

## Paul and Peter



### Paul

Paul, also called Saul, was a Jew who had immigrated to the Roman Empire—or the descendant of such immigrants. He was a **Roman citizen by birth** (Acts 22:28), born in **Tarsus of Cilicia** (Acts 21:39), and later stayed [studied] in **Jerusalem** under **Gamaliel**, learning the Law (Acts 22:3).

Paul worked in the **tentmaker's trade** (Acts 18:3)—in today's terms, a family line engaged in building multi-family housing for commoners—and lived in comfortable circumstances, as suggested by the record that he studied in Jerusalem.

We should reflect on the fact that both **Paul and Gamaliel were Pharisees**. In the Gospels Jesus often voices antipathy toward the **Pharisees and Sadducees**. Had Paul's doctrine matched Jesus', there would have been no reason for the two not to meet in life. That they did not implies that their religious outlook or philosophy differed—or at least did not coincide. Jesus and the Apostle Paul appear to have held different ideas, advancing rival teachings.

More than ten years after Jesus' death, **one afternoon** on the road to **Damascus** to persecute Christians, Paul saw a **vision** of Jesus. Whether he **heard a voice** [Acts 9:7: "The men traveling with Saul **heard the sound** but did not see anyone"] or **saw a form** [Acts 22:9: "My companions **saw the light** but did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me"; cf. Acts 26:13–18 on the light] is unclear. After a single encounter with this incorporeal vision, he converted.

Hebrews 8:4 has Paul saying, "**If he (Jesus) were on earth**, he would not be a priest, for there are already priests who present the offerings prescribed by the law." This suggests Paul may not have been fully assured about Jesus' historical presence on earth. For someone like that to claim he **saw** Jesus or **heard** his voice raises a reasonable suspicion that the account of Paul's encounter was inserted later by an editor.



Paul may also have harbored **hostility toward women**. Unmarried himself, he counsels others, if possible, **not to marry** (1 Cor 7:8). Not having married, he was in no position to grasp women's inner worth; unlike Jesus, he maintained a firm **male-superiority** stance.

Later biblical scholars only **intensified** this disparagement of women. “In Romans 16:7 the Apostle Paul mentions **Andronicus** and **his wife Junia** (KJV: *Junia*, NIV: *Junias*, the Korean Revised Version follows the KJV—**author’s note**) and says they are ‘**prominent among the apostles**’ (KRV: ‘well respected by the apostles’). This is the **only** verse in the New Testament that calls a woman an apostle. Realizing this, scholars perpetrated an unprecedented manipulation by adding an **s** to Junia, turning her into the male name **Junias**.” 1)

At first Paul spread teaching grounded in the “**gospel of Christ**,” but at some point he introduced other “gospels” of his own coinage—“**the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ**” (deifying Jesus), “**the gospel of God**” (identifying Yahweh with God)—and thus diverged from Jesus’ original teaching. He seems to have accommodated the **Old Testament**, which Jesus had sought to exclude.

The Apostle Paul was present at Stephen’s stoning **as an open accomplice**, “flaunting his status as he stood with the mob” (Acts 7:58: “the witnesses laid their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul”). 2)

“According to tradition, Paul and Peter were killed by Nero—together with many other early Christians—as scapegoats for the fire of AD 64 that destroyed ten of Rome’s fourteen districts. Paul was **beheaded**, Peter **crucified**. As a Roman citizen, Paul was spared crucifixion.” 3)

However, Paul did **not** die a martyr; he **died of old age in his bed**. Acts says that, asserting his Roman citizenship, he demanded trial in **Rome**; when he was sent to the governor **Felix** (Marcus Antonius Felix, prefect of Judea AD 52–58), **470 soldiers**

were assigned to escort him (Acts 23:23). He then stood trial before **Felix** (Acts 24) and **Festus** (Porcius Festus, AD 58–60; Acts 25), after which he was transported to **Rome** to be tried before **Nero** (Acts 27). Acts concludes by saying Paul lived **two years** in his **own rented quarters**, freely receiving visitors. Had Paul been martyred, dramatizing such an end would have been more effective; the absence of such a scene confirms that he lived comfortably **under Roman protection** and **died a natural death**.

Paul first appears in Acts at **Stephen's martyrdom** in the role of **enforcer**, and ends his life rejected by Jewish society but escorted by soldiers back to Rome. He lived a life **at odds** with Jesus' life, thought, and teaching.



A passage that starkly displays his mind is Romans 13's "**Be subject to the governing authorities**": "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities (i.e., the rulers of the state — **author's note**). For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities **resists what God has appointed**, and those who resist will **incur judgment** [will receive judgment — **author's note**]" (Rom 13:1–2). This is a demand for unconditional obedience to the authority of the **Roman state**.

## Peter

It is infuriating to see Peter esteemed as a great priest in Christianity. In every Gospel, Jesus hints that **Peter will betray** him, and the narratives show Peter **denying Jesus three times**. 4) Jesus knew Peter was interested in doctrines **not his own** and said, "You will deny me three times." When others questioned him as Jesus was being taken to trial, Peter's "I do not know him" does not mean he lacked acquaintance with the man Jesus; it was a dodge—claiming he was **not a member** of the "faction" or "sect" that followed Jesus' teaching.



Only **John 18:10** identifies the man who cut off the ear of the high priest's servant at the arrest: the **assailant** was **Simon Peter**; the **servant** was **Malchus**. Peter thus shows a markedly **violent and cruel** streak. Further, when **Ananias and Sapphira** concealed part of the price of their land, **Peter and his followers** first caused the husband's death, then three hours later the wife's; young men carried out the bodies and buried them (Acts 5:1–11). The **ringleader** of these atrocities was Peter.

This same Peter is the disciple to whom, in Matthew 16:18, Jesus is said to have delivered the words about **building the church**, and **St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican**

**City** bears his name. That a man who acted so contrary to Jesus' thought is honored as a saint is one of history's ironies.

The New Testament records Jesus' prediction that the disciples would betray him: "You will all fall away, for it is written: 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered'" (Matt 26:31; Mark 14:27); and, "Then **all the disciples deserted him and fled**" (Matt 26:56; Mark 14:50).

When **leadership of the movement** was entrusted to **Mary Magdalene**, it appears the group **betrayed Jesus en masse** and joined another sect. If this is so, not only the **resurrection**, but also the post-resurrection **appearances to the disciples** must be fictional.

After Jesus' death, the activities of the "**early Christianity**" centered on **Jesus' brother James, Peter**, and the other disciples took place in the **Temple** ("Day by day, continuing with one accord in the temple," Acts 2:46). This suggests they sought **coexistence** through some compromise with **Judaism**. That allowed Paul to operate among them, yet Acts and Paul's letters show **sharp conflicts** over doctrine.

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## Sources

1. **Misquoting Jesus** (Korean trans. *The History of Biblical Distortion*), Bart D. Ehrman; trans. Min Kyung-sik, Sunghim Publishing, 2006, p. 340 (edited by author).
2. Thomas H. Huxley, **Agnosticism and Christianity**, Prometheus Books, 1992, p. 178.

3. Garry Wills, **What Paul Meant**, Penguin Books, 2006, p. 161.
4. Matt 26:69–75; Mark 14:66–72; Luke 22:56–62; John 18:15–18, 25–27.