

Secrets in the Sand-Week 1: What Archeology Teaches About Saint Paul, the First Christians, and Us

Basics:

- We're going to Travel back in time with and follow St Paul on his missionary journeys in Turkey and Greece.
- We will discover what 2000 year-old ruins reveal about why the Good News of Jesus Christ spread so quickly among people who weren't even looking for a Messiah.
- Thursdays at 11am. In person and on Zoom. Downloadable hand-outs each week. Recorded. Emails with reminders and links.
- Review Syllabus (see last page).

In each place we'll ask:

- What does the culture and geography reveal about why people responded to Paul's message in the way they did?
- What does Paul's message to *them* mean for *us* today?

Why Study Greece and Turkey?

- 70% of NT was written to, from, or about this place. The 4 Gospels are less than 30%.
- We may have more in common culturally with Romans than with Jews
- We are "Gentiles" and therefore have much in common spiritually with Paul's audience.
- Our faith was born in Israel, but its cradle was in the Roman Empire. The land shaped our faith like a cradle "shapes" a baby.

Class Format: Slightly Different from "Diamonds in the Dust"

- Intro to the city and/or Ray Van Der Laan video. 20-30 min.
- Bible Passages: 10-20 min
- So What? – Discussion: 20 mins

Vicki Lantz will support the class administratively.

For our live online participants:

- Mute your mic
- interject and speak when needed; or raise your virtual or real hand
- You can also use the chat
- Vicki will assign you to a Zoom discussion group.

Recordings — available online within 24hrs and by email link.

Background: Let's find out about this cradle.

Dimensions: The Roman Empire was vast



- The Roman provinces of Britain and Egypt were about as far apart as the American states of Florida and Washington.

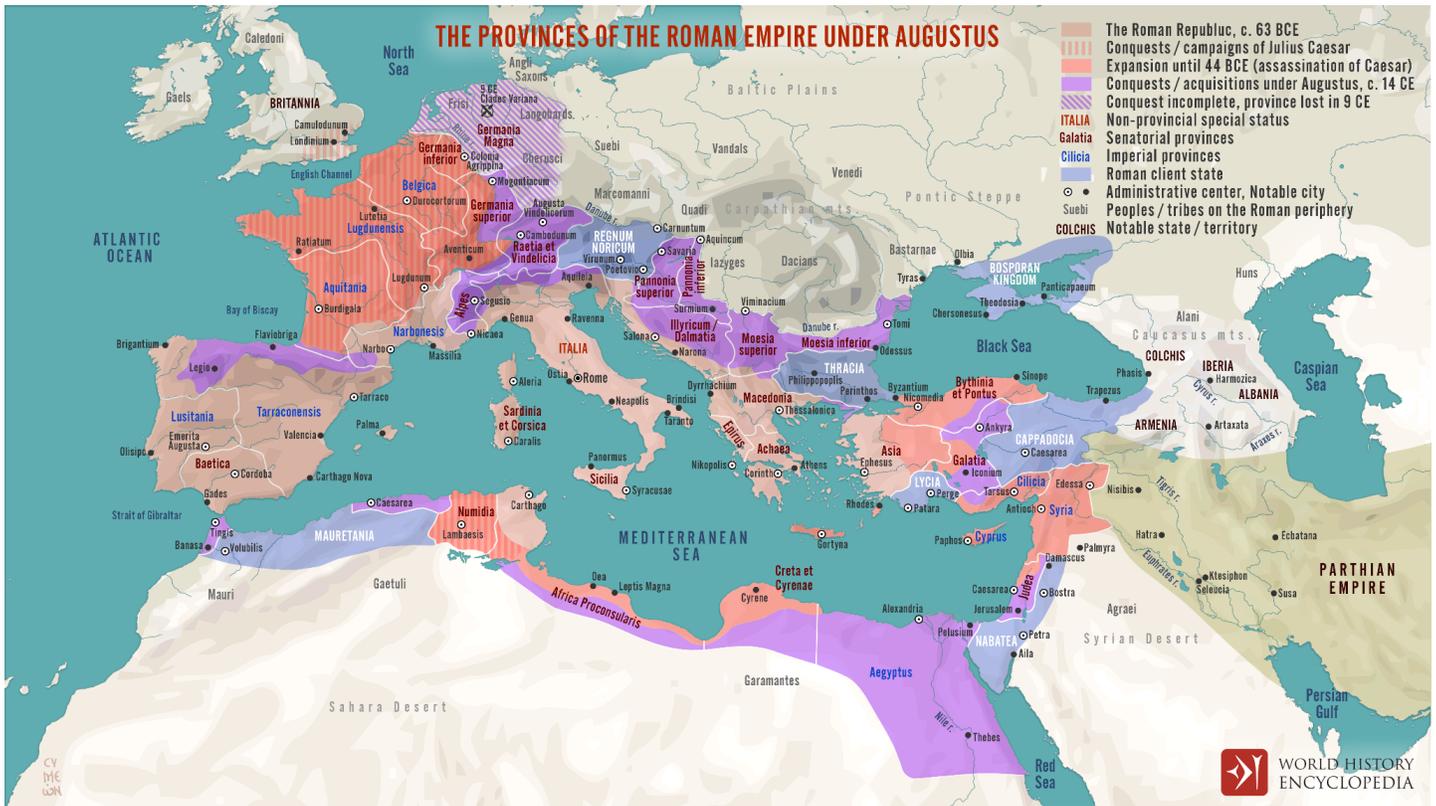


- Turkey is about the size of Texas



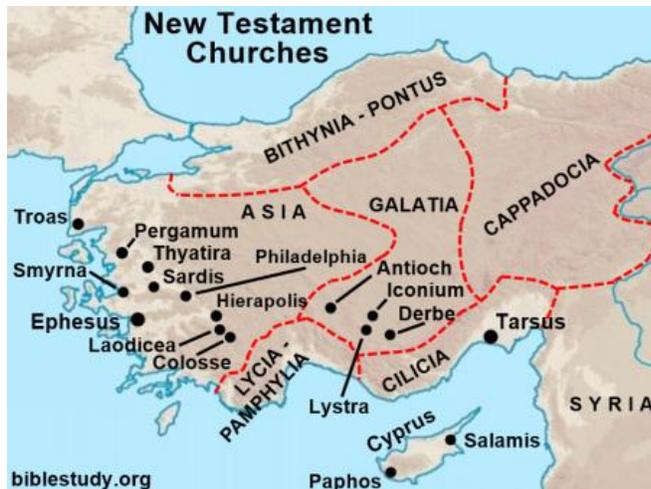
- Israel is size of NJ
- Turkey is 35 times bigger than Israel.
- Greece is 7 times larger than Israel.

Population of Roman Empire: at least 4-5 million in 1st Century AD; may have been much larger.



Find: Spain, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Israel, Egypt

Find the key



Biblical Cities.



Roman Roads — Via Egnatia and other engineered roadways made overland travel possible. Slower than sea.

- Dangers of Sea Travel: Pirates, harsh conditions, sinking (weather, shipwreck, poorly loaded ship)
- Dangers of Road Travel: Robbers, harsh conditions

What it meant to be part of Roman Empire

- Culturally Roman on top of local culture
- Spiritually Roman (Pagan) on top of local gods
- Economically, militarily, administratively tied to Rome.

How cities functioned

- in Greek times— independent city-states.
- in Roman times – dependent on Rome, accountable to Rome

Note: Greece and Turkey are separate and culturally different neighbors today; they weren't in the First Century AD. They were more like US States with a central government. United by

- Common sea – Mediterranean
- Common language (Greek-Roman),
- Common Religion
- Common Rule – Emperor

4 Main Cultural Institutions in Roman Cities:

- Theater- for learning, entertainment and spirituality
- Stadium- for learning and sport and spirituality
- Temple on Highest point (acropolis) – for spirituality
- Baths – for entertainment, hygiene, and spirituality

Roman Religion and Values – Meet the Pantheon



- No such thing as religious orthodoxy—no one cared about the details.
- No religious based morality. Gods were immoral and amoral.

Worship consisted of offerings, sacrifices, sex with temple prostitutes.

Devotion to the gods was transactional not relational

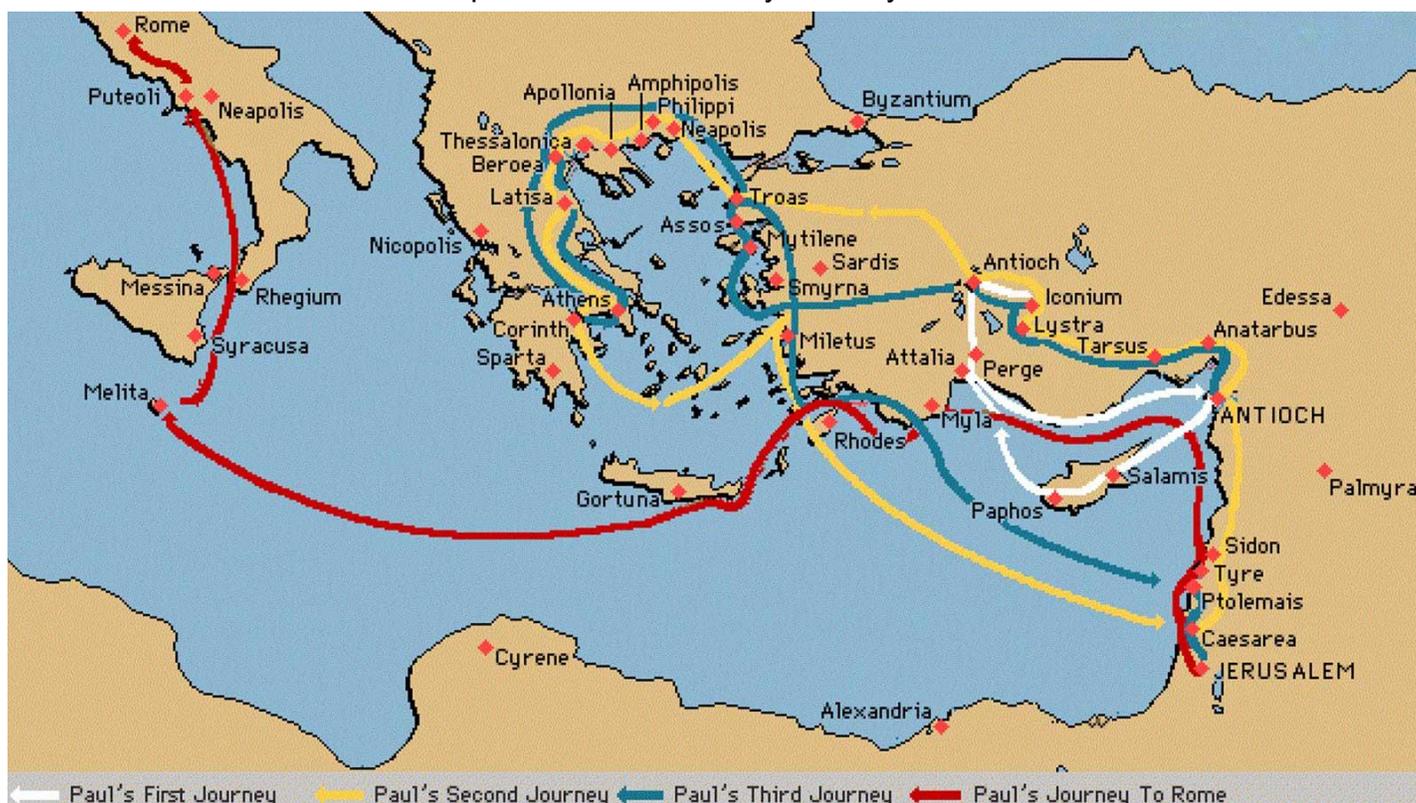
- No one talked about loving or being loved by the gods.
- No one said, "I'm trying to be more like Zeus in my daily living" like we might say "I want to be more like Jesus."

No official scriptures of any kind.

- They had oral stories, plays, art and mosaics

Pax Romana = not just peace from *outside* enemies, but peace from each other and from Rome. It was a brutally enforced peace.

Map of Paul's Missionary Journeys



Who was St Paul? – He took the Good News beyond Israel to the entire world.

- Born in Tarsus (see map) – Roman city; Roman Citizen; Roman name; possibly child of freed slaves
- Raised Jewish – Philippians 3:5–6

1. “circumcised on the eighth day.”
 2. “of the people of Israel.”
 3. “of the tribe of Benjamin.”
 4. “a Hebrew of Hebrews.”
 5. “a Pharisee.”
 6. When he speaks of his zeal, he talks of “persecuting the church.”
 7. Lastly, he says that with respect to the law, he was “faultless”
- Pharisee–Outstanding Jew– Gamaliel-Hillel
 - Presided at St. Stephen stoning – Acts 8

Personal Qualities:

- Courageous–Mediterranean travel dangers, spoke fearlessly
- Passionate/Zealous for God – persecuted hard and loved hard
- Cocky, Confident AND Humble – he started a whole new life

The Challenge Facing Paul

- From the Jews
 - Why should they allow non-Jews into the covenant?
 - Why should they allow non-jews into the covenant without them becoming Jews?
- From the Gentiles (Non-Jews; Pagans)
 - Who is Jesus?
 - Who is the Messiah?
 - Who is Yahweh?
 - How does Yahweh relate to Zeus?
 - What do I have to give up to become a follower of Jesus?
 - Foreskin?
 - Bacon? Theater? Gym?
 - Food offered to idols?
 - How do I relate to Caesar?

Why was Paul so Effective? Paul could navigate culturally between Romans and Jews very easily.

Fearless 4 Discussion Questions: (10 min)

From what you have already heard, what do you think will be similar about their world and ours?

From what you have already heard, how was the Roman world different from the world of Israel?

What do you hope to experience on this “trip?”

Secrets in the Sand: Overview – 9/22/22 to 4/6/23

1. 9/22 Intro Week – Orientation to Greece and Turkey; the Cradle of Christianity
2. 9/29 Damascus, Antioch Pisidia, and Syrian Antioch
3. 10/6 Philippi and Neapolis (Thrace)
4. 10/13 Philippi
5. 10/20 Philippi
6. 10/27 Thessaloniki
7. 11/3 Athens
8. 11/10 Athens
10. 11/17 Athens
11. 12/1 Delphi
12. 12/8 Corinth
13. 12/15 FLEX WEEK

Christmas Break

1. 1/5 – Ephesus
2. 1/12 – Assos – Alexandria Troas
3. 1/19 - Jerusalem
4. 1/26 – Caesarea Maritima
5. 2/2 – Adventures and Mis-Adventures at Sea
6. 2/9 – Rome
7. 2/16 – BREAK/FLEX
8. 2/23 Churches of the Revelation: Smyrna
9. 3/2 Churches of the Revelation: Pergamum
10. 3/9 Churches of the Revelation: Thyatira
11. 3/16 Churches of the Revelation: Sardis
12. 3/23 Churches of the Revelation: Philadelphia
13. 3/30 Churches of the Revelation: Laodicea (plus Hierapolis and Colossae)
14. 4/6 - Maundy Thursday – FLEX WEEK

This trip usually takes 15 days. We will do it in 25-27 weeks or so.