

Early Date for Galatians

Key Question for dating Galatians: Acts mentions 5 Pauline visits to Jerusalem, whereas Galatians mentions 2. Which of the Acts visits corresponds to the second Galatians visit? Answer: The second Galatians visit fits best with the second Acts visit.¹

Paul's first post-conversion visit to Jerusalem	
<p>Acts 9:19-30</p> <p>19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.</p> <p>20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.</p> <p>21 But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?</p> <p>22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.</p> <p>23 And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:</p> <p>24 But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.</p> <p>25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.²</p> <p>26 And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.</p> <p>27 But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles,³ and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.</p> <p>28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.</p> <p>29 And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him.</p> <p>30 Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.</p>	<p>Galatians 1:15-24</p> <p>15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,</p> <p>16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:</p> <p>17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.</p> <p>18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.</p> <p>19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.</p> <p>20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.</p>

¹ The last three Acts visits are unlikely parallels for the Galatians second visit for the following reasons:

- Visit 3 – the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 (preferred by many sound Bible scholars who give a later date to Galatians).
 - The language of Gal. 2:1 indicates that Paul is not skipping over a visit in the history he is recounting there. Bruce: “Ἐπειτα, ‘then’, ‘next’, as in 1:18, 21, implies that Paul is omitting nothing material to his argument—in particular, that he is omitting no visit to Jerusalem or other contact with the church there or its leaders” (*Galatians*, 106).
 - Had the Jerusalem Council decision been rendered, its decision would have been mentioned in support of Paul's case against the Judaizers, unlike his case against eating meat sacrificed to idols in Corinth, which lacked a Jewish context. The issues discussed in the epistle lead up to (Acts 15:1-2) and find unified resolution at the Council.
- Visit 4 – Paul keeps a Jewish feast (perhaps Passover in AD 52; Acts 18:21-22).
 - Barnabas is not Paul's companion at this juncture, but he is in Galatians 2.
- Visit 5 – Paul brings an offering to Jerusalem where he is arrested (Acts 21).
 - Paul does not return to Antioch after this visit, but he does in Galatians 2.

² Paul recounts this episode in 2 Cor. 11:32-33 noting that Aretus was king with jurisdiction over Damascus. Conybeare and Howson put great emphasis on this point in their chronology, concluding that A.D. 37 was the earliest this might have happened and that therefore the second Jerusalem visit mentioned by Galatians 14 years later coincides with the Jerusalem Council history (*The Life and Epistles of Paul*, 827). F. F. Bruce remarks in response: “Arguments that [Damascus] was controlled by the Nabataean kings from AD 37 to 61 (based on the absence of Roman coins from its coin record between those years) are not conclusive (see Schürer, *HJP*, I, 581f.)” (*Galatians*, 95). Bruce uses a date of AD 35 for Paul's flight from Damascus in his early-Galatians chronology (*Paul*, 475).

³ To reconcile Luke's “to the apostles” with Paul's “to see Peter . . . But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother,” F. F. Bruce calls Luke's phraseology “an instance of the generalizing plural” (*Galatians*, 101).

Paul's second post-conversion visit to Jerusalem

Acts 11:19-30	Galatians 1:21-2:10
<p>19 Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.</p> <p>20 And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.</p> <p>21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.</p> <p>22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.</p> <p>23 Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.</p> <p>24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.⁴</p> <p>25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul:</p> <p>26 And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.</p> <p>27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.</p> <p>28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.</p> <p>29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:</p> <p>30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.</p> <p>[The Herodian persecution of Acts 12]</p> <p>12:24-25</p> <p>24 But the word of God grew and multiplied.</p> <p>25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.</p>	<p>21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;⁵</p> <p>22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ:⁶</p> <p>23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.</p> <p>24 And they glorified God in me.</p> <p>1 Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.</p> <p>2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.</p> <p>3 But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised:</p> <p>4 And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:</p> <p>5 To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.</p> <p>6 But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me:</p> <p>7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter;</p> <p>8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)</p> <p>9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.</p> <p>10 Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.</p>

⁴ Paul was in Tarsus during this time (Acts 9:30).

⁵ Antioch was in Syria and Tarsus was in Cilicia:



⁶ Although Paul had spent some time with the brethren of Jerusalem during his first visit (Acts 9:28-30), Bruce points out that the persecution of Acts 8:1 may have left the city during that time bereft of church members and apostles. In addition, this is a reference to the 14-year Syrian and Cilician absence from Jerusalem, after which many believers in Judaea would no longer recognize Paul by face.

