

Paul and Acts

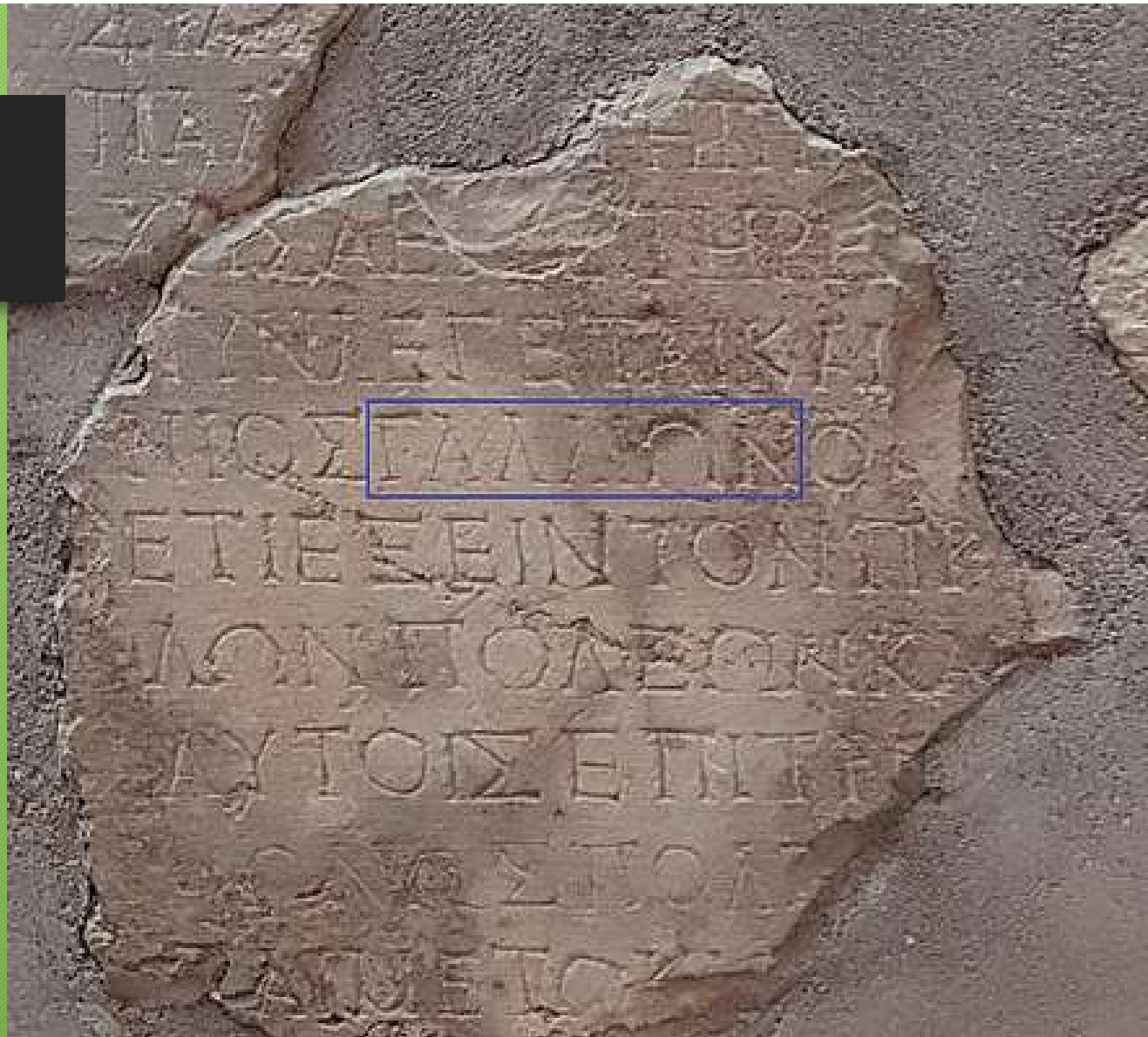
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Do We Start with Paul or Acts?

- The chronology of Paul's letters is usually based on the narrative in Acts
- Is Acts historically reliable?
- Should the letters be read according to the evidence of Acts?

Gallio Inscription

- An inscription in the temple at Delphi
- Proconsul of Achaia 51 CE
 - Dates Paul's appearance before Gallio (Acts 18:12-17)
 - But not clear which trip to Corinth
 - Usual dating assumes it's the first trip in Acts



Two Main Sources for the Life of Paul

Galatians 1-2

- 1:13-14 persecuted the church
- 1:15-16 converted
- 1:17a to Arabia
- 1:17b returned to Damascus (not Jerusalem)
- 1:18-20 after three years visited Jerusalem for the first time
- 1:21 regions of Syria and Cilicia
- 2:1 after fourteen years to Jerusalem

Acts

- Chapters 9-28

Details of Paul's Life Omitted by Acts

- Five whippings (2 Cor. 11:24)
- Two beatings by Gentiles (2 Cor. 11:25)
- Three shipwrecks, including a day adrift (2 Cor. 11:25)
- Imprisonments (2 Cor. 11:23)
- Contest with wild beasts at Ephesus (1 Cor. 15:32)
- Affliction in Asia (2 Cor. 1:8)
- "Painful" visit to Corinth before trip to Macedonia (2 Cor. 2:1)
- Sojourn in Arabia (Gal. 1:17)
- Most of the events of a fourteen-year interval (if Acts 11:37-30 is identified with Gal. 2:1)
- Paul's confrontation with Peter in Antioch over table fellowship between Jew and Gentile (Gal. 2:11ff)
- Paul's evangelization of Illyricum (Rom. 15:19)
- Internal discord and divisions in the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 1:12; 3:4, 22)
- Galatian defection (Gal. 1:6, 7; 5:16)
- The collection for the saints (1 Cor. 16:1; 2 Cor. 9, 2; Rom. 15:25-7)

Usual Approach to Dating Paul's Letters

- Read Galatians according to Acts
- Build a chronology of the letters based on the events of Acts
 - Use the intervals in Galatians to flesh out the narrative of Acts
 - Key the chronology to visits of Paul to Jerusalem

One of Several Problems

- Does Galatians 2:1 refer to:
 - Paul's second trip (Acts 11:27-30)?
 - Paul's third trip (Acts 15)?
- If second trip, Galatians was written to churches Paul had not yet founded
- If third trip, why does Paul not mention the visit of Acts 11 and the Apostolic Decree of Acts 15:20

A Key Question Fitting Galatians to Acts

- To whom was Galatians written?
 - Gallic territory in the central highlands of Anatolia
 - “North Galatian” hypothesis
 - Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe in the Roman province of Galatia
 - "South Galatian" hypothesis
- If south
 - First missionary journey (Acts 13:14-14:23)
 - Galatians can be dated before the Apostolic Council of Acts 15
 - Therefore, Galatians is late

Usual Solution to Dating of Paul's Letters

- Galatians is late in Paul's ministry
- Galatians is the earliest of Paul's letters
- Galatians is similar to Romans - Romans has Paul's most mature thinking
- Therefore there was little development in Paul's thinking in the letters

Weaknesses of the Usual Chronology

- Acts' dating is vague
- Acts' narrative is episodic
- Acts is based on a variety of sources - may not be consecutive
- Purpose of Acts
 - Not chronological accuracy
 - Not recording facts for posterity
 - To present Christianity to Roman readers as a legitimate religion, a part of Judaism

Acts is More Literature than History

- Acts 11 and 15 are different accounts of the same event
- Lack of context in some stories
- Evidence of editorial work
- A theological agenda
 - Parallels between 11 and 15: theological pattern of the author
 - Missions to the gentiles by Peter and Paul

What to Make of it All?

- Don't read Paul's letter in terms of Acts
 - There is no need to reconcile the dating of Acts with the letters
- Don't read Paul's letters from the point of view of the post-Pauline letters
- Each letter has an occasion and a purpose(s)
 - Each of Paul's letters must be read according to:
 - What it says
 - What the situation is that forms its background
 - Don't use statements in one letter to explain another

What is a Letter?

Letter

- A particular addressee
- A particular occasion
- Expects an answer

Epistle

- A literary creation
- Addressed to a general audience