight and Paul's filling with the Holy Spirit.

Gal. 1:12 – Paul received the Gospel

from Christ directly.

These are the only verses we have in regard to this topic. These do not specify at what moment Paul received the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. **My opinion**, is it is likely Paul did receive gifts shortly after baptism. We know he immediately started to preach Christ – Acts 9:20. However, we do not see his first recorded miracle until Acts 13:11.

Question 2: Does the Bible contradict itself regarding how long Paul was away from Jerusalem?

Gal. 1:17-18 – Following trip to Arabia and a return to Damascus for three years, Paul goes to Jerusalem.

Gal. 1:21 – "Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia"

Gal. 2:1 – "Then after an interval of 14 years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas."

The focus of the passage of text in Galatians from Gal. 1:11- 2:21 is that Paul did not consult any supposed leaders of the Gospel to determine what he should teach. He lists time frames in which he sought out or met the apostles as examples of his independence (yet unity) in the Gospel. Noting in those time frames he was not looking for knowledge about the Gospel. In Gal. 2:1, the text does not say he stayed away from Jerusalem for 14 years. It merely mentions another time in which he went to Jerusalem seeking the apostles.

Let's look at a bit more text:

Acts 9:26 – Paul came to Jerusalem (three years after return to Damascus)

Acts 9:27 – Barnabas takes him to the apostles.

Side Question: What apostles?

Gal. 1:19 – Paul meets "Apostles" Peter and James the Lord's brother.

Contradiction? Many know that James the Lord's brother was not one of the 12. Why would they

call him an apostle? There is great discussion regarding this passage. However, rather than dwell on it, there were others in the Bible referred to as apostles at times: Barnabas being one of them. The word apostle means messenger or one set forth with orders. Also it is used in reference to eminent Christian teachers. Thus, while in reference to the twelve in the Bible, it was not exclusive to them.

Now let us continue with our second question:

Acts 9:30 – Paul is sent away to Tarsus.

Note: This is in the region of Syria and Cilicia. Exactly where our Gal. 1:21 text said he went after Jerusalem.

Acts 11:25 – Barnabas is sent to Tarsus to look for Paul (having already been acquainted with him).

Acts 11:26 – Barnabas brings Paul to Antioch.

Acts 11:30 – Barnabas and Paul go to Judea (of which Jerusalem is a part)

Acts 12:25 – Barnabas and Paul return from Jerusalem

Acts 13:2 – Barnabas and Paul are sent on the first missionary journey by the Holy Spirit.

Acts 14:26-27 – Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch.

Acts 15:1-4 – Paul and Barnabas are sent to Jerusalem to discuss the issue of circumcision.

An examination of the council at Jerusalem in Acts 15 and the text of Gal. 2:1-10, show this is the same instance. This was the 14 year time span since Paul's conversion. From the above text, we see that the reference could not be a 14 year absence from Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas had been there years earlier. Rather, the time of 14 years was simply a notable visit in which Paul approached the apostles there. **Thus, No Contradiction exists.**

Travis Main

*Happy Moments,
Praise God.*

*Difficult Moments,
Seek God.*

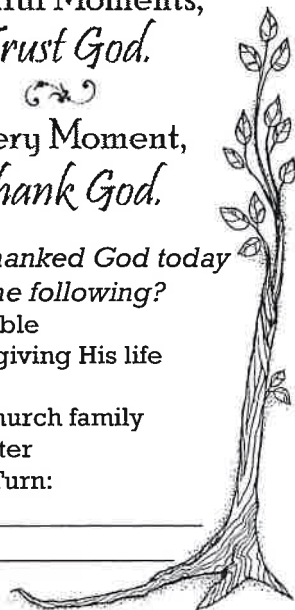
*Quiet Moments,
Worship God.*

*Painful Moments,
Trust God.*

*Every Moment,
Thank God.*

*Have you thanked God today
for any of the following?*

- The Bible
- Jesus giving His life for us
- Our church family
- Laughter
- Your Turn:



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Bible Trivia!

DIRECTIONS: After searching through your Bible, circle which answer is correct.

1. What disciple was told by Jesus that Satan wanted to sift him like wheat?

- a) Matthew
- b) Judas
- c) Thomas
- d) Peter

2. Who confessed that he had been self-righteous?

- a) Abraham
- b) Job
- c) David
- d) Jacob

3. Did the pillar of cloud in the wilderness lead the Israelites by day or by night?

- a) By day
- b) By night
- c) By day and night
- d) Only on Sabbath days

4. Whom did Paul advise that a bishop must be able to control his own children?

- a) Titus
- b) Luke
- c) Timothy
- d) Peter

5. For how long did the thick darkness hang over the Egyptians?

- a) Five days
- b) Three days
- c) Seven days
- d) Four days

6. Which epistle mentions "one Lord, one faith, one baptism"?

- a) Philippians
- b) 2 Corinthians
- c) Ephesians
- d) 1 Thessalonians

7. What rebellious son of David sought refuge from Solomon by holding on to the horns of the altar?

- a) Adonijah
- b) Amnon
- c) Absalom
- d) Chileab

8. When the Jews were allowed to defend themselves against the Persians, how many Persians were killed?

- a) 50,000
- b) 75,000
- c) 30,000
- d) 100,000

9. Whose last words were "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge"?

- a) Jesus
- b) Moses
- c) James
- d) Stephen

10. What did Peter find with a coin in its mouth?

- a) A mule
- b) A frog
- c) A fish
- d) A sheep

LAST MONTH'S ANSWERS & VERSES:

- 1) C, Reference: Genesis 24
- 2) D, Reference: Acts 13:1-3
- 3) B, Reference: John 19:34
- 4) D, Reference: Judges 4:21
- 5) A, Reference: 1 Kings 9:26-28; 10:22

- 6) A, Reference: Acts 13:6-8
- 7) B, Reference: 2 Kings 25:18
- 8) D, Reference: Matthew 22:17-22
- 9) C, Reference: Genesis 25:28
- 10) A, Reference: Acts 16:16