

COMPANION GUIDE
TO THE VIDEO

Paul, the Emissary

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Discussion Guide for *The Emissary*

The Emissary portrays the story of the apostle Paul, closely following the Scriptural account in the book of Acts. Historians recognize that Paul was one of the most important men in all of world history. It was largely through his ministry that the message of Christianity was brought to much of the urban society of the Roman Empire within one generation. To better appreciate Paul's ministry and impact, read the Scriptures, consider and discuss the following questions:

1. We first meet Paul in Scripture when Stephen was being stoned (Acts 7:54-60). At that time he was then called Saul. What role did Saul have in Stephen's stoning? What impression might the dying Stephen's words and behavior have on Saul?
2. Though born in Tarsus in Asia Minor, Paul was raised in Jerusalem, where he was a student of the beloved Gamaliel. What was Gamaliel's attitude to the new sect of Christians? Why might Saul's attitude differ so markedly from his teacher (Acts 22:3; 5:34-39; cf. 8:3; 9:1-2)?
3. Saul was not seeking the Lord Jesus, but the Lord was seeking him and spoke to Saul as he was on his way to Damascus to further persecute the Christians (Acts 9:1-7). Saul frequently recounted his Damascus road experience as he testified to the transforming grace of his Lord (Acts 22:6-16; 26:12-14). When Jesus told Saul, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," what did Saul learn about the church?
4. The Lord sent Ananias to Saul three days after he arrived in Damascus. Ananias restored Saul's sight, baptized him, and told Saul what his ministry was to be like. What were to be four characteristics of Paul's ministry (Acts 9:10-19)?
5. In II Corinthians 11:22-30, Paul described some of the suffering he endured. Describe which items in this list were depicted in *The Emissary* (see also Acts 14:19-20; 16:16-24; 21:26-36; 27:13-42; 28:1-6).
6. The first European city in which Paul ministered was Philippi. What different types of people were affected by Paul's message? How was Paul's behavior as well as his message an important witness to the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:11-34)?
7. Though Paul's message was always of Jesus Christ, he presented his message in different ways to different people. Compare and contrast Paul's gospel presentation to the philosophers of Athens and the people in Ephesus. What was the response in each place? (Acts 17:16-32; 19:8-41) [Note: Acts 19 does describe that Paul did many miracles in Ephesus and that the sorcerers burned their books; it does not describe a specific incident of a sorcerer's son being healed.]
8. Why was Paul arrested in the temple (Acts 21:26-36)?
9. After his address to the crowd in Jerusalem, Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea for two years. How did he continue to serve the Lord in prison, and how did the Lord comfort him there? What was Paul's defense before King Agrippa (Acts 23:11-26:32)?

10. How might Paul be considered a “hero” on the voyage from Caesarea to Rome? What was the basis for his wisdom, courage, and leadership (Acts 27)?
11. Paul spent two years in Rome under house arrest. How did he use that time serving the Lord (Acts 28:17-31; Phil. 1:12-18; 4:21)?
12. The book of Acts ends with Paul arrested, “preaching the Kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ” in Rome. Paul possibly was released as he expected (Phil. 1:25; 2:24) and continued his ministry in Greece (Titus 3:12; II Tim. 4:10), Crete (Titus 1:5) and Asia Minor, what is modern Turkey (II Tim. 1:18; 4:12-13, 20). The first century writing I Clement says Paul also went to Spain (Rom. 15:23, 24, 28). When the Christians began to be persecuted after Nero set fire to Rome in A.D. 64, Paul was imprisoned again and executed. As a Roman citizen, his death was by beheading, and he was spared the torture of other modes of death.
Before his execution, Paul wrote Timothy the letter we know as II Timothy. What was Paul’s attitude as he faced death (II Tim. 4:6-8)?
13. What can we learn from Paul’s ministry about the nature of the Church?
14. What lessons from Paul’s life can we apply to our own lives as Christians?

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Jewish Beginnings:

The earliest Christians and Paul were Jewish, and the Jewish background is important to understanding Paul’s missionary work and the spread of the early church. Though there were many Jews living in Palestine, there were also Jewish settlements located throughout the Roman Empire. Paul himself was born in Tarsus, a city in the southeastern part of modern Turkey. As a boy, Paul was sent to Jerusalem to study the law. He became a Pharisee, as his father before him had been (Acts 23:6; Phil. 3:5-6). The Pharisees were the Scribes and students of the law. They were respected by the people and were the real religious leaders of the land. The Sadducees were the aristocratic, priestly party that firmly followed the written law while rejecting the traditional interpretations which had grown up around the law. Annas and Caiphas, shown in the opening scene of the film, were leaders of this priestly party. That Paul was sent to Jerusalem for his education shows the deep respect the scattered Jewish people had for their religion and culture centered in the temple and Jerusalem.

When Paul became a Christian and an emissary of the gospel, whenever he first visited a city, he always first preached the gospel in the Jewish synagogue. If the Jewish people rejected the gospel, he then took his message to the Gentiles of the city. Paul then became known as the “Apostle to the Gentiles” (Rom. 1:16). Some of the Jewish Christians opposed Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles; they wanted Gentile Christians to become Jews and follow Jewish ceremonies and traditions while also following Christian teaching. These “Judaizers” followed Paul throughout his missionary activities and challenged his ministry (Gal. 1:7; 2:3-5, 12; 6:12,13; Acts 15:1; 21:20,21; Phil. 3:2,3).

Roman Background:

The Roman empire formed an important background to Christianity's beginnings and the life of Paul. Jesus' life itself was bounded by Roman politics. It was the Roman census which had brought Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem, where Jesus was born. It was the Roman procurator Pontius Pilate who finally brought about Jesus' crucifixion.

Historians have often called this period of history the *Pax Romana*, the peace of Rome, for Rome had brought peace to the lands under its sway. From England to Persia and from Germany to the Sahara, the Roman legions kept order. The Roman roads, originally built for the Roman legions, provided ease of communications throughout the empire. They enabled Paul to travel freely throughout the empire.

Though Jewish, Paul's family in Tarsus had acquired Roman citizenship, a rare honor. It is not known how this honor came to the family, but Paul's Roman citizenship brings him certain privileges. Though he does not always appeal to his citizenship, Roman citizens were not to be flogged without a trial (as was done to Paul in Philippi), could appeal directly to Caesar (as Paul does when threatened by the Jewish leaders in Caesarea), and if executed, were executed swiftly by beheading.

Messianic Expectations:

The Jewish Old Testament Scriptures speak of a coming King who would establish a kingdom of righteousness among His people. He would be the Messiah, the anointed and chosen King, the son of David who would reign forever (see, for example, II Sam. 7:11-16; Psa. 2; Isa. 2, 7, 9, 11, 40, 49, 53). At the time of Christ, there was an expectancy among the Jews that the Messiah would come, establish his kingdom and bring deliverance to his people. Historically, several false Messiahs had already appeared, claiming to be the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies. The Jewish leaders recognized Jesus' claims to be the Messiah; but they did not accept them, and they looked upon Him as another false Messiah. These leaders looked for the Messiah to restore the nation's glory. In focusing on the Messiah as king, they had lost sight of the Messiah's priestly role in bringing deliverance from sin and righteousness to the people.

What's in a Name?:

In the earlier accounts of Paul's life, he is called Saul. What really was his name? Actually, it was probably Saulus Paulus. Both names were given to him at his birth, but Saul was a Jewish name and the other was a Roman, befitting one who inherited Roman citizenship from his father. When the apostle began to move out and minister among the Gentiles, it was only natural that he began to use his Gentile name, Paul.

World Traveler:

After his conversion, Paul preached the gospel in Damascus, the very city he was going to persecute the Christians when the Lord seized him and turned his life around. He also went into Arabia for three years (Gal. 1:17-18), probably for seclusion, meditation, and prayer. After returning to Damascus, Paul escaped his attackers by climbing into a basket and being lowered over the city walls (Acts 9:25). Paul then visited Jerusalem, where he met with Peter and James, the leader of the Jerusalem church, before returning to his native Tarsus. While Paul was at Tarsus, persecution of Christians in Jerusalem had caused them to flee to other cities.

A number of Christians had fled to Antioch and were beginning to preach the gospel to the Gentiles there. Barnabas recognized how valuable Paul would be in such a ministry and went to Tarsus to seek him out. Within a short time, the church at Antioch commissioned Barnabas and Paul to take the gospel to other lands. So began Paul's first missionary journey.

Accompanied by Barnabas and Barnabas' cousin John Mark, Paul went to Cyprus and the region of Galatia, in modern southern Turkey (Acts 13-14). The Emissary portrays scenes from Paul's ministry in Lystra from this journey.

After meeting with James and Peter in Jerusalem (Acts 15; Gal. 2), Paul left with Silas on his second missionary journey, revisiting churches established in Galatia, and continuing on in to Greece, preaching the gospel in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth (Acts 15:39-18:2). Paul probably wrote his epistle to the Thessalonians during this time.

On his third missionary journey, Paul again revisited the Galatian churches, then spent several years teaching at Ephesus, before going on to Troy and Macedonia (Acts 18:23-21:17). During this time Paul likely wrote the epistles of Corinthians, Romans, and Galatians. As Paul visited the Gentile churches, he took up a collection for the persecuted and poor in Jerusalem, then suffering a severe famine.

When Paul was in Jerusalem with his offering from the Gentile churches, he was encouraged to make peace with his Jewish opponents and participate in a ceremony at the temple. When he came into the temple, the Jews started a riot, and the Roman soldiers overlooking the temple area came to his rescue (Acts 21). The Jews sought to kill Paul, but his Roman citizenship brought him some protection as he appealed to Caesar for a trial. It was by this means that Paul was finally brought to Rome, the center of the Empire. He had longed to minister the gospel in the city, and he was happy the Lord had brought him there, even if in chains (Acts 25-28). It was probably at this time that Paul wrote the books of Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, and Philippians. Paul, we surmise, was released after his trial before Caesar and went on to minister in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) and possibly Spain. During this time he could have written the letters of I Timothy and Titus.

When persecution of the Christians increased in Rome after the great fire, Paul was again imprisoned. This imprisonment was more severe than the first. Most of his friends left him, and only Luke remained. If II Timothy were written during this time, it tells us of Paul's thoughts as he faced death. From extra-Biblical sources, we know that Paul was executed, beheaded as befitting a Roman citizen.

The Moody Atlas of Bible Lands by Barry J. Beitzel (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 176-177 describes the extent of Paul's journeys as an emissary of the gospel:

"The distances traveled by the apostle Paul are nothing short of staggering. In point of fact, the New Testament registers the equivalent of about 13,400 airline miles that the great apostle journeyed; and if one takes into account the circuitous roads he necessarily employed at times, the total distance traveled would exceed that figure by a sizeable margin. Moreover, it appears that the New Testament does not document all of Paul's excursions. For example, there seems to be an unchronicled visit to Corinth (II Cor. 12:14; 13:1); he refers to shipwrecks of which we have no record (II Cor. 11:25); and there was his desire to tour Spain (Rom. 15:24, 28).

"Considering the means of transportation available in the Roman world, the average distance traveled in a day, the primitive paths, and rugged, sometimes mountainous terrain over which he had to venture, the sheer expenditure of the apostle's physical energy becomes unfathomable for us. Many of those miles carried Paul through unsafe and hostile environs

largely controlled by bandits who eagerly awaited a prey (cf. II Cor. 11:26). Accordingly, Paul's commitment to the Lord entailed a spiritual vitality that was inextricably joined to a superlative level of physical stamina and fearless courage."

Paul's Associates:

Though the Lord used Paul mightily in spreading the Christian message, Paul was not a solo operator. He always had a team who went and worked with him. On his first missionary journey, he went with Barnabas and John Mark. On his second missionary journey, he began with Silas, and later was joined by Timothy and Luke on at least part of the journey. In Corinth and later at Ephesus, he ministered with Aquilla and Priscilla, fellow tent-makers. During his third missionary journey, the Scriptures list a large number accompanying Paul in Asia: Sopater of Berea, Aristrarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica, Gaius of Derbe, Timothy, Tychicus, and Trophimus. The conclusions of many of Paul's letters are replete with greetings and prayers for his many friends and associates. He was a man of strong affections who valued his relations with fellow Christians. He was both a giant and a team player.

Paul's Writings:

Paul's execution did not mean the end of his influence. He is credited with thirteen of the New Testament books, and the book of Acts largely is a narrative of his ministry. These letters continue to preach the gospel as Paul did in his days, and so he truly has become an emissary to the world for the gospel of Christ. Following are the canonical books attributed to Paul:

ROMANS (written in Corinth), c. A.D. 55-57, Theme - Righteousness that comes from God - theology and practical applications

I CORINTHIANS (written in Ephesus), A.D. 55, Theme - Wrong living stems from wrong belief

II CORINTHIANS, A.D. 55-56, Theme - Personal letter revealing the nature of Paul's apostolic ministry

GALATIANS, A.D. 49, Theme - Justification by faith

EPHESIANS (written in Rome), A.D. 60-62, Theme - Encouragement to believers because of their riches in Christ Jesus

PHILIPPIANS (written in Rome), A.D. 60-62, Theme - Joy in the peace of God

COLOSSIANS (written in Rome), A.D. 60-62, Theme - Christ, not any other creature, gives standing before God

I THESSALONIANS (written in Corinth), A.D. 51, Theme - The return of Christ

II THESSALONIANS (written in Corinth), A.D. 51-52, Theme - Exhortations because of Christ's return

I TIMOTHY, A.D. 62-64, Theme - Church organization and sound doctrine

II TIMOTHY (written in Rome), A.D. 66-67, Theme - Encouragement to Pastor Timothy

TITUS, A.D. 62-64, Theme - Encouragement to a young pastor

PHILEMON (written in Rome), A.D. 60-62, Theme - Christianity and slavery