

## *10 Did Jesus Applaud the Ephesians for Exposing Paul as a False Apostle?*

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### *Is There A Thirteenth Apostle?*

It is hard to imagine that Paul's thirteen letters never came to the attention of any of the *twelve* apostles. One would expect to find some testing by the apostles of Paul's claims to be an apostle.

Jesus in Revelation 2:2 mentions a trial at Ephesus of persons who told the Ephesians they were apostles. The verdict found they were not true apostles. Jesus told the Ephesians:

I have known thy works, and thy labour, and thy endurance, and that thou art not able to bear evil ones, and that thou hast tried those **saying themselves to be apostles** and are not, and hast found them **liars**. (Rev. 2:2. YLT)

In Revelation, Jesus did **not** say the same thing to any of the other six churches whom He addressed. Jesus made this remark to the only church among the seven whom we know Paul visited: the church at Ephesus. And among the seven churches, it was only the church at Ephesus whom we know Paul told that he was an apostle. (Eph. 1:1.) Paul wrote this church:

From Paul, chosen by God to be **an apostle of Christ Jesus**. To God's people who live in Ephesus and are faithful followers of Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 1:1 ASV.)<sup>1</sup>

If Paul were the object of Jesus' remarks in Rev. 2:2, it then makes sense that only the church at Ephesus would be commended for trying someone who told the Ephesians that he was an apostle. To the Ephesians, and to them alone, Jesus commends them for testing the ones who "said" they were apostles and are not, but are "liars." Now it was to the Ephesians that we likewise know Paul 'said he was an apostle....'

Was Paul *not* an apostle, thus bringing Revelation 2:2 directly to bear on Paul?

Indeed, there is no evidence for Paul being an apostle, except from Paul's own mouth. As Segal mentions, in Acts "Luke makes no reference [to the twelve accepting Paul's apostalate]." <sup>2</sup> Of course, the four gospel accounts have no mention of Paul, and thus offer no basis to confirm Paul as an apostle.

It is also clear from Acts that the Apostles themselves understood their number was set at *twelve*, but that this did not include Paul. Long before Revelation 2:2 was written, we know from Acts 1:21-26 that the twelfth apostle—Matthias—was chosen to replace Judas. The apostles' criteria for the replacement was that it had to be someone who was with the others from the beginning of Jesus' ministry. Luke reveals therefore that the eleven had a criteria that would likewise exclude adding Paul as an apostle.

Then Jesus in the Book of Revelation reveals *twelve is the number of apostles for all time*. The verse of Revelation 21:14 follows the mention of the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem. Each gate has a name of the twelve tribes of Israel on it. Revelation 21:14 then says:

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1. Some of the oldest surviving manuscripts omit explicit mention of Ephesus in verse 1. Metzger argues this was due to an earlier effort to universalize the letter. Metzger concludes it probably did originally mention Ephesus. (Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987) at 265.)
  2. Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990) at 189.

The city was built on *twelve* foundation stones. On each of the stones was written the name of one of the Lamb's *twelve apostles*. (Rev. 21:14 CEV.)

There is a clear correspondence of one apostle for each of the twelve tribes, gates, and foundation stones. The number each time is only *twelve*. It implies there are not supposed to be more than twelve apostles. You cannot have thirteen or fourteen apostles judging the twelve tribes. Jesus made this clear during His earthly ministry as well. Jesus said the role of the *twelve* apostles was to “sit upon *twelve* thrones, judging the *twelve* tribes of Israel.” (Matt. 19:28.)

The apostles understood it the same way. When Judas fell away and was lost, they added Matthias to bring their number back to twelve. (Acts 1:22-26.) When apostles were martyred later, such as Apostle James (the brother of John), mentioned in Acts 12:2, the apostles did not replace him. Had they done so, this would bring their number to thirteen in the resurrection ruling over the New Jerusalem. The apostles must have seen the mis-match which a thirteenth apostle would represent in fulfilling their role as *twelve* judges over the *twelve* tribes into eternity.

Alan Johnson in the Calvinist *Expositor's Bible Commentator* agrees the early church treated the offices of the *twelve* apostles as dying with them. They were not to be replaced. Their number of *twelve* was unique.

As to whether the authoritative function of apostles continued after the first century, the apostolic fathers are instructive. In no case do the many references to apostles in the writings of Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Barnabas, and the Shepherd of Hermas relate to any recognized apostles other than those associated with the NT. The Fathers apparently understood ***the special apostolic function [on earth] to have ceased with the end of the apostolic era.***<sup>3</sup>

Luke in Acts made it evident there were only twelve apostles for all time, and this excluded Paul. ***Never does Paul claim in Acts to be an apostle of Jesus. Never do the apostles describe Paul as an apostle.*** This has been recognized by all Pauline scholars. For example, John Crossan and Jonathan Reed, in their latest work of 2004:

[I]n all his letters, Paul sees himself as an apostle sent from God through Christ.<sup>4</sup> The very vocation for which Paul lives is ***denied him by Luke***. He is, to be sure, an important missionary....But ***he is not an apostle*** equal to the Twelve.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, Crossan & Reed make the point that Luke's story of how Matthias replaced Judas excludes the possibility of a thirteenth apostle such as Paul. They write:

Luke insists in Acts 1 that, after Jesus' resurrection, there were still, ***always, and only*** 'the twelve apostles.'...For Luke, ***Paul is simply not an apostle.***<sup>6</sup> Without Matthias' explicit selection, one might have imagined that Luke's Paul was at least implicitly Judas' replacement as the twelfth apostle. With it, ***Luke implies that Paul was not an apostle and could never be one.***...[H]e could never be the one thing Paul always insisted that he was, namely, an apostle

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3. Alan Johnson, "Revelation," *Hebrews-Revelation in The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Ed. F.E. Gaebelein)(Zondervan: 1981) Vol. 12 at 434.
  4. See, e.g., 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Galatians 1:1; 1 Ti. 1:1. See, viz., "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." (1 Cor. 15:9, ASV) and "For I reckon that I am not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles." (2 Cor. 11:5, ASV).
  5. John Crossan & Jonathan Reed, *In Search of Paul: How Jesus' Apostle Opposed Rome's Empire with God's Kingdom* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2004) at 29.

sent by God through a revelation of the risen Lord. (*Id.*, at 29.)

Thus, the only person to say Paul is an apostle *of Jesus Christ* in the entire New Testament is Paul himself. Yet, we know that Jesus said if He alone bore witness to Himself, then His witness would be untrue. (John 5:31, “If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.”) Jesus was extending the Law’s principle, so that two witnesses were necessary to establish not only a wrong, but also anything as important as God sending someone for a special role.<sup>7</sup> In fact, Jesus in Revelation 2:2 clearly agrees a self-serving claim to be His apostle is insufficient.<sup>8</sup> Thus, Paul’s claim to being an apostle thus suffers from being self-serving. By a *Biblical* standard from *Jesus* Himself, Paul’s self-witness “is not true.”

Thus, the identity of the person who *said* he was an apostle to the Ephesians in Revelation 2:2 but who could not be an apostle is proven from the Bible itself. Honest Pauline scholars have conceded this underlying problem to Paul’s validity. His claim to apostleship is uncorroborated and thus Jesus says Paul’s claim “is not true.” (John 5:31.) As a result, it is obvious the person spoken of in Revelation 2:2 is Paul because the New Testament gives us a record of:

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6. Luke does describe Paul and Barnabas as messengers from the church at Antioch. In Acts 14:4 and 14, the Greek word for *messenger* is used for them, *apostoli*. However, as the Christian historian Ben Witherington explains: “The use of the term *apostoli* in [Acts] 14:4 and 14 seems to indicate that Paul and Barnabas are being viewed as agents/apostles of the Antioch church (cf. 2 Cor. 8:23), not apostles with a capital A.” (Witherington, *New Testament History* (Baker Academic: 2001) at 229.) In fact, the context clearly shows Paul was merely a messenger (*apostolos*) of the church of Antioch. Paul was not one of the *apostoli* of Jesus. Even if Luke had called Paul an apostle of Jesus, Luke does not attribute such title as coming from the twelve apostles, or from Jesus in any vision that Paul relates. Thus, it would have been Luke’s remark alone. Luke never claims he himself is a prophet. Nor even if he was a prophet, we still lack the second witness. Nevertheless, Luke’s meaning was *apostoli* with a small *a*. Paul was a messenger from Antioch.

- Only *one person* told the Ephesians he was an apostle who was in fact not one of the twelve apostles (*i.e.*, Paul).
- A complete record of the twelve apostles in Acts excludes Paul.
- In Acts, Paul was never recognized as an apostle by the twelve; and
- In Acts, Paul never claims to be an apostle of Jesus Christ and thus no record exists of an authoritative acceptance by the twelve of Paul as such an apostle.

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7. Jesus was corroborated by God's Holy Spirit in the appearance of a Dove as well as the Father's voice from heaven. (Matt. 3:16-17.) Paul lacks any corroboration on his claim. The theme of corroboration by two witnesses runs throughout the Bible. The Law said that no crime could be established by a single witness. (Deut. 19:15, "any crime or any wrong"). Jesus taught in event of a dispute over a wrong, obtain witnesses so by "the mouth of two witnesses or three *every word* may be established." (Mat 18:16.) Why must this principle apply to would-be apostles? Because without two witnesses with *competent knowledge*, one's claim is entirely *self-serving*. If two witnesses were needed to prove a crime, how much more so to prove something far more important eternally such as one being an apostle. In this case, the Ephesians must have realized proof that someone was an apostle required more than the person's say-so that he was an apostle. Just as Jesus' witnesses were the voice of Yahweh and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, Paul needed two witnesses. In this case, the only valid *two* witnesses would be Jesus on one side and/or the joint decision of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ on the other. The binding authority of the apostles required a joint decision, and not the solitary decision of a single apostle. This is precisely how Matthias was added as the twelfth. (See "Apostolic Decisions Were Binding In Heaven Only When Reached Jointly" on page 494.) However, such proof from either Jesus or the twelve is entirely lacking in the New Testament. Paul's supposed apostleship is *never stated by Jesus* in any of the three vision accounts in Acts. Nor is such an assertion about Paul found in any apostolic speech in Acts or letter of an apostle of Jesus Christ. Not even the pseudograph of 2 Peter says Paul is an apostle. (On its pseudograph nature, see Appendix B at page xix.)

*Paul & Luke Mention A Heresy Trial of Paul at Ephesus*

Is there any evidence in the Bible that the Ephesians determined Paul was not an apostle?

Yes. Paul and Luke both mention that Paul was subject to a heresy trial at Ephesus, a city of Asia (Western Turkey). Paul likewise mentions that all the churches of Asia (Western Turkey) thereafter came to reject Paul. We are puzzled by these verses and we pass over them. However, in light of Revelation 2:2, God has given us this evidence so we can apply Revelation 2:2.

Some background on Ephesus is necessary to understand the Bible passages at issue.

Ephesus was in the province of Asia. This was not near China. Rather it was a Roman province along the west coast of modern Turkey, near Greece. To differentiate this Asia from the Far East, it is sometimes called Proconsular Asia. Ephesus was Proconsular Asia's leading city. Ephesus had a population of 250,000.<sup>9</sup>

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8. Revelation 2:2 specifically says the persons on trial "said" they were apostles. Yet, such a self-serving statement did not suffice. Jesus says the claimants were appropriately found to be liars. Thus, Jesus' own words in Revelation 2:2 agree that self-serving testimony cannot ever be the basis to treat someone as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

9. For background on Ephesus, see Ben Witherington, *New Testament History* (Baker Academic: 2001) at 280.

FIGURE 1. Map of the Roman province of Proconsular Asia



In Second Timothy, Paul talks of a trial he endured in a Christian congregation. Paul says he put up “his first defense” among them. However, Paul says “all forsook me.” (2 Tim. 4:14-17.) In an exact parallel, Paul identifies in the same epistle that this trial took place in Asia—where Ephesus is the capital. Paul writes that *all the Christians of Asia defected from him*. What else other than a heresy trial at Asia’s leading church of Ephesus can explain this action? In 2 Timothy 1:15, Paul writes:

This thou knowest, that ***all that are in Asia turned away from me***; of whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes. (ASV)

Paulinists have no explanation of this verse except to deny Paul’s words. Adam Clarke says Paul must be referring to Asiatic Christians at Rome. “He cannot be speaking of any general defection of the Asiatic Church....” However, *Asia* is primarily two major cities: Ephesus and Smyrna. It is not that hard to believe such a defection took place. We are not talking of a large area covering many major churches. Furthermore, Clarke has no explanation for denying Paul means what he says. It is self-evident Clarke is appealing to our respect for Paul. We cannot imagine Paul sinking so low.



Thus, even Paul's own words that "all... in Asia turned away from me..." cannot convince those devoted to Paul that what Paul says is true.

However, contrary to Clarke's spin, Luke in Acts chapter 19 records the event leading to what Paul mentioned in 2 Timothy 1:15 and 4:14-17. Luke records that the budding church of Ephesus decided at one point to have nothing further to do with Paul. In fact, Luke appears to be implying a heresy trial of Paul took place at Ephesus in Asia. Here is what Luke records in Acts 19:1, 8-9 (ASV):

(1)...Paul...came to Ephesus....(8) And he entered into the synagogue [at Ephesus], and spake boldly for the space of three months, reasoning and persuading as to the things concerning the kingdom of God. (9) But when some were **hardened** and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the multitude, **he departed from them** [*i.e.*, the Ephesians].

Thus, in Luke's account, Paul no longer went to the budding church at Ephesus where he had been "persuading" them for three months. While it appears the leadership favored Paul, he encountered opposition eventually from some influential members.<sup>10</sup> Clearly, this event would be a muted way that a friend like Luke would record a heresy trial.

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10. It is hard to imagine after three months of Paul's preaching ("reasoning and **persuading** concerning the kingdom of God") that this *assembly* lacked a significant support for Jesus as Messiah. Paul apparently always preached correctly the Messianic prophecies in the Law and Prophets. (Acts 28:23 *et seq.*) Thus, there could have been a significant number among the leadership who accepted Jesus as Messiah. However, then Luke says "some were hardened" at the end of this three month period. It does not appear this came at the leadership level. Apparently something Paul said at the end of three months *turned off influential members completely to Paul's version of the Way*. Thus, it appears the leadership of the assembly had previously turned to Christ, but now influential members objected to Paul's preaching there, forcing a trial to resolve the issue. Thus, this synagogue qualifies to be seen as the *assembly* mentioned in Revelation 2:2.

Yet, this parallels what Jesus spoke about twenty years later in Revelation 2:2. There was a trial at Ephesus of a person who said he was an apostle but who was not (and could not be) an apostle.

Paul in Second Corinthians again recalls this defection among Christians of Asia. He says it felt like he was under the “sentence of death.” In 2 Cor. 1:8-9, Paul writes:

(8) For we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning our affliction which befell us in **Asia**, that we were weighed down exceedingly, beyond our power, insomuch that we despaired even of life: (9) yea, we ourselves have had **the sentence of death** within ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead: (ASV)

Hence, Paul alludes to an affliction in Proconsular Asia—in which Ephesus was the leading city—which felt like an experience of a death-sentence. The fact Paul was not killed is proof he is speaking figuratively. A church heresy verdict in Asia would perfectly fit Paul’s meaning. If Paul were the one Jesus has in mind in Revelation 2:2 (*i.e.*, someone tried as a false claimant to being an apostle), such a verdict would be like a *sentence of death*. It would be a crushing blow to Paul’s evangelism.

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*Evidence of the Actual Verdict At Ephesus  
in The Writings of Tertullian in 207 A.D.*

It appears in 207 A.D. that Tertullian in a work entitled *Against Marcion* memorializes the *actual verdict* at Ephesus against Paul. Tertullian is a leading member of the church of Carthage, and a prolific writer on Christian themes. He is one of the most respected of all the Christian writers who predate the Roman Catholic era which began in 325 A.D.

To understand Tertullian's words about Paul, we need to lay some background on church doctrine of that era and on Marcion.

The early church commentators in the 125-325 A.D.<sup>11</sup> period universally rejected almost all uniquely Pauline doctrines. Instead, in that period, almost all doctrine belonged to James' teachings.<sup>12</sup>

This is never disputed by Paulinists. The first 'orthodox' post-apostolic thinker who Paulinists ever cite as holding Pauline doctrines is Augustine from the late 300s A.D. He was the first and only early Christian voice to espouse predestination as taught by Paul. He also spoke of the gift of perseverance. Augustine was a leading Roman Catholic figure whose writings date to the Fourth Century.

However, there was someone prior to Augustine who held Pauline doctrines on grace and salvation: it was Marcion. He arose around 144 A.D. (See Appendix B: *How the Canon Was Formed* at page ix.)

**"The writings of Tertullian...were often on the lips of Calvin and Luther."**

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11. This is the period that antedates the rise of Roman Catholicism as we think of it today. While there was a bishop of Rome since apostolic times, there was no superiority of this bishop acknowledged by any others until after 325 A.D. Even after that point, this superiority was only recognized within the Roman Empire. Within its territory, the Roman government gave official sanction and exclusive legitimacy to the Roman Catholic Church. For more background, see footnote 16.

12. See "Patristic Era (125-325 A.D.) Rejected Paul's Salvation Doctrine" on page 425. See "The Patristic Era Church Also Rejected Paul's Predestination Doctrine" on page 432. See "The Patristic Era Also Blasted Paul's Doctrine on Eating Idol Meat" on page 435. See "The Eastern Orthodox Church & Paul" on page 438. See also *Paul or James' Church: Who Was The Most Successful Evangelist?*, available online exclusively at [www.jesuswordsonly.com](http://www.jesuswordsonly.com).

Despite Marcion's core doctrines agreeing with Paul, the early church in that period pursued Marcion and his followers as heretics. The Marcionites clearly held Paul's doctrines of salvation by faith alone (*i.e.* without obedience) as the true gospel. (See page 49.) Marcion insisted the twelve apostles (and their gospel narratives) were wrong on the doctrine of grace. Marcion claimed their gospel narratives were for the era of Law. Marcion opted for a narrative of Jesus' life that reads a lot like Luke's gospel. However, it is missing the first three chapters of Luke and a few other passages. Based on Paul's letter to the Galatians, Marcion claimed the Law of Moses was abrogated. We do not have to obey the God of the 'Old Testament' but only the God of the New.

To counter this movement, the issue of Paul's validity had to be resolved. It is in this context that the well-respected Christian leader, Tertullian, stood up in 207 A.D. and wrote *Against Marcion*.

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### *Tertullian's Points About Paul*

What Tertullian wrote about Paul's validity has all the earmarks of what one would expect would be a judicial decision at Ephesus involving Paul.

Tertullian makes the following sobering points about Paul:

- Jesus never made Paul an apostle from the records that we can read.
- Paul's claim to apostleship solely relies upon Paul's veracity.
- If Paul were a true apostle, he is still an inferior apostle because Paul in Acts 15 submitted his doctrine to the twelve.
- If Paul later varied from the twelve, we must regard the twelve as more authoritative than Paul because he came later.
- Paul's claim of being selected as an apostle later by Jesus seems implausible. That story asks us to believe Jesus had not planned things adequately with the twelve.

- Lastly, Jesus warned us of false prophets who would come doing miracles in His name and signs and wonders, and Paul perfectly matches that prophesied type of prophet.

This passage from Tertullian is quoted *verbatim* later in this book at page 408 *et seq.*

Tertullian's words are an echo of precisely what one would expect to hear in a sensible verdict about Paul at Ephesus. Tertullian is apparently revealing to us the findings in the Revelation 2:2 hearing. Paul is not to be regarded as an apostle on par with the twelve, if at all. Whatever Paul truly represents in God's eyes, in our finite eyes we must realize Paul is subject to the authority and *superior* teaching of the twelve. Finally, Tertullian said Paul possibly is a liar and a false prophet because he came in the name of Christ with signs and wonders and only had himself as a witness of his apostolic status. Tertullian said this meant Paul potentially fits Jesus' express warning about false prophets. (See Matt. 7:21 *et seq.*) Thus, Tertullian concluded we must quote from Paul cautiously. In other words, only if Paul's words solidly line up with Jesus' words should we follow Paul's words.

Tertullian's teachings not only reflect apparently the ruling at Ephesus, but they also *explain* why we see the early church never following most of Paul's core teachings. This pattern continued for almost two millennia until Luther revived Paulinism. In earliest Christianity, Paul must have been deemed inferior by the church at large, particularly on issues of salvation, or else the following facts make no sense:

- The early church leaders from 125-325 A.D. *universally* reject almost all of Paul's unique doctrines, *e.g.*, salvation by faith alone, total depravity, predestination, man lacks free-will, docetism, etc.<sup>13</sup>

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13. See footnote 12 on page 225. On Paul's docetism, and its rejection, see "Did Paul Teach Jesus Did Not Truly Have Human Flesh?" on page 336 *et seq.*

- The Orthodox Church (now totalling 250 million members) can trace back its origins to that same early church. It existed in territories outside the Roman Empire and was free therefore to reject most of the errors later arising in Roman Catholicism (e.g., extreme Mariology, etc).<sup>14</sup> Yet, its doctrines are identical to the early church of 125-325 A.D. To this day the Orthodox reject all of Paul's uniquely Pauline doctrines. Furthermore, in direct contravention of Paul's directive in Galatians, the Orthodox also keep the Mosaic law's command to rest on the Saturday-Sabbath. The Orthodox claim it was never abrogated. (They have always also worshipped on Sunday.)<sup>15</sup>
- Roman Catholicism, in the form we know it today, arose after 325 A.D.<sup>16</sup> Despite all its flaws, it still retained some of the core teaching of James and Jesus on salvation, claiming sin causes loss of salvation. Thus, Catholicism has always rejected Paul's faith alone and eternal security teaching. Augustine, however, misled Catholicism to adopt a Sacramental system where the church dispensed *regeneration* by baptism even to infants without faith. The Catholic church also did accept two doctrines espoused uniquely by Paul: original sin and the abrogation of the Mosaic law (e.g., abrogating Saturday Sabbath for Christians). Thus, Catholicism in 363 A.D. broke the prior nearly universal tradition among Christians of keeping Saturday Sabbath. By contrast, the Orthodox—who long ago severed ties with Roman Catholicism—reject the doctrine of original sin and Mariology while they have kept the Saturday Sabbath for 2,000 years.

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14. While the Orthodox do not engage in extreme Mariology, they do have a potentially unhealthy attention on Mary. The Orthodox “do not view Mary as a Mediator and Co-redemptrix as does the Roman Catholic church, but it does view Mary as the perpetual virgin and as an intercessor to be prayed to. Orthodox theologians are quick to deny that Mary is to be worshiped....” (Bill Crouse, *The Orthodox Church* (C.I.M.)) However, it is obvious praying to any person for supernatural assistance other than God is having another *god* before the True God. It is idol-worship. It violates the First and Second Commandments.

15. See page 438 *et seq.*

This history demonstrates that the main church, other than heretics, all rejected Paul's unique core teachings for almost two millennia. Tertullian's words show a judicious approach to Paul, as if rendered by a court. Paul can be listened to insofar as he does not contradict Jesus. But we do not

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16. Roman Catholicism as we know it today was created after 325 A.D. After that date, the Roman Emperors authorized it to exert authority over all Christian churches in the Roman Empire. As a result, the *papacy* as we know it today arose sometime after 325 A.D. There is no denying that Peter around 47 A.D. founded a branch church at Rome. He did the same earlier at Antioch. That gave Rome a co-equal claim with the church at Antioch to apostolic origin. This gave Rome a superior claim in the West over churches outside Antioch's influence. (Sixty-six churches were under Antioch's authority.) The Roman church did become a leader among its close neighbors. (See Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3:1:1 (A.D. 189); Eusebius, *History of the Church*, 6:14:1.) But was this a direct administrative control by infallible decree as we know today? No. Roman Catholic authorities try to prove the *papacy* existed in the pre-325 period from two examples. However, even by these official Catholic accounts, both times the bishop of Rome tried to exert influence outside Rome, it was not appreciated. It is resisted. The first example is from Tertullian. Tertullian ridicules the effort by the Roman bishop to be "bishop of bishops." This belies the authority was welcome or accepted. It certainly shows leaders at Carthage like Tertullian did not deem the Roman bishop's authority as infallible. The final example they cite is from Irenaeus, but it is more of the same. Rather than proving the *papacy* existed prior to 325 A.D., these two examples prove just the opposite. (See "The Pope," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12260a.htm>.) Another distinctive doctrine of the Roman Catholics is that Mary was sinless. This too materialized late. It was a doctrine rejected in the so-called *patristic* age (125-325 A.D.) As the *Catholic Encyclopedia* concedes, "in regard to the sinlessness of Mary, the older Fathers are very cautious: some of them even *seem to be in error on the matter*." ("Immaculate Conception," *C. Enc.*, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07674d.htm>.) Thus, what makes Roman Catholicism distinctly Catholic arose after 325 A.D. There were many later accretions that we also think of as Catholic, but they did not pre-exist 325 A.D. These include the following familiar doctrines: purgatory as doctrine (593 A.D.); prayers to Mary and dead saints (600 A.D.); celibacy of priesthood (1079 A.D.); indulgences (1190 A.D.); purgatory as dogma (1439 A.D.) etc. Thus, Roman Catholicism as we know it today arose *after* 325 A.D. It cannot trace its distinctive papal office and unique doctrines back any farther in historical records.

treat Paul as inspired, *ever*. We make no effort to bend Jesus' words to fit Paul's words. That appears to be the actual verdict at Ephesus. This explains ***why Paul's writings were allowed to be connected physically to the Lord's gospel.*** With a *proper introduction*, it was believed Paul's letters could be read for whatever worth they held. Otherwise, on any teaching at odds with Jesus, Paul had to be and was ignored.

Tertullian's comments on Paul's validity, therefore, if affixed as an introduction to Paul's letters, would allow us to sift the good from the bad. Tertullian's thoughts on Paul were forgotten or ignored by Luther and Calvin. Their emphasis on Paul's words broke every caution that Tertullian put up in 207 A.D.

Thus, the Reformation was launched in the 1520s based on Paul's writings without remembering how the church had kept Paul subordinate to the twelve. Paul was subordinate in particular to the four gospel accounts of the teachings of Jesus. This subordination apparently had been cemented in the verdict in Revelation 2:2. Paul's place in the church was decreed at Ephesus. Jesus commended the verdict in Revelation 2:2. It stood solid until the 1520s when Luther began proclaiming once again, like Marcion, the gospel of Paul.

#### **Why Is Paul Then In the Post-Apostolic Canon Lists?**

As noted above, Tertullian's view of Paul in 207 A.D. was that he was inferior to the true apostles. If this was well-known and accepted, then why was Paul added within the ensuing century to the New Testament canon? The answer primarily depends on recognition that *canon* back then did not mean what we mean by *canon* today. If we had the same concept of canon today as back then, we would be willing to include popular writers in our New Testament along with the *inspired* writers. We might attach the writings of C.S. Lewis or Billy Graham. We would know the difference. We would acknowledge both are inferior to the twelve apostles and



Jesus. But we could still read them both for edification. This was Jerome's express understanding of canon in 411 A.D. That year Jerome personally affixed the Apocrypha to his complete translation of the Bible. This Bible was known as the Latin Vulgate. Jerome clearly said he added the Apocrypha solely because it was edifying. Its connection did not signify the *Apocrypha* could be used as the basis of doctrine. In other words, it was not inspired.<sup>17</sup>

This was also clearly the same point Tertullian made about Paul's writings in *Against Marcion* (207 A.D.). Tertullian demonstrated a judicious approach. He affirms Paul is not a true apostle and even is possibly a false prophet. Tertullian goes on to say Paul is "my apostle." He finds edifying doctrines of Paul that are consistent with Jesus.

Tertullian was not ignoring Paul had contrary doctrine to Jesus on salvation and eternal security. Tertullian goes to great lengths to refute Paul's contrary doctrines without mentioning Paul's name.<sup>18</sup>

Why did Tertullian make any effort to retain Paul for edification purposes while making otherwise highly critical observations about him and his doctrines? The reason appears obvious. Tertullian is battling the Marcionites. They claim Paul alone has the true gospel. It is a gospel where obedience does not matter any more. God saves the believer and no longer judges one for disobedience.<sup>19</sup> The Marcionites insist the twelve apostles were legalistic. The twelve presented a Jesus who made salvation turn on obedience. The Jesus of the twelve did not present the gospel of Paul. The twelve's gospel belonged to the God of the Old Testament. Paul's gospel

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17. See Footnote Number 6 on page 36.

18. See "Tertullian Criticizes Every Pauline Doctrine of Marcion" on page 421.

19. See page 49.

belonged to the God of the New Testament.<sup>20</sup> Tertullian was obviously struggling to find a solution to this excessive marginalization of Jesus.

What solution did Tertullian choose? It was simple. He chose good politics. We can hold onto Paul, read him for edification purposes, but we must realize he is not inspired. He is not on par with the twelve. This is what explains Paul's presence in later canon lists.

Thus, early canon lists which add Paul can only be understood in light of Marcionism. Marcionite Paul-onlyism was bravely fought off by the church. The price of peace was that Jesus' true apostles had pre-eminence, but Paul's writings could be read for edification.

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*Luke Even Tells Us What Were The Charges of Heresy Against Paul*

Returning to the specifics of the trial at Ephesus, Luke gives us another important tid-bit. From this morsel, we can deduce what was the charge against Paul at the Ephesus church. In Acts chapter 21, Luke tells us that Jews *from Asia* at Jerusalem were saying Paul spoke against the continuing validity of the Law and against the Jewish people's position within the New Covenant. In Acts 21:28, "Jews from *Asia*" appeal to James for help, complaining: "This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people and the Law...." These Jews were likely followers of Jesus. This is apparently why they appealed to James for help. They were saying Paul was teaching against the continuing role of national Israel as covenant-partner with God and against the Law of Moses. James then takes their side in conversations with Paul, which bolsters again the fact these were Christian Jews.

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20. See "Marcion's Canon (144 A.D.)." on page ix of Appendix B.

### The Biblical Basis to these Charges Against Paul

Of course, if Paul taught these things alleged in Acts 21:28, he would be contradicting God's promise of a New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:31. This promise specifically insisted it was not to replace the Mosaic Law. Nor was the New Covenant intended to forsake national Israel as God's covenant-partner. Rather, in the book of Jeremiah, God made a point of promising a "New Covenant with the House of Israel and Judah" based on *intensifying* internal knowledge of the *Law of Moses*. God would accompany this by revealing Himself more personally and offering forgiveness and mercy.<sup>21</sup> Thus, the Covenant of Mercy (which this New Covenant represents) was marked by making the knowledge of the terms of the Law more readily

**"I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel and the House of Judah... I will put the Torah on their hearts."  
Jeremiah 31:31-34**

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21. Jeremiah 31:31-34 (ASV) reads: "Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah [*i.e.* Yahweh], that I will make a **new covenant** with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:... This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith Jehovah: ***I will put my Law [Torah] in their inward parts***, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people: and they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know Jehovah [*i.e.*, Yahweh]; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more."

known and practiced.<sup>22</sup> As God similarly said in Isaiah, when His Servant (Messiah) comes, God “will magnify the Law (Torah), and make it honorable.” (Isaiah 42:21 KJV.)

This Jeremiah prophecy also specifically said God did not mean by a new covenant to imply he was exchanging an old partner for a new one. Immediately after the promise of the “New Covenant with the House of Israel and Judah,” God declares how impossible it would be for Him to forsake the “*seed* of Israel....” Jeremiah chapter 31 reads:

(35) Thus saith Jehovah, who giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, who stirreth up the sea, so that the waves thereof roar; Jehovah of hosts is his name: (36) ***If these ordinances depart from before me, saith Jehovah, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.*** (37) Thus saith Jehovah: If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, then will I also cast off all the ***seed of Israel*** for all that they have done, saith Jehovah. Jeremiah 31:35-37 (ASV)

Dr. Renald Showers, in a prominent feature article on John Ankerberg’s website, says this is too clear to ignore. “[I]t is evident that God intended to establish the New Covenant with the *literal* people of Israel.”<sup>23</sup>

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22. As one Jewish commentator explains Jer. 31:31 *et seq*, it “implies no rejection of the Covenant of the Torah (aka ‘the Law’) but rather that the Law shall be ‘inscribed in hearts’ of the Jewish people, *i.e.*, they will not have to study the Law, as before, but all of its details will be known ‘by heart’ and practiced by every Jew....” (*A Primer: Why Jews Cannot Believe in Jesus* (2003) (available online.) Indeed, how could “inscribed in their hearts” mean what Paulinists claim it means instead—the Law was *abrogated entirely*?

23. See Dr. Renald Showers, *The New Covenant*, at <http://www.ankerberg.com/Articles/biblical-prophecy/BP1102W1.htm> (2005).

Thus, because Paul indeed taught that God cut off Israel, abandoning her like Abraham did Hagar and Ishmael in the desert (Gal. 4:25-26) and now salvation was through another lineage (*i.e.*, Israel's father, Isaac) (Gal. 4:28), then Paul was guilty of the charge brought by the Asian Jews in Acts 21:28. The fact we know Paul taught both things charged by the "Asian Jews" heightens the probability he was convicted at Ephesus of such charges. Let's review the case.

### **Could A Law *Eternal for All Generations* Be Abrogated in 33 A.D.?**

To prove the likelihood that Paul could be found guilty at Ephesus, let's recreate the prosecutor's probable case.

This promise of a New Covenant toward the seed of Israel in Jeremiah 31:35-37 is itself based upon the promise of God that "these ordinances" of the Law shall be "everlasting for all *generations*." (Ex. 27:21; 30:21; Lev. 6:18; 7:36; 10:9; 17:7; 23:14, 21, 41; 24:3; Num. 10:8; 15:15.)

Thus, for at least as long as humans have offspring, *i.e.*, generations, the Law remains valid. We know this period will be at least until heaven and earth pass away. This is because on the Last Day when all are resurrected (Rev. 20:13-15) appears "a new heaven and a new earth." (Rev. 21:1.) Then simultaneously the righteous are resurrected. They become like angels. They no longer get married or have offspring. (Matt. 22:30.) Thus, human generations cease on the Last Day. Thus, at least until humans no longer have generations and instead when they become like angels, the Law remains valid. It is as Jesus says:

For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished. (Matt. 5:18.)

Will the Law survive the passing of heavens and earth? We cannot know for sure. The only thing for sure we know that survives the passing of the heavens and earth are Jesus' words.

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. (Matt. 24:35.)

Thus, because Paul taught that a Jewish person was "released" from the Law in 33 A.D. by accepting their Messiah (Rom. 7:2), Paul was contradicting God's promise that the Law was "eternal for all generations." This may change after all the heavens and earth pass away (*i.e.*, when human generations cease), but that had not yet happened in 33 A.D. Thus, if the charges against Paul proved he said the Jewish people were released in 33 A.D. from their covenant obligation to keep the Law, Paul's Jewish-Christian opponents would have had a valid case against him.

In fact, we know Paul taught Jews were released from the Law in 33 A.D. Paul even insisted it was only because of stubbornness they continue to follow the Law. (Romans 7:1 *et seq.*; Rom. 10:21. See "Romans Chapter Seven Says the Jews Are Released From the Law" on page 80 *et seq.*; Luther, *Commentary on Galatians* 2:4-5.)

If Paul's letters did not prove these charges at Ephesus, we might doubt he was convicted there. However, because his actual writings prove the charges as true, there is a heightened probability that Paul was indeed convicted at Ephesus.

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### *Conclusion*

After Paul's death, Jesus reveals to John in Revelation some important lessons. One truth is that Jesus says there are twelve apostles. They are twelve pillars in the new heavens and earth. The number twelve is a number that is never increased in Jesus' mind, even after Paul's ministry is over. There is no thirteenth apostle. There is not a shred of evidence other than Paul's own testimony that he was an apostle.

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## Conclusion

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There is never any mention in Acts or by Paul himself that the twelve apostles accepted Paul as an apostle of Jesus Christ *per se*. None in Acts. None in John's letters. Never in Paul's letters. None certainly in Revelation. Not in any apostles' letter. Nor even in the pseudograph Second Peter.<sup>24</sup>

Revelation 2:2 must therefore be talking about Paul. Jesus commends the Ephesians for finding someone lied when he *said* he was an apostle and *was not*. Paul was someone whom the Bible reveals told the Ephesians that he was an apostle, was not, and thus must be untruthful in this respect. Insert these facts about Paul into Revelation 2:2. One clear answer emerges: Revelation 2:2 identifies Paul. This means Jesus called Paul a *liar*. It also means Jesus commends the church for making this kind of evaluation. It proves we cannot shirk our duty to test the uncorroborated claims of Paul.

### Note: Bonhoeffer — Modern Proponent of JWO

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran Pastor, wrote a book in 1937 entitled *Cost of Discipleship*. Bonhoeffer writes an entire book on salvation-principles that ignores Paul's doctrines. Bonhoeffer then expounds Jesus' principles on salvation and the Law. By doing so, Bonhoeffer subtly outlines what Jesus' Words Only means in terms of renovation of our doctrine: Preach and teach from Jesus' words alone.

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24. Most Christian scholars of every stripe, including Calvin, agree Second Peter is a false addition to scripture. See "The Special Question of Second Peter" on page xix of Appendix B. Even if written by Apostle Peter, it does not help Paul's case. Second Peter does not describe him as an apostle. While Second Peter does imply Paul's writings are "Scripture," that does not mean what one might suppose. The word *Scripture* corresponds to the Hebrew for *Writings*. The Bible of that era was: Torah (Law), Prophets & Writings. The *Writings* section meant the book was not yet recognized as fully *inspired*. Thus, Daniel was kept in the *Writings* not the *Prophets* section as of Jesus' day. It was not yet recognized that Daniel's prophecies had come to pass. Thus, even if Peter implied Paul's writings were *scripture*, this does not carry with it the connotation we give the word *scripture* today.

First, Bonhoeffer concludes that Jesus has every intention that the Law (the Ten Commandments) survive in the New Testament. Bonhoeffer comments on Matthew 19:16-24. There Jesus answers on how to have eternal life by telling the young man “if you would enter life, obey the commandments.” Bonhoeffer says Jesus, by quoting the Ten Commandments, has made a call “to a simple obedience to the will of God as it has been revealed.” (*Cost, id.*, at 72.) Jesus reaffirms the Ten Commandments “as the commandments of God.” (*Id.*, at 73.) Jesus is saying we must “get on with the task of obedience” and it is “high time the young man began to hear the commandment and obey it.” (*Id.*)

Bonhoeffer then excoriates Christians who use Paul’s attack on legalism to undermine Jesus’ message:

We are excusing ourselves from ***single-minded obedience to the words of Jesus*** [to the young rich man] on ***the pretext*** [that this endorses] ***legalism*** and a supposed preference for the obedience ‘in faith.’ (*Id.*, at 80.)

As to faith-and-works, Bonhoeffer ignores the dialectic of Paul. Instead, Bonhoeffer pits cheap grace against costly grace. Bonhoeffer says contemporary Christian churches which teach free grace engage in a “deliberate rejection” of Christ’s teachings of the ***personal costliness*** of salvation. (*Id.* at 36.) Jesus’ message of a costly grace has been overlaid with “the superstructure of... doctrinal elements” in modern preaching that destroys the cost-element Jesus demanded. (*Id.*) Bonhoeffer discusses several parables to prove obedience to the Law and repentance from sin are key.

As a result, Bonhoeffer envisioned an entire renovation of the Christian church. He believed that cheap grace had infected all our doctrine. We were a “Christianity without Christ.” (*Cost of Discipleship, supra*, at 39.) Bonhoeffer had some even tougher words. He says of the cheap grace gospel that “Christ is misunderstood anew, and again and again put to death.” (Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center* (1960) at 35.)