

The Chronology of Acts and Beyond

THIS APPENDIX PROVIDES NEW INSIGHT INTO THE controversial subject of New Testament Chronology. If we didn't have something new to bring to the discussion, then we could just as well have adopted any number of popular chronologies that are presented in most Bible dictionaries. The problem, however, with that approach is that these chronologies, to put it bluntly, are *all* wrong! Indeed, our story cannot be correctly told until we straighten out the error that prevents us to see the true historical picture in the period of main interest to us here – the time of *Beyond Acts*.²⁹⁷

THE RESURRECTION AND BEYOND

THERE ARE TWO LEADING CONTENDER DATES for Passion week: 30 C.E. and 33 C.E.²⁹⁸ The reason why these two dates are separated by three years apart owes to the astronomical requirement of

²⁹⁷ The present author readily admits that not every detail of New Testament chronology has been worked out to the degree of satisfaction that we all would desire. However, a future volume will address the many other unsolved riddles. Any suggestions by readers will be appreciated.

²⁹⁸ The 33 C.E. date is maintained, as of late, by Jack Finegan, *Handbook*, 362, who believes that the vacillation of Pilate during the trial of Jesus would not be possible while the anti-Semitic Sejanus, head of the Praetorian Guard, was still the real power in Rome. Sejanus was deposed in 31 C.E., followed by Vitellius, who instructed his provincial governors to treat the Jews with more consideration, thus the temperament of Pilate would better reflect this atmosphere. For a full discussion of this, see Gary DeLashmutt, "Sejanus and the Chronology of Christ's death," online at: <http://www.xenos.org/essays/sejanus.htm>. Other leading proponents of the 33 C.E. date are: Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977); Paul L. Maier, in Jerry Vardaman, ed., *Chronos, Kairos, Christos II: Chronological, Nativity and Religious Studies in Memory of Ray Summers* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1998), 281-319.

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having the day of the crucifixion fall on a Friday in a year when Passover fell on the Sabbath.²⁹⁹ Harold Hoehner champions the date of 33 C.E., but it is apparent from Hoehner's work that his motivation for accepting this date appears to be based on his theory of interpreting the seventy weeks prophecy of Daniel.³⁰⁰

The year of 33 C.E. is also the year that the Roman Catholic Church officially endorses. However, from the internal data given in Acts, the squeeze that 33 C.E. imposes on the data makes it a date that is impossible to work with.

We, therefore, place the date of the crucifixion/resurrection of Jesus to the year of 30 C.E., along with the majority opinion of noted specialists in the field.³⁰¹ Indeed, one scholar, Professor A. T. Olmstead, vigorously expressed his confidence in this date in the following words:

No longer is doubt permissible as to the date of the crucifixion. Friday, April 7, AD 30 is established as firmly as any date in ancient history; in fact, few dates in Greek and Roman history before the adoption of the Julian calendar are as sure.³⁰²

The date of 30 C.E. accords well with the overall scheme of the New Testament, which can be divided into two chunks. A twelve-year period from the time of the resurrection to the time when Peter, and the rest of the apostles, set out to evangelize the world.³⁰³ The second period represents 25 years from this time when Peter first arrived in Rome to the

²⁹⁹ There are some who place the crucifixion on a Wednesday (or even on Thursday) which find support for 31 C.E. For discussion on this, see Harold W. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 65-71 and Paul R. Finch, *The Passover Papers* (Palm Bay, Fla.: Sunrise Publications, 1998), 213-251.

³⁰⁰ Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects*, 115-140. The present writer finds the entire line of reasoning a remarkable example of fundamentalist ingenuity. For example, on page 138 we encounter the following amazing supposition: "Using the 360-day year the calculation would be as follows. Multiplying the sixty-nine weeks by seven years for each week by 360 days gives a total of 173,880 days. The difference between 444 C.E. and A.D. 33, then, is 476 solar years. By multiplying 476 by 365.24219879 or by 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, 45.975 seconds, one comes to 173,855.28662404 days or 173,855 days, 6 hours, 52 minutes, 44 seconds. This leaves only 25 days to be accounted for between 444 B.C.E. and A.D. 33. By adding the 25 days to March 5 (of 444 B.C.), one comes to March 30 (of A.D. 33) which was Nisan 10 in A.D. 33. This is the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem." Either this explanation is an example of amazing insight into this prophecy (which many people believe it truly is) or it demonstrates how one can prove just about anything if one is clever enough.

³⁰¹ Raymond Brown, *The Death of the Messiah* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 2:1374-1375, cites the German scholar Josef Blinzler having catalogued the opinions of about 100 scholars, with 53 opting for 30 C.E., 24 choosing 33 C.E., and between one to three choosing the other years from 26-36 C.E.

³⁰² A. T. Olmstead, "The Chronology of Jesus' Life," *Anglican Theological Review* 24 (1942): 6.

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time when he is finally martyred in that city (42-67/68 C.E.).

The Church Father, Jerome (ca. 135-420), preserved in his work *Concerning Illustrious Men*:

Simon Peter ...after having been bishop of the church of Antioch and having preached to the Dispersion – the believers in circumcision – pushed on to Rome in the second year of Claudius to overthrow Simon Magus, and held the sacerdotal chair there for twenty-five years until the last, that is the fourteenth, year of Nero (Jerome, *De vir. ill.* 1[*NPNF*² 3.361]).

Although the Catholic Fathers sought to present the view that Peter's stay in Rome was a continuous 25 year period (in order to justify the papal notion of the "See of Rome"), the data for Peter's two journeys to Rome appears to coincide with Eusebius.³⁰⁴ From the data contained in Eusebius's *Chronicle* (using the preferred text of Jerome's Latin version) we see that Eusebius places the coming of Peter to Rome in the second year of Claudius (42 C.E.).³⁰⁵ This date accords well with the fact that it was in the year of 41 C.E. that Herod Agrippa had Peter arrested, where upon his release he went to first Antioch, then on to Asia Minor, and then to the city of Corinth, before finally arriving at Rome in the year of 42 C.E.

The date of 42 C.E. is also significant in that in Rome a change of government went from Caligula to Claudius the year before, who confirmed the Province of Judaea upon Herod Agrippa I. The newly appointed Herod wished to attain the esteem of the popular Pharisees, so during the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the spring of 41 C.E., he first had the Apostle James, the brother of John, rounded up and slain by the sword, apparently without even a trial (Acts 12:1-2). Agrippa next had Peter arrested at the same time, but Peter was only able to escape with angelic intervention, which cost the sentinels of Peter's cell their lives

³⁰³ Claudius Apolinarius (fl. 170-80), bishop of Hierapolis, is first to record the twelve year tradition (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.18.13): "He speaks, moreover, of a tradition that the Saviour commanded his apostles not to depart from Jerusalem for twelve years." The *Acts of Peter*, 2:5, written also around this time, stated: "But as they mourned and fasted, God was already preparing Peter for what was to come, now that the twelve years in Jerusalem which the Lord Christ had enjoined on him were completed" (Edgar Hennecke and Wilhelm Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1965], 2:284). Finally, Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150-215), in his *Stromata* 6.5.43: "If now any one of Israel wishes to repent and through my name to believe in God, his sins will be forgiven him. And after 12 years go ye out into the world that no one may say, 'We have not heard [it]' " (Hennecke, *Apocrypha*, 2:101).

³⁰⁴ Finegan, *Handbook*, 384-85.

³⁰⁵ Finegan, *Handbook*, 379-80.

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(Acts 12:3-11; 18-19), demonstrating the seriousness of Herod's aggression.³⁰⁶

After a brief stay at the home of John Mark's mother, where the church had been congregating in secret (Acts 12:12-17), Peter leaves the Jerusalem area "for another place" (v. 17) that is not named.³⁰⁷ However, this may be when Peter goes first to Antioch, through upper Asia Minor, and into Rome, where he contended with Simon Magus.³⁰⁸

Peter's stay in Rome was only passing, and we find him again at the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15:7) shortly after, most likely after the death of Herod Agrippa in 44 C.E.³⁰⁹

THE OUTLINE OF ACTS

IT IS ESSENTIAL TO GET THE CORRECT DATING sequence in the *Book of Acts* because it has an overall bearing on the true story that we are herein presenting. Needless to say, if the Apostle Paul met his death at the completion of the *Book of Acts*, as some scholars maintain,³¹⁰ then the entire story really comes to an end there. However, this view is not what history and the Bible declare. The story does not end there, and once we come to understand this, then a flood of information will shed new light on the mission of Paul (and Peter) after the *Book of Acts* concludes.

There have been many erudite studies on the chronology of the New"

³⁰⁶ Not since the Saulian Persecution was there such a crackdown on the apostles' activity in Jerusalem. This may have been the impetus for the apostles to leave the Jerusalem area (for the time being) to spread the word to the remote regions of the Empire. It is most likely then, that the testimony of Matthew was the officially endorsed Gospel by James, the brother of Jesus and the leading apostles for this evangelizing activity. The twelve years, therefore, would be counted inclusively, as supported by S. Dockx, "Chronologie zum Leben des heiligen Petrus" in Carsten Peter Thiede, ed., *Simon Peter: From Galilee to Rome* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1986), 90.

³⁰⁷ Carsten Peter Thiede, "Babylon, der andere Ort: Anmerkungen zu 1 Petr 5, 13 und Apg 12, 7", *Biblica* 67 (1986): 532-8, discusses the reasons for identifying the "other place with Rome."

³⁰⁸ Tradition has it that Peter, from Rome, went on to Britain at this time. See George F. Jowett, *The Drama of the Lost Disciples* (London: Covenant Publishing Co., 1961), 174-5.

³⁰⁹ Dockx, "Petrus," 86, 94, places the death of Herod Agrippa on March 10, 44 C.E.

³¹⁰ So Loveday C. A. Alexander, "Chronology," *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter Varsity Press, 1993). Rainer Riesner, *Paul's Early Period*, 26-7, also cites the recent works that support the 62 C.E. date: M. A. Hubaut, *Paul de Tarse: Bibliothèque d'Histoire du Christianisme* 18 (Paris, 1989), 29-57; Jürgen Becker, *Paulus: Der Apostel der Völker* (Tübingen, 1989), 17-33 (Eng. trans., *Paul: Apostle to the Gentiles* [Louisville, 1993]); E. Dassmann, *Kirchengeschichte I* (Stuttgart, 1991), 6 (Chronological Table), 48-52.

Testament and the Apostle Paul.³¹¹ Most of these studies, however, as scholarly as they may appear to be to the average lay person, are flawed in some of their reasonings on a number of significant points, as we shall herein show. Therefore, their final conclusions in the matter of chronology must be discarded in favor of some new evidence provided herein.

The study of the chronological aspects of the life of Paul are interesting and even exciting to the overall story flow. A clear understanding of the chronology crystallizes the events into a correct perspective that overthrows many of the critical views of the New Testament era and even the authorship of the books within the New Testament itself.

There are two significant datum points that we need to first consider. These are Paul's appearance before the Roman Proconsul Gallio in the Province of Achaia, with its seat in Corinth, mentioned in Acts 18:12. Secondly, Paul's appearances before Felix and Porcius Festus, the Procurators of Palestine, mentioned in Acts 21:39 and 24:27.

PAUL BEFORE GALLIO

IN ACTS 18:12 WE READ THAT JEWISH OFFICIALS in Corinth brought Paul before the proconsul Gallio. Most scholars believe that this occurred immediately after Gallio assumed his new post.³¹² The interesting thing about Proconsuls is that they regularly held office for only a period of one year.³¹³ Also, Emperor Claudius had established that proconsuls were to set out for their assigned duty before the fifteenth day of April (Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, 60.11.6).³¹⁴

The one year that Gallio held office has been established by an inscription found just across the bay from Corinth in the city of Delphi. In this inscription it mentions Gallio in his official capacity and also the

³¹¹ For example, George Ogg, *The Chronology of the Life of Paul* (London: Epworth Press, 1968); Robert Jewett, *A Chronology of Paul's Life* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979); Jack Finegan, *Handbook of Biblical Chronology*, "The New Testament" (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 270-402; Rainer Riesner, *Paul's Early Period: Chronology, Mission Strategy, Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 1-31; Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990). For further investigation, refer to the many references cited in these works.

³¹² Finegan, *Handbook*, 393.

³¹³ Finegan, *Handbook*, 191.

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fact that the Roman Emperor Claudius at this time received his 26th Imperial Acclamation. We learn that the 26th Imperial Acclamation is tied to what is called the 12th Tribunician Power in another inscription, known as the Carian inscription.³¹⁵ This has been dated to the year of 52 C.E. Jack Finegan informs us that

the tribunician power of Claudius was reckoned from Jan 25, A.D. 41, and renewed annually, therefore his *tribunicia potestate XIII* corresponded to Jan 25, A.D. 52, to Jan 24, A.D. 53.³¹⁶

The period of Gallio's administration can even be narrowed down further by recognizing the fact that before August 1, 52 C.E., the Roman Emperor Claudius received his 27th Imperial Acclamation.³¹⁷ Therefore, the Delphi inscription must be dated between January and August of 52 C.E. And if Gallio was in office between these dates, and for the first half of the year 52 C.E., then Gallio assumed office the year before, in the spring of 51 C.E.³¹⁸ Now, if Paul stood before Gallio when he was newly installed, then Paul stood before him in the spring or early summer of 51 C.E.

But could Paul have stood before Gallio later on in Gallio's year in office? The answer is no! A number of scholars have pointed out that Gallio became ill due to the damp Corinthian climate and had to return to Rome as early as October, 51 C.E. even though his term of office did not expire until the spring of 52 C.E.³¹⁹

Thus, attempts to place the appearance of Paul before Gallio in the year of 52 C.E. are in error and such studies from this point on are at least a year too late.³²⁰ Based upon the foregoing, however, we are forced to fix the appearance of the Apostle Paul before Gallio in July of 51 C.E.

³¹⁴ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Paul and Gallio," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 112:2 (1993): 316, notes: "The ruling of Tiberius in 15 C.E. that provincial office holders should leave Rome by 1 June (Dio Cassius, Roman History, 57.14.5) implies that they took up their posts a month later. That time was allowed for travel is confirmed by the 42 C.E. legislation of Claudius, who moved the departure date back to 1 April only because officials tarried in Rome (Dio Cassius 60.11.3). This was too early for sea travel, and the following year he was forced to change the date to 15 April (Dio Cassius 60.16.7.3). There is no evidence of any modification of the date of assumption of office."

³¹⁵ Finegan, *Handbook*, 192.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 392.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 393.

³¹⁹ Adolf Deissmann, *Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History* (2d ed.; London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1926), 279.

FROM GALLIO TO FELIX

LUKE'S REFERENCE TO GALLIO AS PROCONSUL of Achaia in Acts 18:12 provides us with a fixed anchor with profane history that we can now build upon for a sure chronology, forward and backwards. Just prior to this reference (Acts 18:11), Luke tells us that Paul had taught the Jews in Corinth “a year and six months.” This, therefore, places Paul’s arrival in Corinth at midwinter of 49/50 C.E. and his departure from there in the summer of 51 C.E.

Moving forward from July, 51 C.E., Paul stayed in Corinth “a number of days” (Acts 18:18), then moved on to Ephesus (v. 20), then he returned to Caesarea, then on to Jerusalem (for the fall Holydays²), and then on to his home in Antioch, where he “stayed for some time” (vv. 20-22). It is thus logical to see Paul back in Antioch in November of 51 C.E., where he wintered until the spring of 52 C.E.

In the spring of 52 C.E., Paul is again on the move in what is called his “third missionary journey,” going from Antioch through Galatia and Phrygia (Acts 18:23), then on to Ephesus (Acts 19:1), spending three months there (v. 9), teaching in the Synagogue, which brings us to say July/August 52 C.E. After this, Paul taught for “two years” in the Hall of Tyrannus (v. 10), which moves us forward in time to the spring of 54 C.E.³²¹

Paul then leaves Ephesus after the riot of Demetrius and travels through Macedonia (Acts 20:1-3), passes through Troas (Acts 20:7-12), then keeps Passover at Philippi (Acts 20:9). This brings us to April of 54 C.E. He stayed in Greece for three months (Acts 20:3), viz., December, January and February, and then returns, going first back through Macedonia again, then on to Philippi for the Days of Unleavened Bread in the spring of 55 C.E. From there, Paul sails to Troas in April of 55 C.E., where he

³²⁰ Unfortunately, Ernest L. Martin is one scholar who not only placed Paul before Gallio in 52 C.E., but also subscribed to the fact that Paul’s Caesarean imprisonment lasted two years, as well as subscribing to the cycle of Sabbatical years followed by Ben Zion Wacholder. Thus, he ends up adding a year from Gallio on, and two years after Paul’s Caesarean imprisonment, which artificially makes the *Book of Acts* conclude three years later than our chronology (viz. 61 C.E. versus 58 C.E.). See his “The Chronology of New Testament Times,” online: <http://askelm.com/prophecy/p950102.htm>.

³²¹ These two years and three months are referred to in Acts 20:31 as “three years” in keeping with the Jewish time reckoning principle that parts of a year represent a full year. See Finegan, *Handbook*, 78, 397. If this is the case, then one should question whether the two year reference in Acts 19:10 should equal exactly 24 months. Since Paul keeps Passover at Philippi (Acts 20:9) in the second year, and the beginning of the period started in August of 52, then we would have to conclude that the two years is more likely 19 months.

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spends a week. Then, sailing to Assos, Mytelene, Chios, Samos, Miletus, and bypassing Ephesus, he hastened to be at Jerusalem for Pentecost of 55 C.E. (Acts 20:13).

From the foregoing it is obvious that Paul's visit to Jerusalem occurred in the spring of 55 C.E., and not at any time before or after. This date perfectly dovetails with the fact that this year was a Sabbatical year (54/55 C.E.) and the purpose of Paul's visit was to deliver the contribution of food that he had gathered in Macedonia for the church in Jerusalem during this austere year where no harvest was gathered.³²²

THE SEQUENCE OF SABBATICAL YEARS

THE SEQUENCE OF SABBATICAL YEARS IS IMPORTANT TO the discussion and one in which we must look at closer for our study. First of all, we should note that the Jews had a tough going in Sabbatical years.³²³ It is because of this fact that every seven years the Jews of Palestine would cease agricultural pursuits in the Sabbatical years and many who did not prepare for this year (as they should have, Lev 25:18-24) were in dire straights, economically. In fact, the economy of all of Judaea was brought to a virtual standstill. And it was customary for the Jews living in the Diaspora to send their relatives in Judaea food and aide to help them through such years. Therefore, if we can properly understand the Sabbatical sequence of years during the first century, it will help us understand the correct dating of certain events within the New Testament. With this fact in mind, we note the pertinent remarks by Ernest L. Martin, who explains that

when Paul and Barnabas were given the right hand of fellowship that they should go to the gentiles and the "pillar" apostles were assigned to the circumcision, the only extra requirement imposed on Paul was that he "remember

³²² The sequence of Sabbatical years, which we will discuss next, is a complex issue and one of the complexities is that the eighth year was even more severe than the seventh, since during the seventh year, people were to still survive off of the double portion store of the sixth year, but during the eighth year, the shortages may have become acute. Paul's contribution, therefore, was to help the people through the coming year, before they could resume harvesting.

³²³ It would seem ironic that there would be poor in Palestine when the later Roman Emperor, Titus, said that Judaea was proportionately more prosperous than Rome itself (cf. Josephus, *B.J.* 6.6.2 [335]; *A.J.* 5.1.21 [76-9]). But a recent famine, coupled with a land Sabbath observance, should account for the austere years in question.

the *poor*" (Gal 2:10). The *poor* in question, as the context certainly shows, were the *poor* among the Jews in Palestine — because Paul and Barnabas would surely have considered it incumbent on them to show benevolence upon the gentiles to whom they were commissioned to preach. But why were the Jews *poor*? The answer should be evident once the sequence of Sabbatical Years is recognized. The truth is, A.D. 48 to A.D. 49 was a Sabbatical Year, and the apostle Paul had the conference with the "pillar" apostles some time in A.D. 48 — right at the start of a Sabbatical Year! There would have indeed been many "*poor*" in Palestine during the next year or so.³²⁴

The fact that first century Jews in Palestine did observe Sabbatical years has been generally accepted by most scholars. As for which of those years were land Sabbaths has been based on the fact that the Jerusalem temple was destroyed the year following a Sabbatical year, known as a *Shemithah*.³²⁵ Since the temple fell in August of 70 C.E., then the year of 68/69 C.E. should be a Sabbath year, or was it? Let us look at this a little closer.

Based on the *Shemithah* (and other evidence), a sequence of Sabbatical years has been established by Benedict Zuckermann³²⁶ and has been accepted by the majority of scholars until most recently. Now, however, this traditional sequence has been challenged by a noted professor at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Ohio, Ben Zion Wacholder,³²⁷ who maintains that the Zuckermann sequence is a year too early. For instance,

³²⁴ Ernest L. Martin, "The Year of Christ's Crucifixion," *The Foundation Commentator* [a publication of the Foundation for Biblical Research, Pasadena, Calif.] 10:3 (April, 1983), 8. This article has been essentially reproduced in Ernest L. Martin, "The Sabbatical Years and Chronology," in *The Star that Astonished the World*, (Portland, Oreg.: Associates for Scriptural Knowledge, 1996), 239-59, and is now online at: <http://www.askelm.com/prophecy/p950102.htm>. The point that Dr. Martin is here attempting to make is that the year of 48-49 C.E. was a Sabbatical year. However, although we can accept the year of 48 C.E. as being the year of the Jerusalem Conference, it has to be admitted that there is nothing here that would pinpoint 48-49 C.E. as being a Sabbatical year, simply because the writing of Galatians surely occurred after the conference (Dr. Martin wrongly believed that *Galatians* was written before the conference) and, therefore, that the Gal 2:10 reference could refer to the Sabbatical year, the year prior to the Sabbatical year, or the year following the Sabbatical year, where shortages would most likely be really severe.

³²⁵ This fact has been stated in the Jewish work of the second century attributed to Rabbi Yose ben Halaftha, known as the *Seder 'Olam Rabbah* (30.86-97). See Jack Finegan, *Handbook*, 107, 122. Finegan finds it hard to accept that the tradition of the *Shemithah* would not have been preserved accurately down until the time of writing of the *Seder Olam* (150 C.E.), a point that we also find extremely difficult to discount.

³²⁶ Benedict Zuckermann, *A Treatise on the Sabbatical Cycle and the Jubilee: A Contribution to the Archaeology and Chronology of the Time Anterior and Subsequent to the Captivity* (trans. A. Löwy; London: Chronological Institute, 1866; repr. New York: Sepher Hermon Press, 1974).

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according to the Zuckermann sequence, the year 54/55 C.E. was a Sabbatical, but according to Wacholder, it should be pushed forward a year, to the year of 55/56 C.E.

Recently, Don Blosser³²⁸ has defended the Zuckermann sequence, although not without being challenged by Wacholder.³²⁹ Wacholder's final argument boils down to a Dead Sea Scroll note of indebtedness that was dated as a year of release and to the second year of Nero 54/55 C.E. Jack Finegan has carefully analyzed this objection and found that it is a clear case of antedating, thus, should be dated to Nero's first year and not his second.³³⁰ This being the case, the Wacholder sequence appears to be indefensible, and the Zuckermann sequence remains vindicated. This sequence, interestingly enough, coincides beautifully with the chronology that we have thus far established.

Therefore, the Sabbatical sequence of years that we will be following in this study is that proposed by Benedict Zuckermann. Following this sequence, it is apparent that the year beginning in the autumn of 47 C.E. and ending in the autumn 48 C.E. was also a Sabbatical year. Therefore, the Jerusalem conference of Acts 15 was held during the Sabbatical year of 48 C.E., and most likely on the Day of Pentecost.

Now, in the *Epistle to the Galatians*, the Apostle Paul mentions that he went to Jerusalem twice to discuss doctrinal issues with the "Pillar" apostles. One such visit was three years after his conversion and then another fourteen years after his conversion.³³¹ Paul told the Galatians that he, Barnabas, and Titus had gone by revelation to the apostles in Jerusalem to discuss their special commissions of preaching to the Gentiles. This later visit most likely occurred in the year of the Jerusalem Council in 48 C.E. Fourteen years before this Council meeting Paul was struck down on the road to Damascus and converted. This leads us back to 35 C.E. for the conversion of Paul (counting inclusively after the Jewish manner).

³²⁷ See Ben Zion Wacholder, "The Calendar of Sabbatical Cycles During the Second Temple and the Early Rabbinic Period," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 44 (1973): 153-96; "The Timing of Messianic Movements and the Calendar of Sabbatical Cycles," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 46 (1975): 201-18. Also see *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Suppl. vol., 762-3. Wacholder's cycle is a year later than that of Zuckermann's.

³²⁸ Don Blosser, "The Sabbath Year Cycle in Josephus" *Hebrew Union College Annual* 52 (1981): 129-39.

³²⁹ Ben Zion Wacholder, "The Calendar of Sabbath Years During the Second Temple Era: A Response" *Hebrew Union College Annual* 54 (1983): 123-33.

³³⁰ Finegan, *Handbook*, 124. Finegan goes on to establish that the contracts found at Murabbáat also establish the Zuckermann sequence (*ibid.*, 124-6). This is further supported by E. Jerry Vardaman, "Progress in the Study of the Sabbatical/Jubilee Cycle since Sloan" in Jerry Vardaman, ed., *Chronos, Kairos, Christos II: Chronological, Nativity and Religious Studies in Memory of Ray Summers* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1998), 281-319.

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FESTUS*

BASED UPON THE DATES THAT WE HAVE established above, Paul arrived in Jerusalem in the Sabbatical year of 55 C.E., the day before Pentecost (May 19th), and that “the next day” (Acts 21:17-18), Paul met with James, Peter and John (the pillar apostles) at an assembly of all the elders, which seems most likely to be on the day of Pentecost itself (May 20th, 55 C.E.). It is on this day that the Apostle James then demands of Paul that he go through a seven day period of purification (Acts 21:26-7), which began on the “next day” after Pentecost (v. 26), thus running from May 21st to May 27th. On the next day, May 28th, Paul is arrested (Acts 21:33). The “next day” (Acts 22:30), May 29th, Paul is brought before the Sanhedrin. On the next morning (May 30th), over 40 Jews take an oath not to eat nor drink until Paul is executed (Acts 23:12-15).³³²

Paul’s nephew³³³ then tips off the Roman Tribune concerning this

³³¹ Gal 1:18; 2:1. The question of whether the 3 and 14 year periods are to be reckoned consecutively or whether the 3 years is to be included within the 14 years is addressed by Jewett, *Chronology*, 52-4, who concludes that the grammar only allows consecutive reckoning. Reisner, however, *Early Period*, 319, states that “grammatically, both [positions] are possible.” Jack Finegan, *Handbook*, 395, nevertheless, concludes that “The sequence of his references [makes] it likely that in both cases he [Paul] is counting from the most decisive point of his conversion. In the latter case, ‘after fourteen years’ Paul reported to ‘those ... of repute’ at Jerusalem on his preaching among the Gentiles and received their approval (Gal 2:2, 9), which is almost unmistakably a description of what happened at the Jerusalem conference, where Paul told of his work and the ‘apostles and elders’ (Acts 15:6, 22) approved his mission.” If the 3 and 14 years are to be taken consecutively, this would lead back to 31/32 C.E. for the conversion of Paul, which is only a year or so after the crucifixion and which seems hardly enough time for a flourishing community of Christians to be in existence in Damascus. The simple reading of “then after three years” and “then after fourteen years” certainly hails back to a common starting point. Thus, we believe that the 3/14 years are inclusive and that it leads back to a date of 35 C.E. for Paul’s conversion. We note also that Paul must have visited Jerusalem at other times, but apparently not with the express purpose of discussing doctrine and the relevance of his special commission, which is what he is pointing out in the letter to the Galatians. Indeed, one such other visit is recorded in Acts 11:28-30, which S. Dockx, *Chronologie*, 263, places in 44 C.E.

³³² The fact that this oath is mentioned is interesting in the context of the story flow here that would never have any resolution if Paul were thrown into prison and left there for a period of two years.

³³³ Paul receives help from a family relative (who is otherwise unknown to us), but the thing that is interesting is that we get no indication that any of the church leadership had come to Paul’s assistance in this matter. Should we gather that the “pillar” apostles distanced themselves from Paul to the point that they abandoned him altogether in this situation?

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conspiracy against Paul (Acts 23:16), so the Tribune orders a centurion, Claudius Lysias, to take Paul that very night, at 9:00 PM, and leave for the city of Antipatris and from there, the following day (May 31st), head out for the city of Caesarea. Five days later (June 5th), the High Priest Ananias, along with the other elders, and his lawyer, Tertulus, arrive in Caesarea for the trial (Acts 24:1). It is on this day, by our calculation, June 5th, 55 C.E., that Paul is put on trial before Felix, wherein he salutes the fact that Felix had been “for many years a judge over this nation” (Acts 24:10). Felix defers judgement on the case until the tribune Lysias comes to Caesarea (Acts 24:22). Several days later (mid-June), Felix and his wife Drusila, have a private audience with Paul. This may have occurred on June 9th or June 10th.

We next are told that Felix was hoping that Paul could buy his way out of his predicament, and would send for him very often over the course of the next couple of weeks (Acts 24:26). By this time, it was getting very close to July 1, the time when new Procurators are installed into office. Further, if Felix knew that Festus was already on his way to replace him, it would be quite understandable that Felix would just leave the matter for Festus to deal with. And interestingly enough, we are told in Acts 24:27b that very fact – that Felix “wanted to grant the Jews a favor, [so] Felix left Paul in prison [until Festus arrived].” In other words, Felix decided to just ignore Paul’s plight for the time being, choosing to grant the Jews one last favor (leaving Paul in prison), which had the effect of enhancing his outgoing administration in the eyes of the Jews.³³⁴ The interesting thing about this entire account here is that it is virtually a daily chronicle of events from the beginning of Paul’s arrest to his appearance before the next Procurator, Festus.

PAUL BEFORE FESTUS

P **AUL’S** APPEARANCE BEFORE FESTUS HAS found a wide range of dates among scholars: “from 55 C.E. to 61 C.E.”³³⁵ The earliest opinion was expressed by Eusebius, that Festus succeeded Felix

³³⁴ To believe that Felix had the authority to incarcerate Paul for two years for no good reason while Paul was on an appeal to Caesar is not reasonable.

³³⁵ Joel B. Green, “Festus, Porcius” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, David Noel Freedman, ed., [New York: Doubleday, 1992], 2:795. Green’s appraisal of the data is disappointingly not up to date, indeed, it is virtually a rehash of every point brought out in R. Jewett’s (*op. cit.*) 1979 treatment.

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in 55 C.E.³³⁶ The early Catholic scholars, Dionysius Petavius and later on, Cardinal Baronius, placed the succession of Felix to Festus in 55/56 C.E.³³⁷

A number of modern New Testament scholars are beginning to lower the previously preferred high dates (57 C.E. - 61 C.E.) to be either in 55 C.E. or 56 C.E.,³³⁸ yet there are some scholars who prefer 59 C.E.³³⁹

Jerome, it should be pointed out, stated early on the following:

And because a full account of his life is given in the Acts of the Apostles, I only say this, that the twenty-fifth year after our Lord's passion, that is the second of Nero, at the time when Festus Procurator of Judaea succeeded Felix, he was sent bound to Rome, and remaining for two years in free custody, disputed daily with the Jews concerning the advent of Christ. It ought to be said that at the first defence, the power of Nero having not yet been confirmed, nor his wickedness broken forth to such a degree as the histories relate concerning him, Paul was dismissed by Nero, that the gospel of Christ might be preached also in the West (Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 5 [*NPNF*² 3.36]).

This passage is insightful for the simple reason that it not only places the exchange of Felix and Festus in the second year of Nero (55 C.E.), but also states that the second year of Nero was the 25th year of the Lord's passion (30 C.E.). These dates are in exact agreement with what we believe to be the true chronology.

Now, if it is assumed that Festus was indeed installed on July 1, 55 C.E., two years to the day from when Felix was installed on July 1, 53 C.E., then we have an account that makes perfect sense. And this is exactly what

³³⁶ According to Jerome's Latin version of the *Chronicle*. In it, over against the year 2072 from Abraham, the second year of Nero (55 C.E.), and the 12th year of Agrippa II, there is entered the note: "Festus succeeds Felix, before whom and in the presence of king Agrippa the Apostle Paul expounds the doctrine of his own religion and is sent as a prisoner to Rome" (Alfred Schoene, *Eusebi Chronicon* [Berlin, 1875], 2.155 and Rudolf Helm [ed.], *Die Chronik des Hieronymus, Eusebius Werke* [Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1956], 7:182. The Armenian version of the *Chronicle*, however, lists this same event in the year of 2070 from Abraham, the 14th year of Claudius, the 10th year of Agrippa II (54 C.E.). This unexplained anomaly is confounded further by Eusebius' *History of the Church*, wherein he there says that Festus was sent to succeed Felix by Nero, not Claudius (*Hist. eccl.* 2.12.1). Josephus also supports the fact that Festus was sent by Nero (*A.J.* 20.8.9 [182]). George Ogg (op. cit.), 151-155, discusses this knotty problem for those who wish to delve into this further in depth.

³³⁷ Ogg, *Chronology*, 147.

³³⁸ Jack Finegan, *Handbook*, 397; For a good updated summary of scholarly opinion, see Rainer Riesner, *Paul's Early Period: Chronology, Mission Strategy, Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 3-28.

³³⁹ Jewett, *Chronology*, 44; G. B. Caird, "Chronology of the New Testament" in *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville, 1961), 1:604f; R. Rainer, *Paul's Early Period*, 223-4.

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Luke is telling us: “After two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus; and since he wanted to grant the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison” (Acts 24:27).

There is nothing here about Paul being in prison for a period of two years, despite vigorous scholarly opinion to the contrary. Indeed, the two year imprisonment at Caesarea is almost unanimously accepted by all scholars, with hardly any in-depth discussion concerning its validity. A serious student of history, however, should inquire why? Scholarly opinion on the matter is most baffling, since there is really no evidence for such a conclusion at all. Indeed, those scholars who, for whatever reason, prefer the two year Caesarean imprisonment, usually dismiss those who reject it with condescending words, as if it is not even worthy of discussion. Robert Jewett stated that

it has also been suggested that the ‘two years’ in Acts 24:27 referred to the period Felix held office, rather than to the period of Paul’s incarceration. But I would concur with Weiss’ reasoning that Acts 24:27 would not refer to the length of Felix’s administration unless its beginning had been specifically mentioned in Acts. The topic of Acts, after all, is Paul’s imprisonment rather than the history of Roman provincial administration.³⁴⁰

First of all, the beginning of all Procurators’ administrations was July 1, and therefore we certainly do know the beginning of Felix’s administration, viz., July 1, 53 C.E. Secondly, Weiss’ reasoning makes no sense, however, since we don’t know the beginning of Paul’s incarceration. What kind of an objection is that?

Rainer Riesner also chimes in with:

A consideration of Acts 24:10 already makes highly improbable any interpretation of *διετία* as referring to the duration of Felix’s term of office. Moreover, Luke nowhere exhibits any interest in the duration of any particular procurator’s term of office, but does indeed exhibit such interest with regard to the duration of Paul’s imprisonment (Acts 28:30).³⁴¹

Dale Moody is also of the persuasion that the two years of Acts 24:27 refers to Paul’s imprisonment:

The *dietia* is the last of a series of time references to Paul’s imprisonment, and there is no evident concern about the

³⁴⁰ Robert Jewett, *Chronology*, 43.

³⁴¹ Rainer Riesner, *Paul’s Early Period*, 224.

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length of Felix's term. Note the phrases: "put them off" (24:22), "when I have opportunity" (24:25), "sent for him often" (24:26), and "when two years had elapsed" (24:27). It would be strange indeed if the last reference suddenly became interested in how long Felix was procurator.³⁴²

None of these objections, however, are facts that overthrow the story flow of Acts. Indeed, what we are witnessing here is a breakdown of critical scholarship in favor of gratuitous reasoning that seeks to arbitrarily lengthen Pauline chronology to fit a preconceived notion that Paul never went on a western campaign and therefore, must stretch out the story of Acts to fill the gap, and nothing more. The fact of the matter is that none of these scholarly opinions represent persuasive evidence for establishing a two year silence amidst the day-by-day story flow of Acts in this period. We maintain that the internal evidence clearly contradicts such a theory.

Indeed, it would be a serious misinterpretation to believe that Paul was left in prison for a period of up to two years, and then when the two years were up, Luke now supposedly swings back in gear, telling us that Felix decides to leave Paul in prison as a favor for the Jews. What? Did not Paul just remain in prison for two whole years? If he did, what would Luke be trying to convey to us if he were saying that Felix decided to leave Paul in prison after that fact?

If Paul had already been left in prison for two years, it makes no sense that now Felix had made a decision to leave Paul in prison for some additional unspecified time. The two year Caesarean imprisonment theory only adds confusion to Luke's day-by-day narrative, since it does not fit the circumstances of what Luke is writing about.

The anomaly is resolved simply by saying farewell to a theory that needs to be scrapped altogether. A more insightful interpretation of this passage is found in S. Dockx's following appraisal:

We can certainly read 'Two years (implying the tenure of Felix) having passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus,' but not 'two years (implying the imprisonment of Paul) having passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus.' In the first case, there is only a single subject of this sentence (one understood and one expressed). It is Felix that accomplishes the end of his jurisdiction, and receives Festus as successor. In the second case, there are two subjects: Paul completes a two year imprisonment, precisely at the moment

³⁴² Dale Moody, "A New Chronology for the Life and Letters of Paul" in Jerry Vardaman and Edwin Yamauchi, eds., *Chronos, Kairos, Christos: Nativity and Chronological Studies Presented to Jack Finegan* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 225.

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when Felix receives Festus as his successor.³⁴³

The context in Acts 23 through 25 knows of no two-year gap in Luke's daily chronicle. Indeed, up to this point in the story, Luke carefully gives us a virtual day by day account of Paul's activities, as we have carefully documented. Are we to believe that now, all of a sudden, Luke goes blank on us for a period of two full years, only to pick up his daily account in Acts 25:1 as if nothing had happened in between? What was Paul doing during all of this time³⁴⁴ and what were the conspiring Jews doing who had taken an oath not to eat nor drink again before they had killed Paul? They reappear after the arrival of Festus (Acts 25:24) as if no long period had transpired in between.

Taking the entire context as a whole, the flow of events is continuous from Felix to Festus, from around June 10th to July 4th in the year 55 C.E. All of this makes perfect sense if we are talking about a four to five week transitional period, but makes no sense at all if we artificially interject a two year vacuum in the middle of the story and, indeed, into the life of the Apostle Paul.

We have carefully followed the chronological references in Acts from the Gallio incident in the summer of 51 C.E. to the placing of Paul standing before Felix in the spring of 55 C.E. And this is the exact time that Eusebius and Jerome tell us when Paul stood before Festus. If we had no other information, we would have to conclude that Felix's replacement by Festus would also have had to have occurred at this very time. Yet scholars seem bent on throwing out this evidence in favor of a chronology that is artificially stretched out. The point is just too important to simply ignore. Let us therefore take a closer look at the so-called scholarly arguments against our low chronology.

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED

*S***SUPPOSEDLY, PAUL'S STATEMENT TO FELIX,**

³⁴³ S. Dockx, "Chonologie de la Vie de Saint Paul, Depuis sa Conversion jusqu'a son sejour a Rome," 13 *Vetus Testamentum*: 288 (translation the author's).

³⁴⁴ Jerry Vardaman, "A Chronology of Paul's Life," *Biblical Illustrator* (Winter, 1991): 70, believes: "While Paul was at Caesarea, he carried on a furious correspondence, leading Festus to say that his 'many writings were turning him mad' (a better translation of Acts 26:24, rather than 'your great learning is turning you mad'). Thus, it is probable that most of Paul's imprisonment letters were written from Caesarea, and not from Rome." This deduction, of course, is totally erroneous, as we demonstrate elsewhere in this book.

that he had administered justice in Judaea “many years” (Acts 24:10) proves that the “two years” of Acts 24:27 does not apply to Felix and should rather be applied to Paul’s imprisonment in Caesarea. We should note, however, that the Roman historian Tacitus (*Annals* 12.54.3) tells us that at this time Judaea was divided under the joint rule of Felix and Ventidius Cumanus, the former ruling over Samaria and the later over the Galileans.³⁴⁵ F. F. Bruce points out in this regard:

Tacitus’s statement might be explained if Felix, before becoming procurator of Judaea, held a subsidiary post under Cumanus, with special responsibility for Samaria. ...When Tacitus, dealing with the events of A.D. 52, says that Felix had been set over Judaea for a long time now (Tacitus, *Annals* 12.54.1), this can only be explained if Felix held a subordinate office in the province since early in Cumanus’s governorship. But one may wonder if Tacitus’s sources misled him. He further says that Felix was one of the judges appointed by Ummidius Quadratus, legate of Syria, to help Claudius in reaching a decision in a quarrel between Judaeans and Samaritans (Ibid., 12.54.7).³⁴⁶

The statements of Tacitus simply cannot be rejected out of hand.³⁴⁷ But even if it is, we must ask, is this “many years” statement of Paul in Acts 24:27 to be understood in strict chronological terms, or should we not see in it, as it is used here, a kind of oratorical flattery that is typical of the style that Roman administrators are used to? Indeed, at face value, the “many years” point seems a little too desperate to be taken as serious evidence against what we are here proposing. Surely, Felix had other administrative experiences before he came to Judaea, so the entire objection is certainly a weak one.

Moreover, let us not forget that a term which extends from July 1, 53 C.E. to the end of June, 55 C.E. is reckoned as 3 years according to ancient Jewish time reckoning practice, i.e., any portion of the first year is counted as a whole year. Since the Jewish year began in the autumn, Felix’s first year would be from July 1, 53 C.E. to autumn of 53 C.E. His second year would go from autumn of 53 C.E. to autumn of 54 C.E. And his third year

³⁴⁵ It should be noted that Josephus knows of no such joint rule, only that Cumanus preceded Felix. Therefore, it has been suggested that Tacitus may not have gotten his facts straight. However, we cannot rule out that he may also be reflecting a tradition of some sort that Felix was involved in some capacity while Cumanus was still procurator proper.

³⁴⁶ F. F. Bruce, “Chronological Questions in the Acts of the Apostles” *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 68 (1986): 285-6.

³⁴⁷ Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 70, nevertheless colors the issue by saying that “Tacitus’ version of these events is well nigh worthless.”

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would go from autumn of 54 C.E. to end of June, 55 C.E. Thus, Paul, without any exaggeration, could say that Felix had ruled in Judaea for several or “many” years.

Also, there is the fall of Pallas, the brother of Felix, to consider. We are told that Felix was saved from disgrace or censure due to the intervening efforts of his influential brother, Pallas (Josephus, *A.J.* 20.8.9 [182]). Yet, Pallas himself lost his office as financial secretary to the Emperor in the later part of the year 55 C.E. As a result, his influence to save his brother Felix from censure could hardly have occurred after 55 C.E.³⁴⁸ A close reading of Josephus shows us that Pallas’ intervention came “at that time” when he was *still* in the “highest” of honor with Nero:

And he (Felix) had certainly been brought to punishment, unless Nero had yielded to the importunate solicitations of his brother Pallas, who *at that time* had in the *greatest honor* by him (Josephus, *A.J.* 20.8.9 [182]).

Scholars who toss this evidence aside are neglecting the careful wording of Josephus. After the year of 55 C.E., Pallas may still have maintained some of his influence, but he certainly would not be in the “greatest honor” with Nero “at that time.” Yet, if Felix was relieved of his duty in July of 55 C.E., he could have arrived back in Rome toward the end of August, in plenty of time for his brother Pallas to throw his utmost political weight and influence around to save his brother, Felix, before the end of 55 C.E.³⁴⁹ Therefore, Felix had to have been relieved in July of 55 C.E., which places Paul before Felix in the spring of 55 C.E.³⁵⁰

Another fact to be considered is the numismatic evidence. Rainer

³⁴⁸ Nevertheless, this is not seen as an obstacle to Jewett, *Chronology*, 42-3, who maintains that Pallas was still influential, since he still maintained vast wealth (Nero reportedly killed Pallas in 62 C.E. out of greed for his 400 million sesterces). Riesner, *Paul’s Early Period*, 221, threw in his support for Jewett’s argument, which, apparently, has become the apologetic *du jour* on this matter. L. C. A. Alexander, “Chronology,” *Dictionary of Paul*, 120, states: “The activities which Josephus assigns to Felix’s procuratorship (including the Egyptian agitator of Acts 21:38 and Josephus *J.W.* 2.13.5 § 261) seem to require that he was in office several years under Nero (Josephus *J.W.* 2.13.1-7 §§ 250-70), that is after October 54.” The reader should consult Josephus themselves here, for we find that there is nothing in the passage of Josephus to justify a lengthy term of Felix under Nero.

³⁴⁹ Rainer Riesner, *Paul’s Early Period*, 222, maintains that: “The dismissal [of Pallas] must have taken place already before the birthday of Britannicus on 13 February A.D. 55 (cf. Tacitus, *Ann.* xiii.15.1).” However, the correct date for Britannicus’ 14th birthday should be 13 February 56 C.E. Britannicus was not born on the 20th day of the *Imperium Claudii* (Feb. 13, 41 C.E.), but on the 20th day of the second year of Claudius (Feb. 13, 42). This fact has long been noted by Ernst Haenchen, *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961, 13th ed.), 63, n. 3. This same mistake is repeated by Colin J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 171. Once scholars get their facts straight then they can move on to a genuine solution of the data that makes good sense.

Riesner notes: "The last coins unquestionably dating from Felix's term of office can be dated to the first year of Nero (A.D. 54/55)."³⁵¹ It was not until the 5th year of Nero (58/59 C.E.) before a noticeably new number of coins were struck. It is believed by Riesner (and others) that the introduction of new coins at this time represents the change in procuratorships. But the very fact that the last coins dating from Felix's reign are dated to 55 C.E., appears to be significant. If Felix struck coins in 55 C.E., Festus may have waited until the year of 58/59 C.E. before striking any new mintage. So, we really have no solid proof one way or the other with this line of reasoning.

Now among certain scholars there is (supposedly) new evidence that Festus reckoned his term from 56 C.E. Jack Finegan relates in this regard:

Dates proposed for the succession of Festus to Felix run ...from A.D. 55 (Knox, p. 66) to 60 (Armstrong, ISBE [1929], I, 649). According to new "micrographic" evidence discovered by J. Vardaman, however, the date can be fixed in A. D. 56. On a coin of Nero's fifth year are the names of the consuls of the year 58 and the notation that this was the third year of Festus. Therefore the first year of Festus was 56.³⁵²

This new evidence presented by Jerry Vardaman apparently now has the recognition of establishing the date of Festus' arrival in Caesarea and it appears to have been just as Eusebius has stated all along. In reference to this, Dale Moody noted the following:

If J. Vardaman (personal communication) is correct that the Festus coin of A.D. 58 reads "in the fifth year of Nero" and "the third year of Marcus Porcius Festus," the issue is settled in favor of A. D. 56 and Eusebius is vindicated.³⁵³

But is Eusebius really vindicated by this new evidence? Eusebius said that Festus came to office in Nero's second year. That would place Festus in office in the year of 55 C.E., which is in exact agreement with what we

³⁵⁰ This is not only good history, but it doesn't sacrifice good history at the expense of gratuitous reasoning.

³⁵¹ Rainer Riesner, *Early Period*, 223.

³⁵² Jack Finegan, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, article "Chronology of the New Testament" (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 1:691. See also Jack Finegan, *The Archaeology of the New Testament: Mediterranean World of the Early Christian Apostles* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1981), 5, 14 and Jerry Vardaman, "A Chronology of Paul's Life," *Biblical Illustrator* (Winter, 1991), 66-70.

³⁵³ Dale Moody, "A New Chronology for the Life and Letters of Paul" in Jerry Vardaman and Edwin Yamauchi, eds., *Chronos, Kairos, Christos: Nativity and Chronological Studies Presented to Jack Finegan* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 226.

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have maintained. But if year 3 of Festus, as Jack Finegan notes,³⁵⁴ is the same as year 5 of Nero, then year 1 of Festus is the same as year 3 of Nero, not year 2, as Eusebius stated! So, we must ask, how is Eusebius vindicated by this new “micrographic” evidence?

One must also ask, are the years mentioned here actual years of Nero, or calendar years? And which calendar years should we use? The Roman Calendar or the Jewish Calendar or the Syro-Macedonian Calendar? If actual years are counted, then the first year of Nero extends from Oct 13, 54 C.E. to Oct 12, 55 C.E. But if reckoned according to the Roman Calendar, Nero’s first year would be from Oct 13, 54 C.E. to Dec 31, 54 C.E., and his second calendar year would be from Jan 1, 55 C.E. to Dec 31, 55 C.E. Reckoning in this manner, Festus would assume his duties in Nero’s second calendar year, which is still one year earlier than this new coin information given by Vardaman. Until Vardaman’s evidence can be substantiated, however, we must move forward on this point, accepting the date of 55 C.E. as the year that Paul stood before Felix. Our chronology, in fact, is truly in accordance with that of Eusebius and Jerry Vardaman’s is the one that is out of sync.

THE FINAL YEARS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

AS SOON AS FESTUS BECAME PROCURATOR, Paul made his appeal to Caesar. Once having done that, Paul, a Roman citizen, could now go before the Emperor himself and appeal his case. The *Book of Acts* tells us that he did that very thing. He left for Rome in the fall of 55 C.E. on his famous “shipwreck” journey, wherein he wintered on the Isle of Malta before finally arriving at Rome in the spring of 56 C.E. Then the *Book of Acts* tells us that Paul spent two years under house arrest in Rome, and therefore the ending of the story in the *Book of Acts* occurs in the summer of 58 C.E. and not anytime later.

Tradition tells us that Paul, upon his release from prison, did fulfill his desire to go on a western campaign.³⁵⁵ Such a vast journey, wherein

³⁵⁴ Jack Finegan, *Handbook*, 399.

³⁵⁵ We believe that Paul wanted to go to Britain to see first hand if anti-Roman forces there would bring the mighty Roman Empire down. Paul must have wanted to return to the churches of Asia Minor in the crucial year of 63 C.E., with the knowledge, one way or the other, if the prophecies of Rome’s fall would occur at that time. With the failure of the Boadicean uprising, and Parthia offering terms of peace, it was now all too apparent to Paul that the time of the end was not on the near horizon.

Clement of Rome tells us that Paul “taught righteousness to the WHOLE WORLD, having travelled to the LIMITS of the west” (1 Clem 5:7), may have taken upwards of five years of Paul’s life, an endeavor that we know virtually nothing about. It is not until Paul returns to Asia that the story picks up again, but not in the *Book of Acts*, but only in Paul’s later Epistles (Pastorals, *Ephesians*, *Colossians* and *Philemon*).³⁵⁶

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WHEN PAUL RETURNED FROM HIS TRIP FROM the west, it appears that he first went to the Island of Crete with Titus, and then on to Nicopolis in western Greece, probably in the spring or summer of 63 C.E. He wintered in Nicopolis and in the following spring moved on to Macedonia.

After writing the Epistle of *First Timothy* in the spring of 64 C.E., in Macedonia, Paul returned to Ephesus in late summer of 64 C.E. to visit Timothy (1 Tim 1:3). It was there, in the city of Ephesus, that the Apostle Paul was again taken into custody in his sixth major imprisonment.³⁵⁷ It is this Ephesian imprisonment where Paul writes the Prison Epistles of *Colossians*, *Philemon*, and *Ephesians*.³⁵⁸ We thus place the writing of these Epistles in 64/65 C.E. Paul was probably released from bonds the following spring of 65 C.E. and then went to Laodicea and Colossae. He then continued his journey into Galatia, specifically Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, where he encountered stiff opposition and persecution.

After Paul’s stay in Galatia, Paul then journeyed to Corinth, then to

³⁵⁶ The vacuum of biblical information for this time period appears to this writer to be deliberate due to the lack of an “amen” at the end of the *Book of Acts*. Only outside sources tell us of Paul’s activity of *Beyond Acts*.

³⁵⁷ Hemer, *Book of Acts*, 272, objects to an Ephesian imprisonment for the following reasons: “The difficulty with Ephesus is that of positing, not an imprisonment as such, but the exceptional, prolonged captivity situation. Imprisonment was commonly used either for the overnight lock-up of a trouble-maker (*coercitio*, cf. Acts 16:23, 35, at Philippi), or for those awaiting trial or execution. Only in exceptional or irregular circumstances might one expect a prolonged captivity pending trial, as at Caesarea and Rome. Both were apparently forms of open arrest imposed by Roman authority, where the victim or his friends, not the state, bore the costs of his support. If at Ephesus Paul had fallen foul of civic authorities, they are unlikely to have had the occasion or facility to hold a prisoner for long. Exile, not imprisonment, was the likely penal sentence, and that would be the prerogative of the Roman governor.” Isn’t it interesting that scholars have no problem letting Paul sit in prison in Caesarea for two years and not bring up this objection, but jump forward with it to argue against an Ephesian imprisonment? Hopefully, a new generation of scholars will see the obvious, and then some refreshing analyses will appear to paint a picture that finally makes sense.

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Malta (2 Tim 4:20), and then finally to Rome, arriving there around the autumn of 65 C.E. It is there, and at this time, that Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy, asking him to come to Rome with John Mark before the winter of 65/66 C.E. set in. Then, in the spring of 66 C.E. Paul sends John Mark back to Jerusalem to get Peter to come to Rome. This is when Peter writes his Epistle of *Second Timothy*.

It was sometime in the autumn of 66 C.E. that Paul was eventually re-incarcerated at Rome, where tradition tells us that he finally met his execution in early 67 C.E.

THE DATE OF PAUL'S MARTYRDOM

CLEMENT OF ROME, WRITING SOON AFTER PETER and Paul had been martyred, stated that the Apostle Paul gave his final testimony, not before Nero, but before “the rulers” (1 Clem 5:7). This would indicate that Paul’s testimony for his own defence occurred after the general persecution of 65 C.E., when Nero was absent from Rome and in Greece, a fact that places Paul’s demise somewhere between October 66 C.E. and June of 68 C.E. These “rulers” were acting on Nero’s behalf while Nero was absent from Rome. Arthur Stapylton Barnes informs us that:

Either the phrase [“under the rulers”] has no meaning at all or it must mean that the martyrdom [of Paul] took place during the time that Nero was absent from the city, and that sentence was pronounced not by the Emperor in person but by the *Praefecti* whom he had left in charge. It is noteworthy too that several of the apocryphal ‘Acts’ represents the Apostles as condemned not by the Emperor but by the *Praefects*.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁸ Most scholars add *Philippians* to this list, but, although *Philippians* is a Prison Epistle, it belongs to Paul’s first Roman imprisonment. Scholars have not yet recognized an Ephesian imprisonment after Paul’s Roman imprisonment. The scholar George S. Duncan, (*St. Paul’s Ephesian Ministry* [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1929]), although recognizing an Ephesian imprisonment, unfortunately placed it within the time period of *Acts*, which is impossible. Therefore, his theory never really gained any acceptance. Needless to say, however, is the fact that the post-Acts Ephesian imprisonment is just another vital key to understanding the period of *Beyond Acts* that we here have at last provided for an accurate picture of New Testament history.

³⁵⁹ Arthur Stapylton Barnes, *The Martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1933), 71.

With this in mind, it appears that the date of the death of the Apostle Paul would fall during the time when Nero was still in Greece, and that would be after the general persecution of 65 C.E.³⁶⁰ The most likely date for the death of the Apostle Paul is preserved in a document called the *Depositio Martyrum*.³⁶¹ Daniel Wm. O'Connor, in his thoroughly researched book on the subject of Peter in Rome, agrees with this conclusion:

January 25 commemorated the death and burial of Paul in the Via Ostia. The word "conversio" was added to the notice of January 25 since this is the most spectacular event in the life of Paul.³⁶²

This date makes excellent sense, since it falls well within the time frame that Nero was away in Greece. Therefore, we submit, on the evidence of the *Depositio Martyrum*, that the martyrdom of the Apostle Paul occurred on January 25, in the year of 67 C.E.

THE DATE OF PETER'S MARTYRDOM

THERE ARE TWO IMPORTANT REFERENCES IN the *Depositio Martyrum* that we need to analyze in order to come to conclusion on the date of Peter's death. The date of February 22 is found in the *Depositio Martyrum* of the *Chronographer of the Year 354*, where the following item occurs:

Mense Februario: VIII Kal. Martias. Natale Petri de Cathedra.³⁶³

³⁶⁰ Jerome, (*Vir. ill.* 12, [NPNF² 3:365]), informs us that the philosopher Seneca died two years before the apostles, which we learn from Tacitus (*Ann.* 15:48) occurred in 65 C.E. This alone would therefore place Peter and Paul's death in 67 C.E., according to the testimony of Jerome.

³⁶¹ The *Depositio Martyrum* is a section of a larger opus entitled the *Chronographer of the Year 354*, an anonymous work which may have arisen at the time indicated by the title. It is preserved in T. Mommsen's *Chronica minora* (3 vols.; Monumenta Germaniae historica, 9, 11, 13; Berlin: Weidmann, 1892-1898). Fortunately, professor Barnes has reproduced this text in its entirety in his *Martyrdom*, 120-21.

³⁶² Daniel Wm. O'Connor, *Peter in Rome: The Literary, Liturgical, and Archeological Evidence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 49.

³⁶³ Barnes, *Martyrdom*, 120. This translates as: "Month [of] February: Eighth [day before the] kalends [or the first day of] March. Natal [day] of the Chair of Peter."

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This corresponds to a date of February 22.³⁶⁴ What did this date signify? Jérôme Carcopino believed that this date referred to the transfer or translation of Peter and Paul's bones in the year of 258,³⁶⁵ but Jocelyn Toynbee counters that

natale, means, not 'translation', but 'birthday', in a funerary Christian context "heavenly birthday," or 'martyrdom'; and it could only refer to a burial that took place at the time of death, or to the first solemn burial after death; it could not be used of a re-interment after an interval of nearly two-hundred years.³⁶⁶

As for the meaning of "cathedra," Daniel Wm. O'Connor offers the following:

The word "cathedra" in the notice of the *Depositio Martyrum* may hold the key to the early character of the festival. The meaning of cathedra in Latin is "chair." On occasion it may mean also "locale," or "center of operations." In the mid-third century, however, when this festival was instituted, Latin had not yet been introduced generally into formal Church usage. It is therefore necessary to remember that the Greek "καθέδρα" may suggest a "place of rest."³⁶⁷

Based upon these scholarly assessments, therefore, the notice in the *Depositio Martyrum*, which literally translates to: "The natal day of the Chair of Peter" should be corrected to read: "The martyrdom [*natale*] and burial [Greek: *cathedra*] of Peter." This being the case, then this evidence points to February 22 for the death and burial of the Apostle Peter.

We are supported in this position with the careful insight of specialists in this field of research, such as, Daniel Wm. O'Connor, who summarizes the excellent positions of noted scholars, Jocelyn Toynbee and Henry Chadwick:

A recent attempt at a solution to this problem was made by Toynbee, who explains that upon the authority of Henry Chadwick,³⁶⁸ she is now of the opinion that February 22 commemorates the date of the death and burial of Peter at

³⁶⁴ Finegan, *Handbook*, 383.

³⁶⁵ Jérôme Carcopino, *De Pythagore aux Apôtres: Etudes sur la conversion du monde romain* (Paris, Flammarion, 1956), 265: "Il n'y a point de doute que lors de son institution première, elle n'ait été destinée à commémorer la translation de 258 à Catacumbas."

³⁶⁶ Jocelyn M. C. Toynbee, review of *De Pythagore aux Apôtres*, by Jérôme Carcopino, *Gnomon* 29 (1957): 266.

³⁶⁷ Daniel Wm. O'Connor, *Peter*, 42-3. O'Connor seems to have struck on something worth considering, i.e., that "cathedra" was not the Latin "chair," but the Greek "place of rest."

the Vatican according to an alternative tradition that the deaths and burials of Peter and Paul took place on different days and in different years. The word ‘cathedra’ in the familiar notice of the *Depositio Martyrum* was added later to mark him out as the founder of the line of popes.³⁶⁹

Thus, we would have to place the death’s of Paul and Peter on January 25th, 67 C.E. and February 22nd, 68 C.E., respectively, except for the fact that, concerning Peter’s death, there is another date to consider. The other date that we have to consider in dating Peter’s death is the one that is officially accepted by the Catholic Church and many noted scholars – i.e., June 29th. It also is derived from the *Depositio Martyrum*. Let us now investigate whether this date holds any credibility to the belief that Peter died on this date.

DID PETER DIE ON JUNE 29?

THE *DEPOSITIO MARTYRUM* MENTIONS THIS second date in relation to both Peter and Paul:

Mense Iunio: III Kal. Iul. Petri in Catacumbas et Pauli in Ostiense, Tusco et Basso Cons.³⁷⁰

The thing to notice about this entry is that the consulships of Tuscus and Bassus referenced herein are in the year of 258 C.E. and not, as we would expect, in a year in the late 60’s C.E.³⁷¹ Why would this entry reference a year in the third century, if such a reference had anything at all to do with the martyrdom of Peter and Paul in the first century? The *Liber Pontificalis* may provide the solution to the problem with some additional insight as to what was going in the middle of the third century:

³⁶⁸ Henry Chadwick, “St. Peter and St. Paul in Rome: The Problem of the Memoria Apostolorum ad Catacumbas,” *Journal of Theological Studies*, New Series, 8 (1957): 31-52.

³⁶⁹ Daniel Wm. O’Connor, *Peter*, 49.

³⁷⁰ Barnes, *Martyrdom*, 121. This translates as “June 29. Peter in the catacombs, and Paul on the Via Ostiensis in the consulship of Tuscus and Bassus.”

³⁷¹ The French scholar, Paul Monceaux, “L’Apostolat de Saint Pierre à Rome à propos d’un Livre récent,” *Revue d’histoire et de Littérature religieuses*, n. s., 15 (1910): 235, believed that the scribe who wrote “Bassus and Tuscus,” consuls in the year of 258, mis-copied his source, which originally read, “Bassus and Crassus,” who were consuls in 64 C.E. But are we to believe that there just so happened to be consuls in the year of 258 that coincidentally had exactly the same names as a scribal error? What are the chances of that happening?

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In his time (Pope Cornelius, 251-253), at the request of a certain lady Lucina, he took up the bodies of the apostles Saints Peter and Paul from the catacombs at night; in fact first of all the blessed Lucina took the body of St. Paul and put it on her estate on the Via Ostiensis close to the place where he was beheaded; the blessed bishop Cornelius took the body of St. Peter and put it close to the place where he was crucified, among the bodies of the holy bishops at the temple of Apollo on the Mons Aureus, on the Vatican at Nero's palace, on 29 June.³⁷²

The ominous date of June 29 appears in this reference as a date for the transference for the bodies of Peter and Paul in the third century.³⁷³ Indeed, there exists no evidence that this date is to be taken as the actual date of Peter and Paul's martyrdom, but rather the date of their bodies being reburied in the catacombs.³⁷⁴ A. S. Barnes helps us understand one thing that is an important clue in figuring this out:

It is a characteristic survival of pagan ideas about the relative importance of death and burial, that it was the burial and not the martyrdom that was commemorated, even in cases in which the two events were widely separated.³⁷⁵

³⁷² Davies, *Liber Pontificalis*, 9.

³⁷³ Barnes, *Martyrdom*, 89-90, believes that this story really belongs to the first century. He states that: "It is one of the few points on which all critics are unanimous that this statement does not belong to the time of Cornelius at all, but that it has been misplaced and should be put elsewhere. ... All that need be done is to leave out the title of the Pope, doubtless supplied to fit it for being placed in the story of his life, and also the mention of the graves of the other bishops, which graves only came into existence later. The Cornelius will be seen to be very probably Cornelius Pudens, the owner perhaps of the place then known as *ad Catacumbas*, and the difficulty of imagining a second Lucina besides the one who traditionally originally buried St. Paul is done away with."

³⁷⁴ From an altogether different source, we are told that in the time of Pope Vitalian, the year being 656 C.E., the bodies of Peter and Paul, along with other saints, were sent to King Oswy of Britain: "Vitalian, bishop and servant of the servants of God, to the most excellent lord, our son, Oswy, king of the Saxons: ... We have ordered blessed gifts from the saints, that is, relics of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul and of the holy martyrs Laurence, John, and Paul, and Gregory, and Pancras to be delivered to the bearers of these letters of yours, all indeed to be taken to your excellency." The Venerable Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (3:29), ed. James Campell, (New York: Washington Square Press, 1968), 172, 174. John D. Keyser, "1st Century Britain and the Gospel of Christ," n.p. [cited July 20, 2002], online: <http://hope-of-israel.org/1stcent.htm>, stated that he "was personally told by the librarian of Canterbury Cathedral that the church inventories record the arrival of the remains of Peter and Paul to the church's safekeeping shortly after Pope Vitalian sent them to Britain. Unfortunately, though, it is believed the remains were lost, or record of their location lost, in the aftermath of the Cromwellian Rebellion." Thus, it would seem that the Catholic Church in the seventh century was not all that interested in the relics of the founders of their church and that the modern quest to find the tomb of Peter in Rome and his body only have reaffirmed that they are no longer buried on the Vatican.

³⁷⁵ Barnes, *Martyrdom*, 118.

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From this it appears that the dates given in the martyrologies are to be considered the days on which a body was buried, rather than the memorial of the person's death. It could be that these dates were one in the same, but in the year 258, it obviously applied to a reburial of some sort.³⁷⁶ If this is so, then the June 29th date, which speaks about the catacombs (in reference to Peter) and the Ostian Way (in reference to Paul) is a commemoration of Peter and Paul's burial [or better yet, their reburial], and certainly not to their martyrdoms back in the first century!

The fact that both the Apostles Peter and Paul are remembered on the same day would fit the idea of a reburial far better than the dates of martyrdom because, as we have noted, Peter survived Paul and wrote about him as already deceased (2 Pet 3:15). Indeed, the reference to the consularships of M. Mummius Tuscus and Pomponius Bassus points away from the first century because they were consuls in the year of 258 C.E. and not in year of 67 C.E., nor 68 C.E. Obviously, Peter and Paul were reburied on June 29, 258 C.E. rather than being martyred on June 29, 67 C.E.³⁷⁷

Friedrich Gontard is also in agreement with our assessment, that June 29th, which commemorates some event concerning Peter and Paul, had something to do with the year of 258, and not with the dates of the martyrdoms of Peter and Paul:

The Roman Catholic Church celebrates the feast of SS. Peter and Paul on 29th June, a date based on the tradition of the year 258. During the persecution under the Emperor Valerian (253-60) Pope Sixtus II (257-8) is said to have transferred the bones of the two Apostles to an underground burial-place on the Via Appia, *ad catacumbas*. The day of the transference is given as 29th June, and this is the day that is now celebrated, after gradually becoming accepted as the date of the martyrdom.³⁷⁸

A. S. Barnes also quotes a Dr. von Gerkan, the Secretary of the German Archaeological Institute at Rome, as stating:

³⁷⁶ Scholars refer to the reburial explanation as "The Translation Theory," which is discussed at length in O'Connor, *Peter*, 126-134.

³⁷⁷ Jack Finegan, *Handbook*, 383-4, who accepts the date of June 29th as the day of both Peter and Paul's martyrdom on the one hand, ironically contradicts himself with the following remark: "The year 258 was the year in which Valerian's brief but violent persecution of the Christians took place. It may be that at that time the remains of Peter and Paul, or some portions thereof, were temporarily transferred to this place for safe-keeping." Despite this insight, Finegan still believes in the June 29th, 67 C.E. as the most probable date for the deaths of Peter and Paul: "Peter and Paul suffered martyrdom, June 29th, 67" (*ibid.*, 389).

³⁷⁸ Friedrich Gontard, *The Chair of Peter: A History of the Papacy* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1964), 63.

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The bodies of the Apostles were brought to the place called *ad Catacumbas* on June 29th in the year 258, in fear of desecration by the Roman authorities. June 29th is the date of the translation, not of the martyrdom.³⁷⁹

Another tradition has it that June 29th is indeed the correct date of death for both the apostles, but that they died exactly a year apart. As for this intriguing theory, A. S. Barnes again comments:

St. Peter himself, though he survived the great day of A.D. 64, according to all tradition perished in the later days of this same persecution. The date assigned for his martyrdom, as also for that of St. Paul, is 29th June, and the prevailing opinion is that the two apostles suffered, not only on the same day of the month, but in the same year. Some early writers, however, among whom may be noted Prudentius and St. Augustine, say that St. Peter suffered exactly a year later than his fellow apostle (Prud., *De Mart.*; Aug., *Serm.*, 296-97.; Arator, ii., p. 700). So strange a coincidence is in itself very unlikely, and the explanation of the existence of this tradition [June 29] is given us by a council at Rome in the time of Gelasius [492-496], which asserted that the two apostles suffered at Rome at the same time, *uno tempore uno eodemque die*, (Labbe, *Concilia*) "and not otherwise as the heretics were wont to say".³⁸⁰

Many believe, including the early church Father Jerome, that the Apostle Peter was martyred on the same day as that of the Apostle Paul, which the *Acts of Peter and Paul* places on June 29th.³⁸¹ But such a conclusion flies in the face of the internal evidence. As we have stated above, Peter was alive when he speaks of Paul in the past tense as being already dead (2 Pet 3:15). James Hardy Ropes, agrees, noting that:

As to the date of Peter's death, it may be added that if II Peter is genuine, Peter would seem to have survived Paul, and to have written, after the later's death, a letter to gentile Christians in the provinces of Asia Minor.³⁸²

Henry Chadwick makes the following observation in this regard:

³⁷⁹ A. S. Barnes, *Martyrdom*, 86.

³⁸⁰ A. S. Barnes, *St. Peter in Rome* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1900), 92-3.

³⁸¹ ANF8:485. A. S. Barnes, *Martyrdom*, 71, is one scholar who accepts the date of June 29th for both apostles, Peter and Paul: "Roman tradition might easily have failed to retain with certainty whether it was in 66 or in 67 that the double martyrdom took place. It was on 29 June; that was certain." Jack Finegan, *Handbook*, 401, unfortunately also accepts the idea that Peter and Paul were both martyred on June 29, 67 C.E.

³⁸² James Hardy Ropes, *The Apostolic Age in the Light of Modern Criticism* (New York; Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), 217.

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If at the last the ultimate question is to be raised concerning historical events, probability is no doubt overwhelming in favour of the view that the apostles died on different days. The notion that they died on one and the same day would naturally catch the imagination as far more dramatic, though it is interesting to observe that there was also current the same date a year apart – a view which would have the advantage of involving no liturgical complications. In the second-century *Acta Petri* and *Acta Pauli* it is simply taken for granted that the apostles died at different times.³⁸³

It is therefore impossible to accept the date of June 29th as the date of Peter's death, if for no other reason than it maintains that Paul also died on the same date, which, we believe is totally against the internal evidence.

Another point to consider is this. Around the year of 500, Pope Gelasius (who believed that pronouncements from the Chair of Peter were infallible), declared that it was forbidden to teach the idea that Paul ever sojourned in Spain and also that Peter and Paul had died at separate times. Arthur Stapylton Barnes notes, concerning this:

Both Prudentius (Prudentius, *De Martyribus*, hymn xii) and St. Augustine of Hippo (St. Augustine, *Sermons*, 296-7) were misled ... and the idea [that both Peter and Paul did not die on the same day, June 29th, in the same year] was formally repudiated, as being due to heretical misrepresentation by a Roman Council under St. Gelasius about A.D. 500.³⁸⁴

Thus, the only real authority for the date of June 29th (which Barnes himself had defended so vehemently), rests upon a decree by the Catholic Pope, Gelasius, in order to counteract what he felt were heretical opinions to the contrary.

If Peter was executed a year later than Paul, and Paul was beheaded on January 25, 67 C.E., as we have shown above, then Peter met his death a year later, in the same time-frame as January, 68 C.E. And the date of February 22, 68 C.E. fits this requirement. Indeed, June 29th fails because Nero had already committed suicide on June 9th, 68 C.E. and we would not have Peter dying during the reign of Nero.

Therefore, on the basis of the *Depositio Martyrum*, it would appear that Peter did die about a year later than Paul, which we can now place as February 22, 68 C.E.

³⁸³ Henry Chadwick, "St. Peter and St. Paul in Rome: the Problem of the Memoria Apostolorum ad Catacumbus" *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s., 8 (1957):31-52.

³⁸⁴ Barnes, *Martyrdom*, 70.

LINUS — ANOTHER CHRONOLOGICAL KEY

W**E** HAVE AN EXCELLENT CLUE TO THE CORRECTNESS of the chronology that we have presented herein in the fact that Linus was bishop of Rome from 56 C.E. to 67 C.E. This fact is stated in the *Liber Pontificalis*:

Linus... was bishop in the time of Nero from the consulship of Saturninus and Scipio [56 C.E.] to that of Capito and Rufus [67 C.E.].³⁸⁵

It is the very year of 56 C.E. that we have placed Paul arriving in Rome. Now, if Linus was ordained in Rome in that year, who was there to ordain him to the office of bishop? The *Apostolic Constitutions* tells us that it was indeed the Apostle Paul who is the one credited for this ordination:

Now concerning those bishops which have been ordained in our lifetime, we let you know that they are these: ... Of the church of Rome, Linus the son of Claudia was the first, ordained by Paul; and Clemens, after Linus' death, the second, ordained by me Peter (*Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* 7:46 [ANF 7:477-8]).³⁸⁶

But how could the Apostle Paul ordain Linus in Rome in the year of 56 C.E. if Paul did not arrive in Rome until 57 C.E., 58 C.E., 59 C.E., or even 60 C.E., as many scholars believe? We maintain that our chronology is the only one that fits the above criterion, when all the facts are considered together.

Placing Paul's arrival in Rome in 56 C.E. is the only way to accommodate the fact that Paul ordained Linus as bishop in that year, and that he died there 11 years thereafter, in the year of 67 C.E. The reason scholars seek to place Paul's arrival in Rome later is that they do not know how to fill an eleven year gap with the events of his life. It is our position, however, that Paul left Rome after his two year incarceration and journeyed to Britain and most likely back through Gaul during the years from 58 C.E. to 63 C.E.

³⁸⁵ Raymond Davis, tr., *The Book of Pontiffs (Liber Pontificalis)* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1989), 2.

³⁸⁶ The idea that Linus was the second Pope following Peter is historically wrong. And if Paul did ordain Linus, then this would make Paul surviving Peter, which is contrary to the evidence of the *Liber Pontificalis*.

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The idea that the death of Paul occurred in 61 C.E. or 62 C.E., at the time that many scholars believe that the *Book of Acts* comes to a conclusion, cuts Paul (and Peter) off right at the time that they were to complete the most important literary endeavor of their careers. Indeed, once scholars have cut off the final years of Peter and Paul, they seem to be free to place the canonization of the New Testament in the hands of later church clerics. And such a theory appears to be sustained in part by a chronology that is pure fiction. Then scholars take that fiction and use it to form their views on canon history, which is a total mess. So, can we now understand why the subject of chronology is of such extreme importance in understanding the true history of *Beyond Acts*?