

Was Paul The True Apostle?

Written by Administrator

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In my article *Origin Of Paulinist And Catholic Christianity* I have shown that great many scholars believe and maintain that Paul and not Jesus was actually the founder of Christianity and that Paul was a false Apostle who twisted and distorted Jesus's original message. In this article I will look at this issue from the biblical perspective and see whether their opinion can be justified. From Paul's own writings it can be plainly demonstrated that Paul believed that he was a special and unique Apostle - unlike the Twelve whom Jesus personally chose. Paul also insisted on his independence from the Twelve and that he is in no way indebted to them since he never received any instructions from them but rather he claimed that his Gospel was directly and personally revealed to him by the risen Jesus. Paul also claimed that his commission was not as that of the Twelve and that his own Gospel was of necessity different from the Gospel the Twelve preached. In Galatians 1:1 Paul testifies concerning himself:

"...Paul, an Apostle, not by human appointment or human commission, but by commission from Jesus Christ and from God the Father."

In verse 12 Paul goes on to say that the Gospel he preached he did not learn from any man but that it was revealed to him directly by Jesus:

"I did not take it [the Gospel] over from any man; nor man taught it me; I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ."

Paul goes on to say that after he saw "Jesus" in a vision on the way to Damascus, he did not consult any human being concerning the nature of the Gospel nor did he go to Jerusalem to consult the Twelve, but that he immediately went to Arabia and that finally after three years he went to Jerusalem:

"...I did not consult any man, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days. I saw none of the other apostles - only James, the Lord's brother. I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie."

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Paul assures the Galatians that his testimony is true and that he is not lying. If Paul is indeed saying the truth and not lying, then most certainly Luke is lying in the book of Acts - as we shall see later. Paul then goes on and tells the Galatians that he was unknown to the believers in Judaea until he finally went to Jerusalem the second time - after fourteen years:

"I was personally unknown to the churches of Judaea that are in Christ. They only heard the report: The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy...Fourteen years later I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas" Galatians 1:22-24; 2:1].

Paul goes on and reveals that his Gospel was not the same Gospel that Peter and the Twelve actually proclaimed:

"As for those [the Twelve] who seemed important - whatever they were makes no difference to me...those men added nothing to my message...I had been intrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been to the Jews. For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship...They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews."□

Jesus spoke of all believers being one even as he and his Father are one. He spoke of one flock and the sheep outside the fold which he was going to bring into the fold so that there would be only one united flock. But Paul speaks of two different flocks - the Jews and the Gentiles. He speaks of two different Gospels - one given to Peter which is suitable for the Jews and the other given to him which is suitable for the Gentiles. He speaks of himself and Barnabas as those who were specifically chosen to preach this special Gospel exclusively to the Gentiles while Peter and the Twelve were to preach their special Gospel exclusively to the Jews. But if this is true, what Gospel did Peter preach to Cornelius, his household and friends? They were not Jews but rather Gentiles. Did Peter preach to Cornelius Paul's version of the Gospel?

What Gospel did he preach to the Samaritans? What Gospel did Peter preach in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia, and later in Rome? And if Peter agreed that he should preach to the Jews while Paul to the Gentiles, why then did he preach his Gospel in all these Gentile regions? Why did he address his epistle to the Gentiles who lived in these regions?

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Let us compare Paul's version of his conversion and apostleship with Luke's version given in the book of Acts. Luke plainly shows that after Paul saw "Jesus" in a vision on the way to Damascus, he did not immediately go to Arabia but rather he went to Damascus. In fact, according to Luke, "Jesus" told Paul to go to Damascus so that he may receive certain instructions from Ananias so that he would know what to do. Please note Acts 9:6:

"Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what to do."□

Ananias baptised Paul and obviously gave him some instructions - since "Jesus" said that he would be told what to do in the city of Damascus. After spending several days with the believers in Damascus Paul did not go to Arabia - as he claims in Galatians - but rather he immediately began to preach in the Damascene synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God [verses 19-20]. The Jews were astonished since they knew that he was the one who came to Damascus in order to imprison Jesus's followers. After spending "many days" preaching in Damascus, the Jews of Damascus conspired to kill him. Instead of going to Arabia, Paul in fact went to Jerusalem and was taken by Barnabas to meet the Apostles. Here is Luke's version of the story - preserved in Acts 9:23-30:

"After many days had gone by, the Jews conspired to kill him, but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall. When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the Apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. So Saul stayed with them [Apostles] and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. He talked and debated with the Grecian Jews but they tried to kill him. When the brothers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus."□□

Luke flatly contradicts Paul's version given in Galatians. Instead of immediately going to Arabia he in fact ends up going to Jerusalem where he meets the Apostles and where he preaches his Gospel not to the Gentiles but rather to the Jews [verse 22]. Paul testifies in Galatians that he was specifically chosen to be an Apostle to the Gentiles and was entrusted with the Gospel for the Gentiles. He also says that the deal with the Twelve was that he should preach to the Gentiles while they to the Jews. This of course cannot be true if Luke's version and account is accepted as true and inspired. After he left Jerusalem and went to Tarsus, Barnabas found him

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there and went with him to Antioch where they first named their followers Christians [11:25-26]. Somewhat later, in the days of Claudius, Barnabas and Paul went to Jerusalem, taking the gift from Antioch [11:28-30]. After they delivered the gift to Jerusalem, they took John Mark with them [12:25]. Sometime later Barnabas and Paul took John Mark with them and began what is commonly called "first missionary journey." They went to Seleucia and then to Cyprus [13:1-5].

When they reached Salamis they began their mission of preaching. But who did they preach to? Gentiles? Luke says that thenceforth they continually preached to the Jews. In Salamis they preached in the Jewish synagogues [13:5]. On the island of Paphos they got involved with a Jewish sorcerer [13:6]. From there they went to Perga in Pamphylia. At this point for some unspecified reason, John Mark deserted them and decided to return to Jerusalem [13:13]. From Perga, Barnabas and Paul went to Antioch in Pisidia. Instead of preaching to the Gentiles they went to the Jewish synagogue and preached to the Jews. When the Jews eventually departed from the synagogue, they preached their Gospel to the Gentile proselytes who worshipped with the Jews in their synagogues [Acts 13:14,42]. When the Jews two weeks later rejected Paul's message, this is what Paul said to them:

"It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but since you reject it, and prove yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so had the Lord commanded us, saying, I have chosen you to be a light of the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation unto the ends of the earth" [13:46-47].□

If Paul was specifically chosen to be an Apostle to the Gentiles and if his Gospel was specifically designed for the Gentiles and not the Jews - as Peter's Gospel allegedly was - why did he continually preach to the Jews and try to convert them - thereby breaching the agreement with Peter and the Twelve? And why did he even after leaving Antioch of Pisidia, still continue to preach to the Jews in their synagogues? Why did he not simply go to the Gentiles as he said he would? That nothing really changed, despite of Paul's promise, is evident from the remaining chapters of Acts. When they arrived in Iconium, Paul did not simply resort to the Gentiles, as he said he would, but he and Barnabas went to the Jewish synagogue in order to preach to the Jews [14:1]. Some time later Paul and Barnabas had a bitter argument and so parted company. Never again did they work together. Barnabas took his cousin John Mark and went his way preaching and testifying while Paul chose Silas and with him went his own way - preaching and propagating his own special Gospel [15:35-41]. After he parted company with Barnabas, Paul went to Derbe and Lystra.

Did he finally turn to the Gentiles as he promised he would? The fact that he circumcised

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Timothy because of the Jews, proves that his mission was still very much to the Jews [16:1-3]. After circumcising Timothy, Paul went to Philippi, a major Macedonian city. Paul was again looking for the Jews and the Gentile proselytes, since he went to the river on the Sabbath [16:13]. From there Paul went to Thessalonica, where once again he preached to the Jews and the Gentile proselytes in the Jewish synagogue [17:1-4]. When the Jews in Thessalonica tried to kill Paul and Silas, they went to Berea. Instead of looking for the Gentiles and preaching their Gospel to the Gentiles, Paul went to the synagogue of the Jews [16:10]. When the Jews from Thessalonica came to Berea and stirred up trouble, Paul went to Athens where once again he went to preach to the Jews in their synagogues [17:17]. From Athens Paul went to Corinth where again he preaches to the Jews and goes to their synagogues [18:1,4-5]. When the Jews in Corinth opposed him and blasphemed, Paul told them:

“Your blood be on your own heads; I am clean; from henceforth, I will go to the Gentiles” [18:6].

The fact is, however, that Paul again did not keep his word. Paul stayed next door to a Jewish synagogue for eighteen months with a man who was a Jewish proselyte, preaching to those who were acquainted with Judaism [18:7,8,11]. From there Paul finally went to Ephesus where he did not, as promised, turn to the Gentiles, but rather once again resorted to the Jews and their synagogues [18:19]. At Corinth, Paul met Apollos who was a Jew and got involved with him and some other Jews who were originally baptised by John. Paul decided to re-baptise them since they supposedly never even heard that the Holy Spirit exists [19:1-7]. For three months Paul attended the Jewish synagogue in Ephesus arguing with them about faith [19:8]. When certain Jews of the synagogue opposed, Paul caused a split in the synagogue and took as many members as he could and continued to preach to the Jews in the school of Tyrannus for the next three years [19:9-10]. After being arrested at Jerusalem, Paul later appeared before King Agrippa before whom he plainly confessed that immediately after his vision of “Jesus” on the way to Damascus, where he was supposedly appointed an Apostle to the Gentiles, he actually preached to the Jews in Damascus then those in Jerusalem and throughout Judaea [26:20].

When Paul finally arrived in Rome he found himself once again entangled with the Jews and not the Gentiles [28:16-31]. Thus we see that if Paul was specifically chosen to be an Apostle to the Gentiles and that if he really struck a deal with the Twelve to preach among the Gentiles while they among the Jews - he failed to fulfil both his mission and agreement with the Twelve. Another important thing needs to be pointed out. What Gospel did Paul preach to all these Jews that he came in contact with? Was it the Gospel he supposedly received from Jesus on the way to Damascus or was it the Gospel Peter preached among the Jews? Luke, again, gives us the answer. Paul apparently preached to the Jews the same Gospel that he preached to the

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Gentiles. He taught them to abandon the customs of Moses and not to observe the Mosaic commands or to circumcise their children. This is evident from the statement of James to Paul:

“You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews believe and how they are all zealous for the Law. But they are informed concerning you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them that they should not circumcise their children, nor walk in accordance with the customs” [21:20-21].

James the Just knew who Paul was and what he taught. He disagreed with him but despite the fact of believing that he was a false Apostle, he tried to save his life in Jerusalem. He advised him to shave his head and along with their four men go and worship in the Temple and present a bloodless sacrifice. By this, James said, he would prove to all the Jews that the report they heard was a hearsay and that he himself lives in accordance with the Law [21:23-24]. Paul, seeing how grave and serious the situation was, agreed to James’ proposition. However, later certain Jews from Asia recognised him and confirmed James’ allegation that Paul preached everywhere against God’s Law and the Mosaic institutions. Please note Acts 21:27-28:

*“And when the seven days were almost completed, the Jews who were from Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, crying out, Men of Israel, help: this is the man, who teaches all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place.”*¹

Paul of course cowardly denied all these charges claiming that he never said and spoke anything that did not agree with the Mosaic Law or the customs of the Jews. Before Felix he testified:

“I believe everything that agrees with the Law” [24:14].

In verse 17 Paul said that he actually came to Jerusalem in order to present sacrifices and that he was ritually clean when presenting them. In verse 18 Paul claimed that the Jews of Asia could not prove their charges against him. During his trial before Festus, Paul falsely testified:

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"I have done nothing wrong against the law of the Jews" [25:8].

□ To the Jews in Rome, Paul lied by saying:□

"My brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or against the customs of our ancestors, I was arrested in Jerusalem" [28:17].

Paul distorted the facts and lied to the Jews in order to save his own skin. His epistles clearly show that the Jews of Asia who knew him and his associates were right when they accused him of nullifying the Mosaic Law and teaching against the customs of the Jews. Paul continually negates the Law God gave through Moses and claims that those who think that they could be justified through the Law have "fallen from grace." He definitely spoke against the custom of the Jews when he wrote against circumcision and when he called those who practice this rite "dogs" and "mutilators of the flesh" [Philippians 3:2-3]. In Galatians he expresses his contempt for the Jewish custom of circumcision by saying that he wished to see the knife slip during the operation. In Galatians 5:4,11-12 Paul writes:

"But if you do look to the Law to make you justified, then you have separated yourself from Christ, and have fallen from grace...As for me, my brothers, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted?...Tell those who are disturbing you I would like to see the knife slip" [The Jerusalem Bible].

Paul even condemned Peter for not following Jewish customs. He claimed that Jews should live like Gentiles [2:14-15]. Throughout his epistles it is evident that Paul adopted an antinomian stance and always spoke and taught against the Mosaic Law. For this very reason the Ebionites rejected him as an apostate from the Law. Paul also directly violated the decree of the Jerusalem Council [Acts 15] where it was expressly forbidden to the Gentiles to partake of food sacrificed to idols. He permitted his converts to eat of that food since, according to him, idols are nothing. Jesus however held a different view since he condemned those who partook of food sacrificed to idols [Revelation 2:14,20]. Paul taught doctrines contrary to Jesus and the Twelve.

He never knew Jesus nor did he ever walk with him or partake food of his table - as did the Twelve. His vision does not help him since no one was able to verify it. His miracles - if he ever

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performed them - don't help him either, since Simon Magus and host of others performed miracles but not by the power of God's Spirit. In fact, Jesus predicted that many would cast out demons and perform many miracles in his own name - yet would be deceivers and those whom Jesus never knew because they practiced iniquity "anomia" - that is, the transgression of the Law. The Synoptic Gospels clearly show that Jesus had many disciples who followed him and who were sent to preach his message. But out of all these disciples Jesus especially chose the TWELVE to be his closest companions and only to them he gave special power and authority. Luke 6:12-13 says:

"One day soon afterward Jesus went to a mountain to pray, and he prayed to God all night. At daybreak he called together all of his disciples and chose twelve of them to be Apostles."

Matthew 10:1 states:

"Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to cast out evil spirits and to heal every kind of disease and illness."

As he sent them to preach his message of the kingdom, he told them:

"Heal the sick, raise the dead, cure those with leprosy, and cast out demons. Give as freely as you have received!" [Matthew 10:8].

Mark 3:13-15 says:

"Afterward Jesus went up on a mountain and called the ones he wanted to go with him. And they

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him. Then

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he selected twelve of them to be his regular companions, calling them Apostles. He sent them out to preach, and he gave them authority to cast out demons.”

The TWELVE were selected so that they would be Jesus’s closest companions and associates. To them Jesus gave special powers and abilities to perform miracles. And only to them did Jesus clearly explain all the mysteries of God while to others it was spoken in parables. On the Day of Pentecost, the TWELVE were imbued with the POWER from God and they were now ready to begin their mission. But what was their mission? Was it to preach the Gospel to the Jews only - as commonly supposed? Matthew 28:19-20 clearly shows that after his resurrection Jesus commissioned the Apostles to preach the Gospel “to all nations everywhere” and to make the disciples out of them by baptising them and teaching them to observe all the commands he taught them. Acts 1:8 shows that Jesus commissioned the Apostles to be his witnesses not only in Jerusalem and Judaea but also in Samaria and in fact to the “ends of the earth”:

“But when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power, and you will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, in all Judaea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”□

In Mark 16 Jesus also commissioned his Apostles to preach the Gospel to all peoples and nations - throughout the world. The shorter ending of Mark [verse 10] found in some early manuscripts says:

“After this, Jesus himself sent out through his disciples from the east to the west the sacred and everliving message of eternal salvation.”□

If you accept the traditional ending of Mark, then please note what Jesus tells his disciples in verse 15:

“Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.”□

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The Synoptic Gospels and the Book of Acts irrefutably show that Jesus commissioned his Apostles to preach the Gospel not only to the Jews [as Paul later insinuates] but rather he commanded them to preach his message throughout the whole world and to make converts from all nations. The canonical epistle of Peter also shows that Peter preached the Gospel in the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bythinia. The epistle addresses converted Gentiles and not Jews. Acts 15:7 shows that it was Peter who was specifically chosen to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles:

“My brothers, you know that a long time ago God chose me from among you to preach the Good News to the Gentiles, so that they could hear and believe.” □

Peter testifies that he was specifically chosen to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles and that in fact he did so. How could Paul then claim that Peter was entrusted with the Gospel for the circumcised - that is the Jews - while he with the Gospel for the Gentiles? Church tradition shows that Apostle Judas Thomas preached the Gospel among the Indians and Persians, a fact that even the Clementine Homilies confirm. Others went to Europe and other parts of the world. Since Yahshua specifically chose the twelve to be his Apostles and representatives and since they indeed preached his message also among the Gentiles - as he himself commanded them to do - it is plain therefore that there was no need for Paul to be chosen as a special Apostle who would carry the Gospel among the Gentiles.

Jesus would not intrust Paul with a Gospel that was so strikingly different from the Gospel that he taught his most intimate disciples whom he appointed to be witnesses to the “ends of the earth.” The Holy City which will one day descend from heaven has twelve foundations. On them are written the names of the original twelve apostles of Jesus. Paul’s name is nowhere to be found. This in itself proves that he was not a true apostle who was specifically chosen by God let alone the most important of all apostles who allegedly enlightened the Twelve and set them straight. □□□□□□□□□□