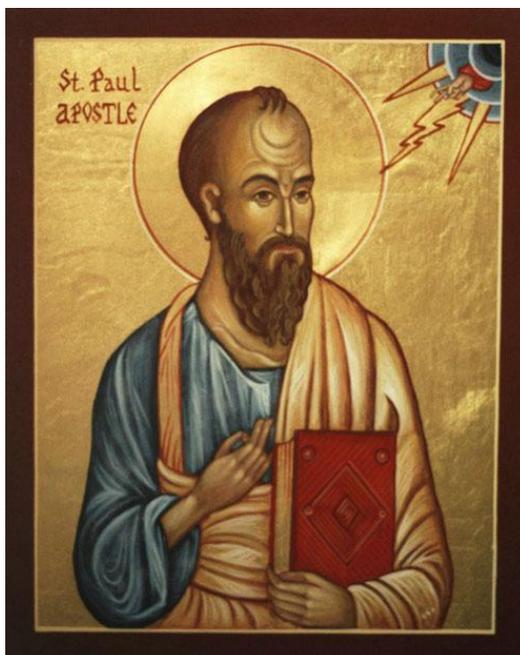


## Secrets in the Sand – Week 2

### Damascus and the Antiochs (Pisidian and Syrian)



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

- Paul was Jewish
  - Had a Jewish name – Saul
  - Had great Jewish Credentials: 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= Outstanding teacher. Follower of Hillel, like Jesus was.
- Presided at stoning of St. Stephen – Acts 8:1

*And Saul approved of their killing him. That day a severe persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria. .... Saul was ravaging the church by entering house after house; dragging off both men and women, he committed them to prison.*



- He was Roman – born in Tarsus, a Roman city;
  - Roman Citizen; possibly child of freed slaves
  - Roman name – Paul



Tarsus ruins, today

#### Paul's Personal Qualities:

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

### The Many Challenges Facing Paul

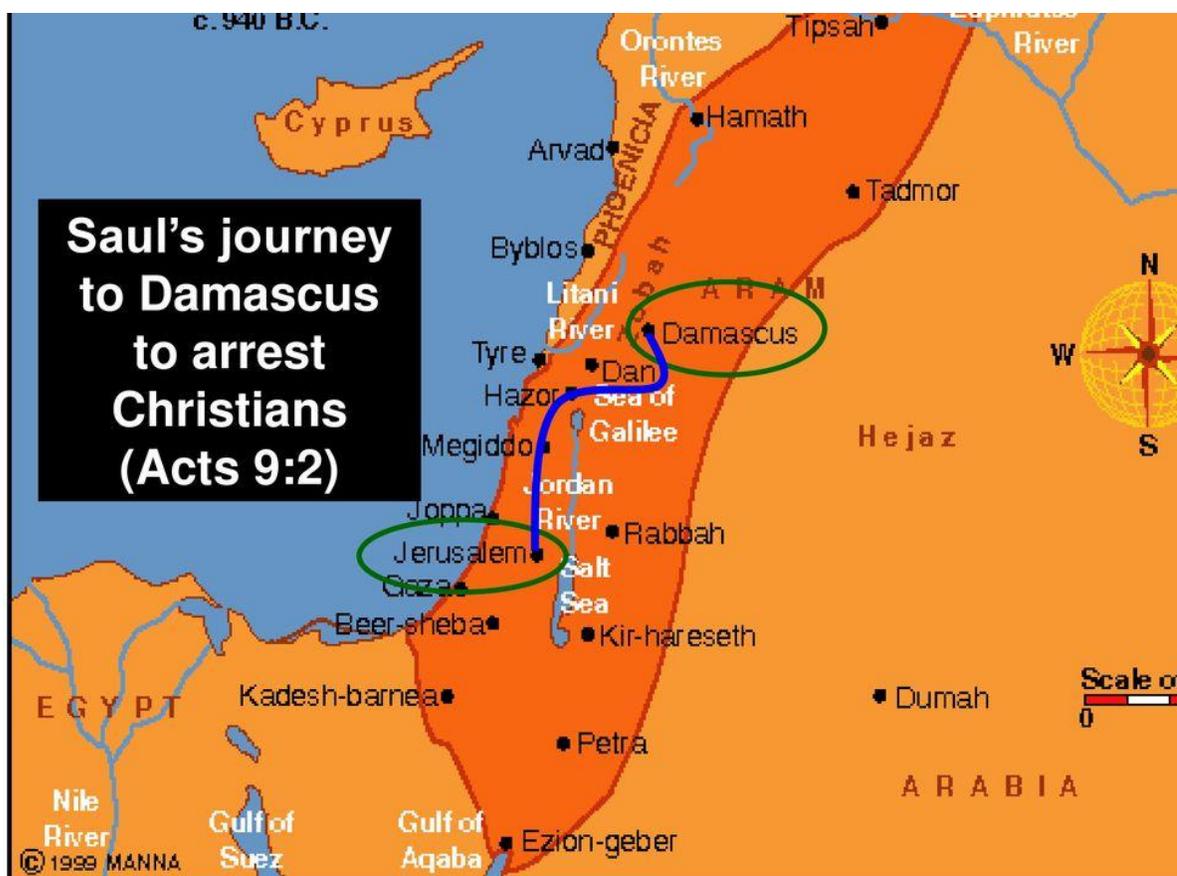
- From Jewish non-believers
  - Why should they think Jesus is the Messiah when he ended up on a cross?
- From Jewish Christians
  - Why should they allow non-Jews into the covenant?
  - Why should they allow non-jews into the covenant without them becoming Jews?
- From Gentiles (Non-Jews; Pagans)
  - 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 and the laws of the Empire?

### Why was Paul so Effective?

- Paul could navigate culturally between Romans and Jews very easily.

### Paul's Conversion – or Awakening – On Road to Damascus

*Acts 9:3 Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus,*



**135 miles from Jerusalem to Damascus**

suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' 5He asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' The reply came, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. 6But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.' 7The men who were traveling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. 8Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. 9For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

10 Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, 'Ananias.' He answered, 'Here I am, Lord.' 11The Lord said to him, 'Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul.



Straight Street, Damascus, in 1860-70s

*At this moment he is praying, 12and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.’ 13But Ananias answered, ‘Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; 14and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name.’ 15But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; 16I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.’ 17So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ 18And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, 19and after taking some food, he regained his strength.*



Grotto of Ananias (Damascus)

## Paul's Time in Arabia and "the Silent Years"

*Galatians 1: 15 But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased 16to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being, 17nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus.*

*18 Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and stayed with him for fifteen days; 19but I did not see any other apostle except James the Lord's brother. 20In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie! 21Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, 22and I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea that are in Christ; 23they only heard it said, 'The one who formerly was persecuting us is now proclaiming the faith he once tried to destroy.' 24And they glorified God because of me.*



From Arabia back to Asia Minor and then to Syrian Antioch (on the Orontes River)



Antioch Syria – capital of Syrian region – This is where Quirinius was Governor (Jesus’ birth)

- Now a part of Turkey, It was founded by Alexander's general Seleucus I Nicator.
- Three hundred miles (480 km) north of Jerusalem,
- Large Jewish population.
  - the Seleucids urged Jews to move to Antioch, their western capital, and granted them full rights as citizens upon doing so.
  - In 64 BC, Pompey made the city capital over the Roman province of Syria.
  - By AD 165, it was the third largest city of the empire.
- First recorded use of the term “Christians” was in Syrian Antioch

*Acts 11: 19 Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that took place over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, and they spoke the word to no one except Jews. 20But among them were some men of Cyprus and Cyrene who, on coming to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists also, proclaiming the Lord Jesus. 21The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number became believers and turned to the Lord. 22News of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. 23When he came and saw the grace of God, he rejoiced, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast devotion; 24for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were brought to the Lord. 25Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 26and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. **So it was that for an entire year they associated with the church and taught a great many people, and it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called 'Christians'.***

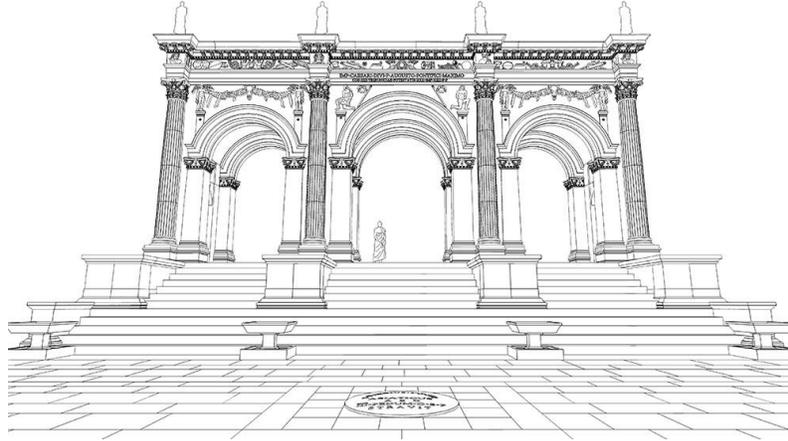
From Syrian Antioch to Cyprus (Conversion of Sergious Paulus) to Pisidian Antioch



Antioch of Pisidia – in Galatia

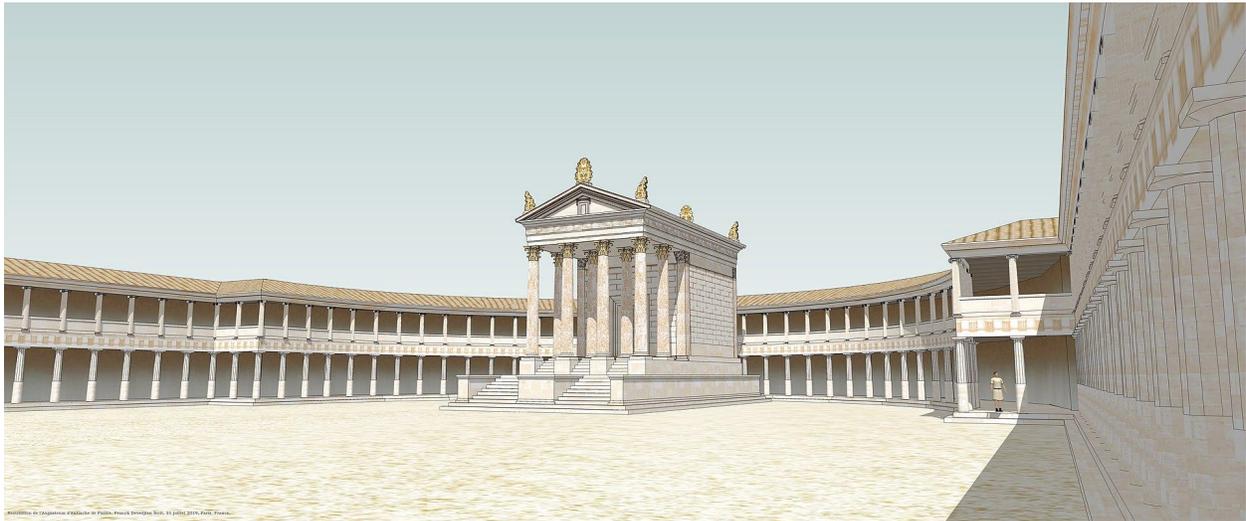
- founded in the 3rd century BC by either Antiochus I or II (Selucid Greek)
- refounded as a Roman colony by Augustus Caesar 25 BC
- On trade route that linked Ephesus and Cilicia.
- Large Jewish population.

- Famous Triple-Arched Gate (after Paul)
  - built in the 2nd century AD and was dedicated by Hadrian in AD 129 on his tour of Asia Minor.
  - major Hellenistic center before Paul's arrival.



### Temple of Augustus Caesar

- Augustus was regarded as the city's founder,
- temple dedicated to worship of him
- built after 2 BC
- focal point of the city
- Cult of Emperor





Temple of Augustus today, Pisidian Antioch

*Acts 13:14ff -52 – They went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. And on the sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. 15After the reading of the law and the prophets, the officials of the synagogue sent them a message, saying, ‘Brothers, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, give it.’ 16So Paul stood up and with a gesture began to speak: ‘You Israelites, and others who fear God, listen....*

*...42 As Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people urged them to speak about these things again the next sabbath....*

*44 The next sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. 45But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy; and blaspheming, they contradicted what was spoken by Paul.*

*46Then both Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, .... ‘ we are now turning to the Gentiles. 47For so the Lord has commanded us, saying,*

*“I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles,  
so that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.” ’*

*48 When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and praised the word of the Lord; and as many as had been destined for eternal life became believers. ...50But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their region.*