

Sunday, November 6, 2022—Galatians 2:1-2 The Jerusalem Council: Triangulating Acts 15 and Galatians 2

Galatians 2:1

- When we last saw Paul in Chapter 1, he was not in Jerusalem but was operating out of his hometown region of Syria and Cilicia.
 - Acts 22:17-21
 - Acts 9:29-30
 - Acts 11:22-26
- **Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.**
- **Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem**--the first word of verse 1, “then,” indicates that Paul is continuing the chronology that he started in Chapter 1.
- Most commentators think this is the same visit to Jerusalem that is described in Acts 15. However, there are several differences in the accounts between Acts 15 and Galatians 2 which have led some to believe that the visit described here took place in Acts 11 when Paul carried famine relief to Jerusalem.
 - Acts 11:27-30—some think that Paul went to Jerusalem by “revelation” in Gal. 2:2 is a reference to Agabus in Acts 11:28. In my mind there are 4 problems with this view.
 - Judea Not Jerusalem—the text of Acts 11:29-30 says nothing about Paul going to Jerusalem. Paul could have gone into the region of Judea without going to Jerusalem.
 - Revelation of Jesus Christ—according to Galatians 1:12, Paul was taking his instructions directly from the glorified Christ. There is no reason in the context of Galatians 1 and 2 to think Paul was referring Agabus’s revelation/prophecy in Acts 11:28 and not the glorified Christ.
 - Acts 22:17—Christ was directly Paul’s movements immediately following his conversation.
 - Timing—not enough time had transpired to make Acts 11:27-30 square with Paul’s only testimony in Galatians 1 and 2. Paul went up to Jerusalem by revelation (Gal. 2:1-2) after 14 years.
 - Titus—in Galatians 2:1-2 Paul took Barnabas as well as Titus with him to Jerusalem. There is no mention of Titus in Acts 11:29-30 when Paul and Barnabas carried the famine relief into Judea. In contrast, when Paul and Barnabas went to the Jerusalem in Acts 15, they took “certain other of them (Acts 15:2)” from the church at Antioch with them.

- In his book, *Understanding the Book of Galatians*, Charles F. Baker offers the following comparison between Luke's account in Acts 15 and Paul's account in Galatians 2.

Acts 15—Luke	Galatians 2—Paul
The church sent them—Acts 15:3	Went by special revelation—Galatians 2:1
Accompanied by Barnabas, Titus not mentioned—Acts 15:2	Accompanied by Barnabas and Titus—Galatians 2:1
Opposed by those who were Pharisees—Acts 15:5	Opposed by false brethren who slipped in privately to spy out their liberty—Galatians 2:4
No mention	Other apostles added nothing to Paul's understanding—Galatians 2:6
No mention	Distinguishes between the gospel of the uncircumcision and the gospel of the circumcision—Galatians 2:7
No mention	Agreement reached for Paul to go to the Gentiles and the other apostles to the Jews—Galatians 2:9
Peter's speech about being the first to preach to Gentiles and how God put no difference between Jews and Gentiles—Acts 15:7-11	No mention
Discourse by James on Amos 9—Acts 15:13-18	No mention
Letter written freeing Gentiles from Mosaic Law and a disclaimer that they had sent these men to Antioch who were insisting on circumcision for Gentiles—Acts 15:23-29	No mention
Mentioned as Paul's third visit to Jerusalem [As noted above we question that assumption that Paul went to Jerusalem in Acts 11:27-30. The text says only that they went into Jude.].	Mentioned as second visit to Jerusalem.

(Baker, 21-22)

- The next question we must answer regarding Galatians 2:1 is how to count these fourteen years. Should the fourteen years be counted from the last time Paul was in Jerusalem, in which case there would be a total of seventeen years between Paul's conversion and the Jerusalem Council. A second option would be that these fourteen years should be counted from the time of his conversion which would result in a total of fourteen years between Paul's conversion and the Jerusalem Council.
- Charles F. Baker thinks that the fourteen years should be counted from the time of his conversion. Ernest R. Campbell suggests in his commentary that seventeen years is the correct way of reckoning the chronology. Baker offers the following chronology to prove his point (See pages 22-23).

30 A.D.	Pentecost
35 A.D.	Saul's conversion
38 A.D.	Saul's first visit to Jerusalem—Galatians 1:18, Acts 9:26
38-45 A.D.	Saul preaches in Syria and Cilicia—Galatians 1:21, Acts 9:30
40 A.D.	Cornelius converted—Acts 10:32-48
45 A.D.	Reception of Gentile converts into Jewish church in Antioch. Barnabas brings Saul from Tarsus to minister in Antioch—Acts 11:19-26
46 A.D.	Barnabas and Saul sent to Jerusalem with famine relief—Acts 11:27-30, 12:25
47-48 A.D.	Saul and Barnabas on first missionary journey—Acts 13:1-14:25
49 A.D.	Paul goes to Jerusalem to meet with the Jewish apostles—Acts 15:1-29, Galatians 2:1-10. This is his second visit according to Paul and his third according to Luke. This is not a contradiction. Luke tells us of things Paul did which are not mentioned by Paul in his epistles, and vice versa. Paul does not state in Galatians 2:1 that this was his second visit to Jerusalem. He simply dates it as fourteen years later.

- **with Barnabas and took Titus with me also.**
- In the second half of the verse, we learn that Barnabas and Titus went with Paul.
 - II Corinthians 2:13—1st canonical mention of Titus.
 - Galatians 2:1—1st chronological mention of Titus.
- Acts 15:1-2—this is precisely what happened according to the book of Acts.
 - Notice what the reason is in Acts 15:1 for their going to Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas had a dispute with the Judaizers over whether circumcision and Law keeping were required for Gentile salvation.
- Acts 15:5-6—so Paul went to Jerusalem for the sole purpose of demonstrating the uniqueness of his teaching on justification by grace through faith without the deeds of the Law.
- Paul had a purpose in taking Titus, an uncircumcised Gentile convert, with him. His purpose was to test the other apostles right in Jerusalem, to see if they would accept Titus without circumcision, or if they would insist that he be circumcised.
- This was the same group of people who troubled the Galatians by teaching that Law keeping and circumcision were necessary for their salvation after Paul had left the region. The chronology is clear; Paul had established churches in the region of Galatia which were being subverted by the teachings of the Judaizers, for which cause Paul goes to Jerusalem after fourteen years to settle the issue once and for all.

Galatians 2:2

- **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.**
- **And I went up by revelation**—Paul made this trip to Jerusalem due to the direct revelation of Jesus Christ. The Lord revealed to him that he should go to Jerusalem to settle the controversy over whether the Gentiles should be required to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses.
- **and communicated unto them the gospel which I preached among the Gentiles**—when Paul got there, he told them exactly what he had been preaching among the Gentiles.
- Acts 13:34-39—Paul was preaching that justification was by grace through faith apart from the Law of Moses. This is the gospel Paul was talking about in Galatians 1:6-9 when he scolds the Galatians for being “so soon removed from him that called them into the grace of Christ”.
 - Galatians 2:7—Paul had been preaching the “gospel of the circumcision” i.e., the gospel of God plus the gospel of Christ.
- **but privately to them which were of reputation**—Paul privately set forth the gospel which he preached before those who were the reputed leaders at Jerusalem. Verse 9 makes it clear that this would have included at least Peter, James, and John.
- **lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain**—the expression “*in vain*” means “emptiness” and “to no purpose.” This must not be interpreted to mean that Paul thought his gospel might be in error. Such an interpretation would be utterly contrary to his main argument that his gospel had been received from the Lord.
- If the Jerusalem Church took a stand against his Gentile ministry, much of his labor would be overcome by their support of those Jews at Antioch who were insisting on putting the yoke of the Law on the Gentiles’ neck.
- The point Paul is making here is that if his gospel was not confirmed by the Jerusalem leaders, it would have opened the way for destructive divisions in the Galatian churches. Furthermore, without their support behind his gospel, Paul could see the Judaizers totally free to undo what he had done, which some did regardless of the official sanction of his gospel (Acts 15:24).