

Rel 108 Life and Letters of Paul
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Summer 2008

INSTRUCTIONS FOR POSITION PAPER #1:
The Value of Acts for Understanding Paul

For basic instructions on Position Papers (length, grading, etc.) see the syllabus.

From our class lectures, your reading of the assigned authors and the New Testament passages, you should have noticed that Luke's account of Paul's visits to Jerusalem and Paul's own account differ in the number of visits. All attempts to coordinate Paul's autobiographical sketch in Gal 1-2 with Acts raise a lot of difficult questions and issues. This assignment is designed to get you to wrestle with some of them. For the purposes of this assignment, we will propose the following three theories to explain these differences:

Theory #1: Luke did not present historically factual information in Acts. Since the record of the spread of the Christian movement in Acts is theologically driven and Paul's letters describe his own theology, the differences between Paul's account and the account presented in Acts are important only for determining the theological agendas of each writer.

Theory #2: Both Acts and Paul's letters are useful for understanding the history of the Christian movement. We can understand the differences by proposing that Paul failed to mention the famine relief visit to Jerusalem described in Acts 11. Therefore, Gal 2:1-10 and Acts 15 are two accounts of the *same* Jerusalem meeting.

Theory #3: Both Acts and Paul's letters are useful for understanding the history of the Christian movement. We can understand the differences by proposing that Paul did not omit any visits to Jerusalem. His account in Gal 2:1-10 is actually parallel to the famine visit of Acts 11. Therefore, Gal 2:1-10 and Acts 15 are not referring to the same event.

If You Agree with THEORY #1:

1. Compare Luke's account and Paul's account of Paul's first post-conversion trip to Jerusalem (Acts 9:23-30; Gal 1:18-24). What are the important differences in these two accounts?
2. Now look closely at the details of the Jerusalem debate (Acts 15 and Gal 2). How many visits had Paul made to Jerusalem prior to this debate? Are different characters involved in the proceedings in the two accounts? Are these differences significant? Why or why not?
3. What could these passages in Acts and in Galatians tell us about the theological and social diversity of the early Christian communities?
4. What do these passages in Acts and in Galatians tell us about the theological agendas of Luke and Paul?
5. After considering these questions, summarize your conclusions in this week's position paper.

If you disagree with Theory #1: Study the two charts on pages 4 & 5 below that represent **Theory #2** and **Theory #3**. In both charts, the proposed parallels from Acts are on the right and Paul's biographical outline from Galatians is on the left. After looking at both charts and reflecting on them, choose whether you would like to base this paper on **Theory #2** or **Theory #3**.

If You Choose THEORY #2 - read back through the **theory #2 chart** parallels several times slowly, reflecting on them. See if you can anticipate some of the issues of interpretation on your own. Then respond to each of the following items:

1. Luke's account and Paul's accounts of Paul's first post-conversion trip to Jerusalem (Acts 9:23-30; Gal 1:18-24) have some striking differences from one another. What are they? Assuming that Acts is mostly accurate, can you think of rhetorical reasons Paul might tell this story differently? Assuming instead that Paul is mostly accurate, can you think of rhetorical reasons Luke might tell this story differently.
2. Now look closely at the details of the Jerusalem debate (Acts 15 and Gal 2). How many visits had Paul made to Jerusalem prior to this debate? Are different characters involved in the proceedings in the two accounts? Are these differences significant? Why or why not? Assuming that Acts is mostly accurate, what do you make of the differences in Paul's account? What are some major details that Paul does not tell his readers in Galatia? Can you think of any rhetorical benefits of the way he recounts the event?
3. Assuming that Luke knew Paul and had heard him tell about the Jerusalem debate in a similar fashion to what we find in Galatians, can you think of any rhetorical reasons Luke might have for telling the story differently? Paul is Luke's hero and this is the defining moment in Paul's apostolic career. What do you make of the fact he does not choose to recount Paul's speech (Acts 15:12) on this occasion?
4. Note carefully Paul's remarks about circumcision and law observance more generally in Gal 2:3-5 and 15-21. Do some of Paul's actions in the Acts column seem inconsistent in light of these remarks? How do you explain these actions?
5. What do you make of Cephas/Peter (the same person) based on all the information considered here (Acts 15:7-11; Gal 2:11-21)? Are his actions consistent?
6. After considering these questions, summarize your conclusions in this week's position paper.

If You Choose THEORY #3 - read back through the **theory #3 chart** parallels several times slowly, reflecting on them. See if you can anticipate some of the issues of interpretation on your own. Then respond to each of the following items:

1. Luke's account and Paul's accounts of Paul's first post-conversion trip to Jerusalem (Acts 9:23-30; Gal 1:18-24) have some striking differences from one another. What are they? Assuming that Acts is mostly accurate, can you think of rhetorical reasons Paul might tell this story differently? Assuming instead that Paul is mostly accurate, can you think of rhetorical reasons Luke might tell this story differently.

2. Now look closely at the details of The Second Trip to Jerusalem according to Luke and Paul (Acts 11:27-30; Gal 2:1-10). What details do the two accounts have in common? Assuming Acts is mostly accurate about the real purpose of the trip and the circumstances surrounding it, can you think of rhetorical reasons Paul might omit this information?
3. Assuming that Luke actually knew Paul and had heard him tell about this visit and the very important decisions that were made then concerning which groups Peter and Paul should go to with the gospel, can you think of any rhetorical reasons Luke might have for omitting this information?
4. Note carefully Paul's remarks about circumcision and law observance more generally in Gal 2:3-5 and 15-21. Do some of Paul's actions in the Acts column seem inconsistent in light of these remarks? How do you explain these actions?
5. What do you make of Cephas/Peter (the same person) based on all the information included here? Are his actions consistent?
6. After considering these questions, summarize your conclusions in this week's position paper.

Theory #2

Paul (Gal 1:13-2:14)	Acts
Call/conversation experience (1:15-16)	9:1-19
3 years in Arabia and Damascus (Gal 1:17)	Time in Damascus (9:19-25; compare 2 Cor 11:32-33)
First visit to Jerusalem (Gal 1:17-18)	9:26-30
Regions of Syria and Cilicia (Gal 1:21)	Tarsus (9:30) & Antioch (11:25-26)
	Famine Visit to Jerusalem (11:27-29)
	In Antioch (13:1-3)
	First Missionary Journey
	Return to Antioch (14:26)
14 years later Second Visit to Jerusalem (Gal 2:1-10)	Council visit to Jerusalem (Acts 15)
Disagreement at Antioch (Gal 2:11-14)	Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch (15:33-35); separate over John Mark (15:36-41)

Theory #3

Paul (Gal 1:13-2:14)	Acts
Call/conversation experience (1:15-16)	9:1-19
3 years in Arabia and Damascus (Gal 1:17)	Time in Damascus (9:19-25; compare 2 Cor 11:32-33)
First visit to Jerusalem (Gal 1:17-18)	9:26-30
Regions of Syria and Cilicia (Gal 1:21)	Tarsus (9:30) & Antioch (11:25-26)
14 years later Second Visit to Jerusalem (Gal 2:1-10)	Famine Visit to Jerusalem (11:27-29)
Disagreement at Antioch (Gal 2:11-14)	In Antioch (13:1-3)
	First Missionary Journey
	Return to Antioch (14:26)
	Council visit to Jerusalem (Acts 15)
	Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch (15:33-35); separate over John Mark (15:36-41)