

The Attackers: Causes, Conditions, Successions, & Relations: Paul from Claudius to Nero: Claudius Mandates a Jewish Diaspora from Rome, Aquila & Priscilla Meet Paul in Corinth, Acts 18:1–3; Chronology Table: Biography of St. Paul: His Four Missionary Journeys & 13 Epistles; Paul Martyred; Nero Commits Assisted Suicide

8. This resulted in a diaspora of Jews from the Italian peninsula, two of which met up with Paul in Corinth, an event recorded in the New Testament in:
Acts 18:1 - After these things Paul left Athens and went to Corinth.
v. 2 - And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them,
v. 3 - and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers.
8. The psalmist Asaph records in Psalm 76:10, “For the wrath of man shall praise You.” The favoritism of Agrippa and Claudius toward the Jews resulted in them developing an antagonism toward the Christians.
9. This sequence of events became the catalyst that would conclude with the death of Paul, but at the same time initiate the expansion of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire.
10. In the year A.D. 52, Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians, the first of his 13 Epistles and in A.D. 53 he wrote 2 Thessalonians, both from Corinth.
11. In the spring of A.D. 54, Paul left Corinth on what became his third missionary journey. He traveled from Corinth to Jerusalem for Pentecost and then to Ephesus by way of Antioch.
12. In October of A.D.54, Claudius was assassinated by his niece Agrippina the Younger, the mother of Nero.
13. Paul’s work in Ephesus lasted from the fall of A.D. 54 until the summer of A.D. 57 during which time he wrote First Corinthians.
14. After departing Ephesus, Paul went to Macedonia where he wrote 2 Corinthians in fall of 57 and in winter he went back to Corinth where he wrote the Epistle to the Galatians.
15. He remained in Corinth in summer of A.D. 58. While there he wrote the Book of Romans. He made his way to Jerusalem in time for Pentecost where he was arrested and sent to Caesarea.
16. Felix was the Roman procurator at the time. The Jews wanted Paul turned over to them for prosecution, but Paul’s testimony before Felix caused the official to become ambivalent about what to do with him.
17. In the early part of A.D. 60, Felix was replaced by Festus as the Roman governor of Judea.
18. Finally, after having been held in custody for two years, Paul appealed to Caesar and in August of A.D. 60, Festus sent Paul to Rome for trial.
19. Paul’s journey was by boat which suffered shipwreck near Malta which delayed Paul’s arrival at Rome until the spring of A.D. 61.
20. Paul spent two years in a Roman captivity during which time he wrote the Prison Epistles: Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, and Philippians.

21. In spring of A.D. 63, Paul was acquitted. He left Rome for Macedonia which began his fourth missionary journey, going first back to Anatolia.
22. There are indications in Scripture that Paul then embarked on a journey to Spain which he expressed a desire to do in Romans 15:24, 28.
23. Details that support this are provided by Conybeare and Howson:

Having accomplished the objects of his visit to Asia Minor [Anatolia], he was at length enabled to undertake his long-meditated journey to Spain.

By what route he went, we know not; he may either have traveled by way of Rome, which had been his original intention, or more probably, avoiding the dangers which at this period (in the height of the Neronian persecution) would have beset him there, he may have gone by sea. There was constant commercial intercourse between the East and Massilia \ma-si'-lē-a\ (the modern Marseilles \mar-sā"); and Massilia was in daily communication with the Peninsula [Spain]. We may suppose him to have reached Spain in the year 64, and to have remained there about two years; which would allow him time to establish the germs of Christian Churches among the Jewish proselytes who were to be found in all the great cities, from Tarraco \tar'-ra-kō\ to Gades \gād'-ēz\ [Cádiz \ca-diz'], along the Spanish coast. (pp. 745–46)

From Spain Paul seems to have returned, in A.D. 66, to Ephesus; and here he found that the predictions which he had long ago uttered to the Ephesian presbyters were already receiving their fulfillment. Heretical teachers had arisen in the very bosom of the Church, and were leading away the believers after themselves. Hymenaeus and Philetus were sowing, in a congenial soil, the seed which was destined in another century to bear so ripe a crop of error. The East and West were infusing their several elements of poison into the pure cup of Gospel truth. In Asia Minor, as at Alexandria, Hellenic philosophism did not refuse to blend with Oriental theosophy; the Jewish superstitions of the Cabbala,¹ and the wild speculations of the Persian magi, were combined with the Greek craving for an enlightened and esoteric religion. The outward forms of superstition were ready for the vulgar multitude; the interpretation was confined to the aristocracy of knowledge, the self-styled Gnostics (1 Timothy 6:20); and we see the tendencies at work among the latter, when we learn that, like their prototypes at Corinth, they denied the future resurrection of the dead, and taught that the only true resurrection was that which took place when the soul awoke from the death of ignorance to the life of knowledge.

We recognize already the germ of those heresies which convulsed the Church in the succeeding century; and we may imagine the grief and indignation aroused in the breast of Paul, when he found the extent of the evil, and the number of Christian converts already infected by the spreading plague.² (p. 746)

24. The conflagration in Rome occurred in July of A.D. 64. Paul departed Rome in the spring of A.D. 63 on his fourth missionary journey.

¹ “Kabbala, also spelled Cabbala (Hebrew: “Tradition”), esoteric Jewish mysticism . . . is “tradition” inasmuch as it lays claim to secret knowledge of the unwritten Torah (divine revelation) that was communicated by God to Moses and Adam. Though observance of the Law of Moses remained the basic tenet of Judaism, Kabbala provided a means of approaching God directly. It thus gave Judaism a religious dimension whose mystical approaches to God were viewed by some as dangerously pantheistic and heretical. It began to flourish in Palestine in the 1st century AD and had as its main concern ecstatic and mystical contemplation of the divine throne, or “chariot” seen in a vision by Ezekiel the prophet (Ezekiel 1) (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropaedia*, 15th ed. [Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2010], 6:671).

² W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul* (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1893; repr., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), 745–46.

25. He went to Macedonia, Anatolia, and then to Spain in 64 where he remained until the summer of 66.
26. At that point he returned to Anatolia in the summer of 66 spending a year there before going to Macedonia the following summer of 67.
27. From there he wrote First Timothy and the following fall went back to Ephesus where he wrote Titus.
28. He decided to spend the winter of 67 in Nicopolis. Paul was arrested there in the spring of 68 and taken to Rome for his second imprisonment.
29. The trial was conducted in two phases. He was found innocent of charges leveled in the first phase and was returned to prison to await the second.
30. During this time he wrote Second Timothy, the last of his 13 epistles.
31. In the second phase of the second trial Paul was found guilty of organizing the burning of Rome by the Christians of the city.
32. The charges included not only arson but the deaths of those who were consumed by the flames.
33. As a citizen of SPQR, he qualified for execution by decapitation which was carried out in the summer of 68 on the Ostian Road outside the city limits of Rome.
34. Nero tried to commit suicide just a few weeks later. He couldn't muster the courage. Condemned to death by the senate, he put the weapon to his throat and was assisted in the fatal blow by Epaphroditus.³

³ The chronology of this section was drawn from Appendix III: "Chronological Table: Biography of St. Paul," in Conybeare and Howson's *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, 832–34.