

Galatians: The Letter that Saved the Church

The Showdown in Antioch



Galatians 1:11-2:14

Blackhawk Church 2021

The Context of Galatians



- *Author:* Paul
- *Recipient:* The churches in Galatia are composed of mostly Gentiles. Paul founded these churches likely as part of his second missionary journey (49-52 AD).
- *Date:* Some time after the founding of these churches (52-55 AD).

The Context of Galatians

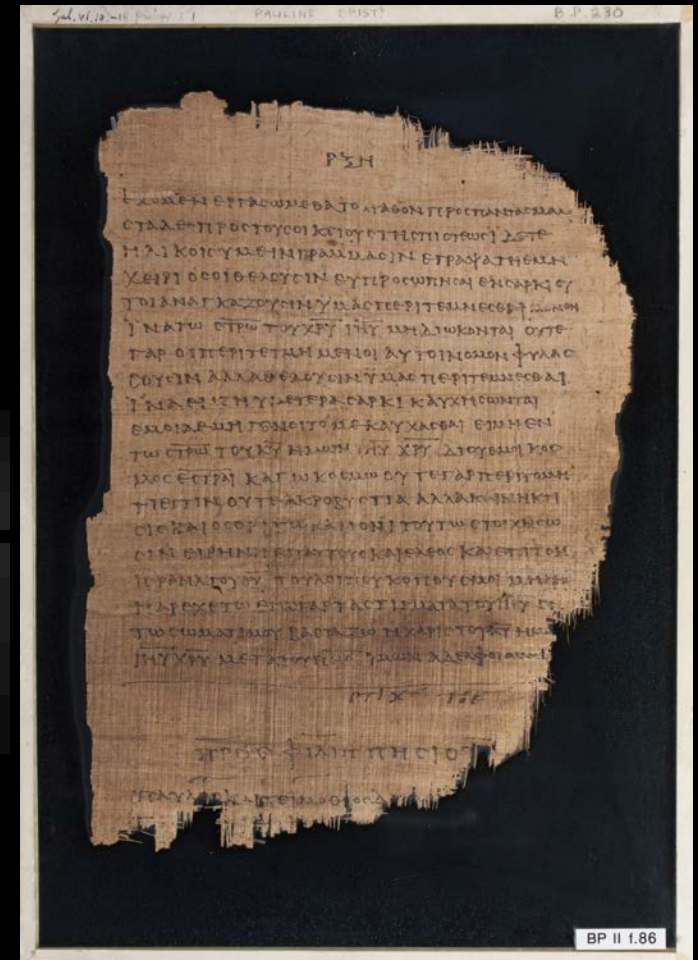
- *Situation:*

After Paul left Galatia, Jewish Christians (likely from Jerusalem) came to these churches and taught the Galatians that to be truly part of the KOG and become children of Abraham, they needed to embrace Jewish ethnicity by following some key elements of the Torah, in particular, circumcision, Sabbath, and food laws. These Jewish Christians also attacked Paul's authority as an apostle (not connected to Jerusalem), labeling him as a people-pleaser who avoided teaching the hard parts of the gospel (e.g., circumcision).

- *Content:* The letter is Paul's response to the situation

My Gospel is Superior

¹¹ I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. ¹² I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.



A Negative Travelogue

13 For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. **14** I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. **15** But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased **16** to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being. **17** I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus.



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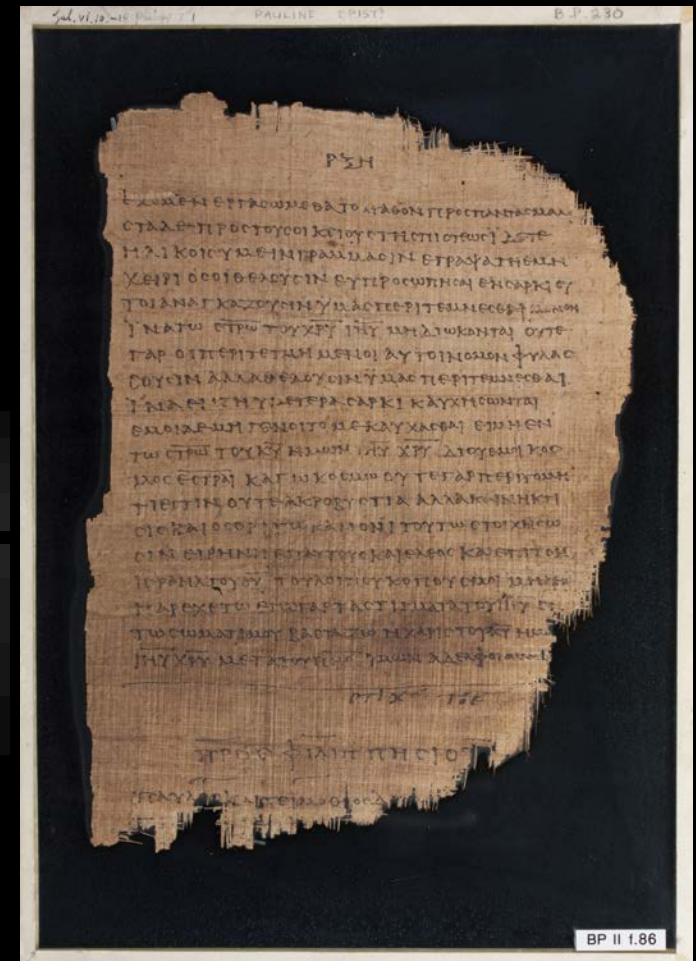
A Negative Travelogue

¹⁸ Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days. ¹⁹ I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord's brother. ²⁰ I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie.



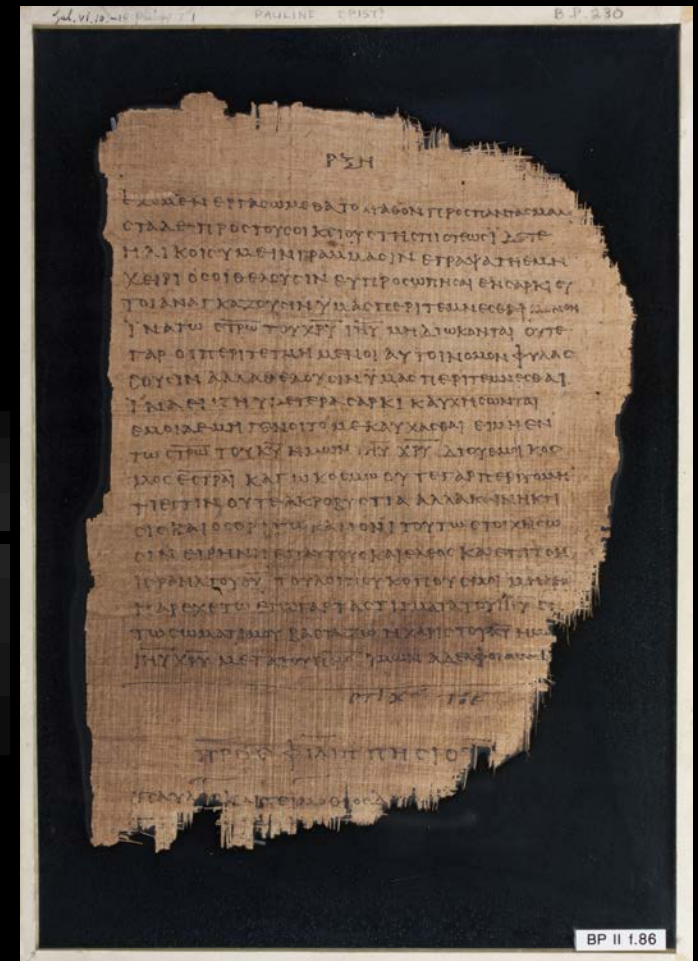
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²¹ Then I went to Syria and Cilicia. ²² I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. ²³ They only heard the report: “The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.” ²⁴ And they praised God because of me.



A Meeting in Jerusalem

2:1 Then after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with **Barnabas**. I took **Titus** along also. ² I went in response to a revelation and, meeting privately with **those esteemed as leaders**, I presented to them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. I wanted to be sure I was not running and had not been running my race in vain. ³ Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. ⁴ This matter arose because some false believers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. ⁵ We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

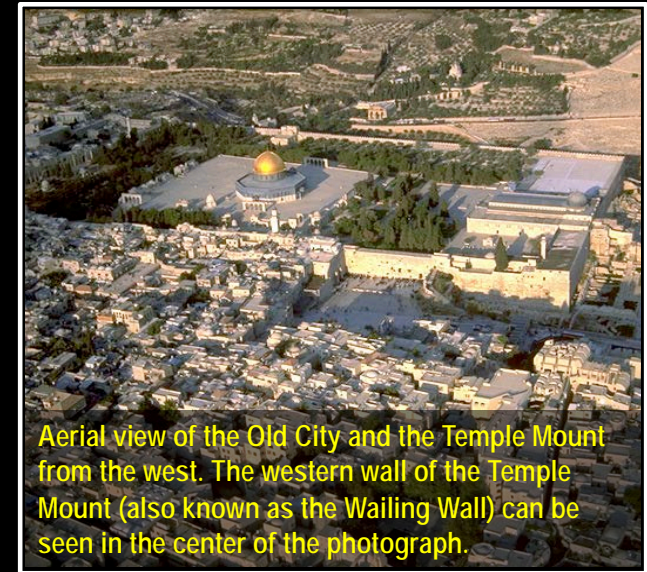


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The Jerusalem Council

Acts 15:1 Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." ² This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question.

- Date: 49 AD
- Parties: The Jerusalem Church and the Antioch Church
- Topic: Should Gentile Christians be circumcised?
- Result: No circumcision, but some restriction on food.



Aerial view of the Old City and the Temple Mount from the west. The western wall of the Temple Mount (also known as the Wailing Wall) can be seen in the center of the photograph.

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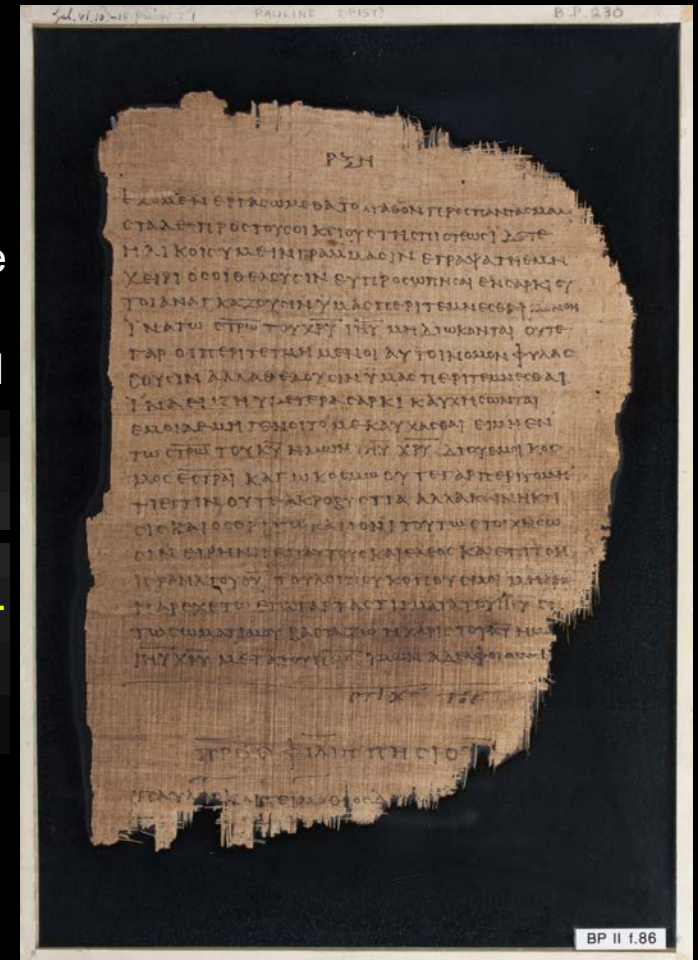
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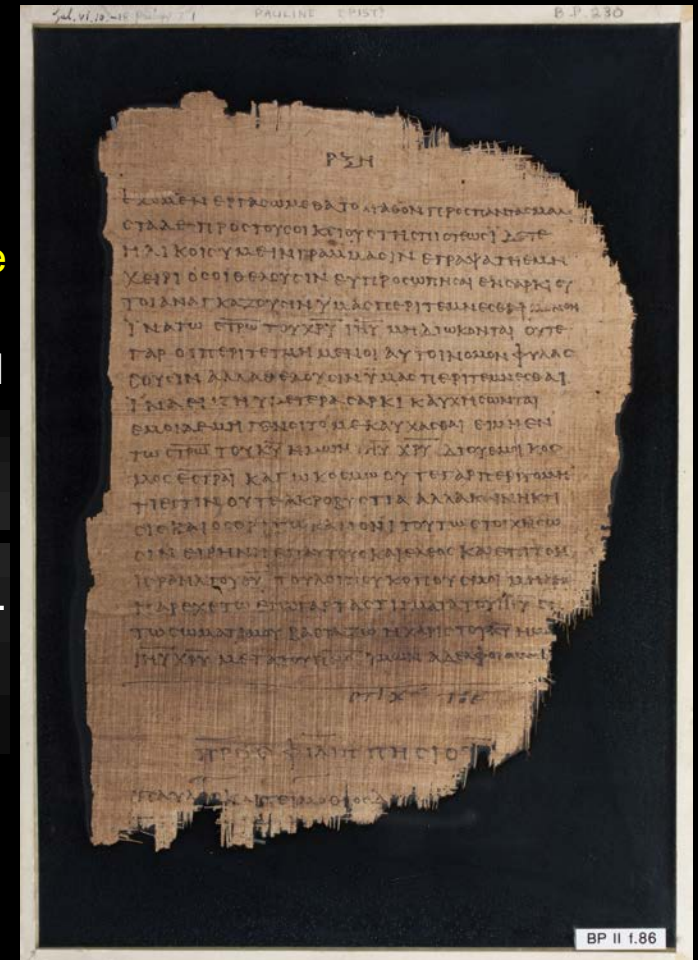
A Meeting in Jerusalem

⁶ As for those who were held in high esteem—whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not show favoritism—they added nothing to my message. ⁷ On the contrary, they recognized that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised. ⁸ For God, who was at work in Peter as an apostle to the circumcised, was also at work in me as an apostle to the Gentiles. ⁹ James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. ¹⁰ All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I had been eager to do all along.



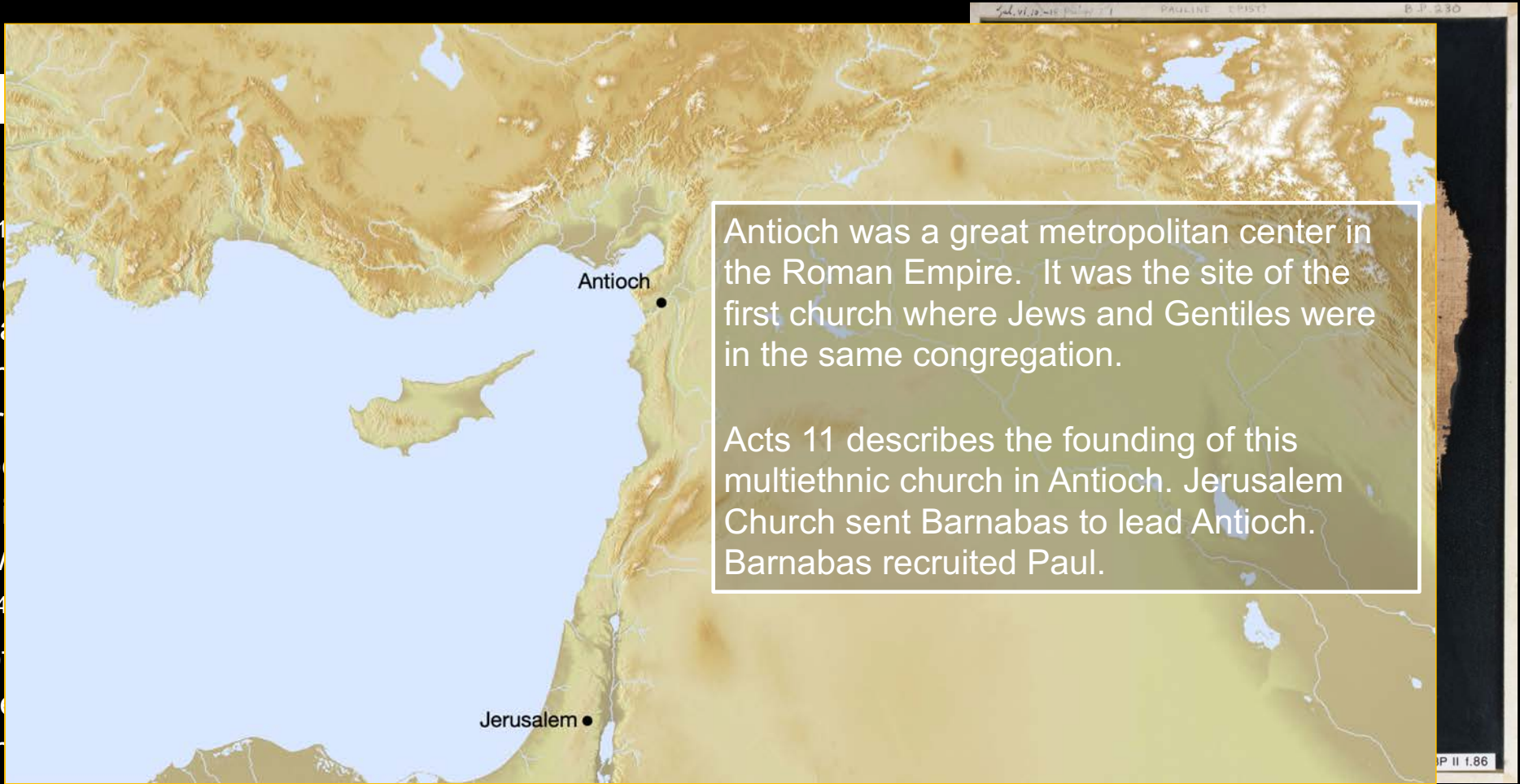
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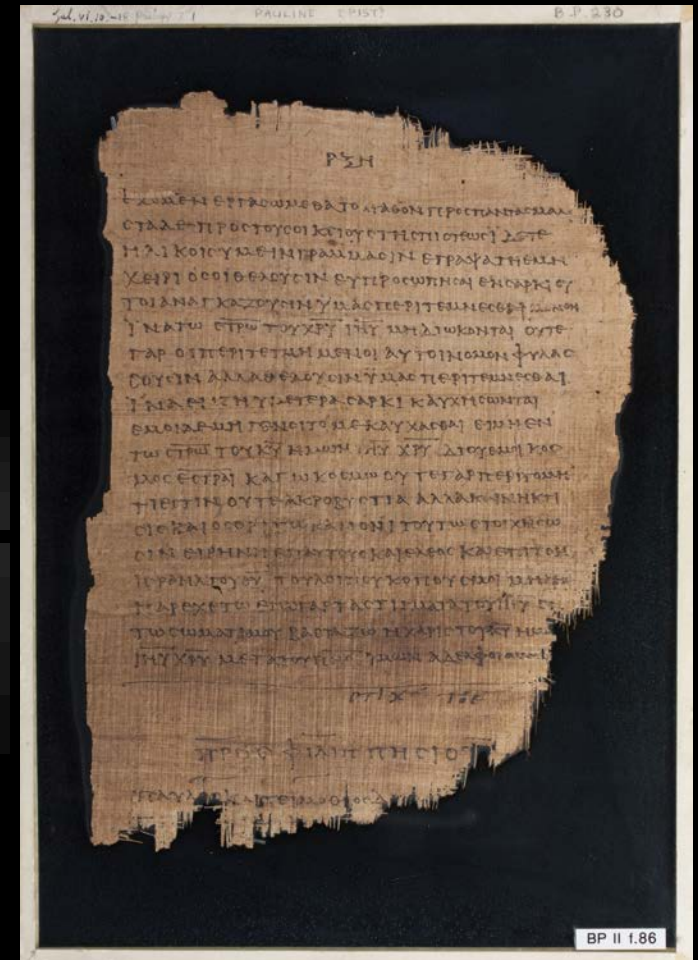
Antioch was a great metropolitan center in the Roman Empire. It was the site of the first church where Jews and Gentiles were in the same congregation.

Acts 11 describes the founding of this multiethnic church in Antioch. Jerusalem Church sent Barnabas to lead Antioch. Barnabas recruited Paul.

The Showdown in Antioch

11 When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. 12 For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. 13 The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.

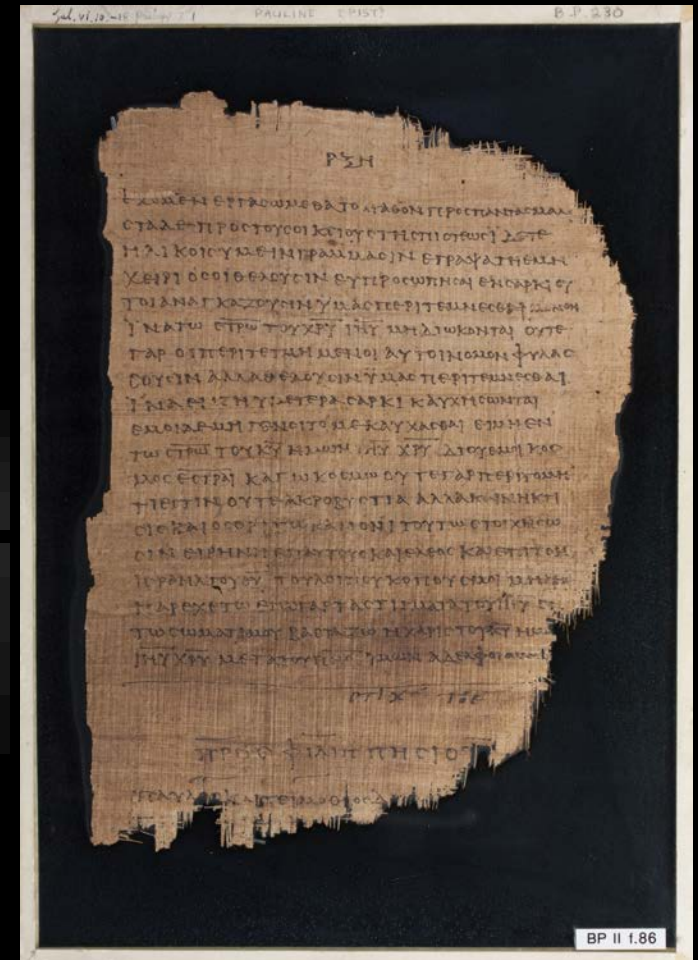
14 When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"



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Galatians 1-2: A Conversation

Galatians: Look, Paul, this is what they're saying about you. You're not a real "apostle." You're not from the Jerusalem Church. You're not one of the 12. Those guys, they're from Jerusalem. They're from James, he's Jesus's brother. Who are you?

Also, they say you are a people-pleaser. You didn't tell us about circumcision because you're kind of a wimp. What are we supposed to think?



Galatians 1-2: A Conversation

Paul: You're dang right, I'm not from Jerusalem. I barely ever went there. I'm not sent from Jerusalem. Oh no, I received my apostleship directly from Jesus the Messiah. The content of the gospel I teach comes directly revealed from God.

But you should also know, the “leaders” of the Jerusalem Church already affirmed my gospel (no need for Gentile circumcision) and gave me authority over the gentile churches. This meddling is a betrayal and violation of that agreement. Can you really trust these people?



Galatians 1-2: A Conversation

Paul: In fact, don't get too impressed by these leader-types from Jerusalem. They don't have it figured out. I had to straighten out Peter in front of everybody in Antioch when he started behaving hypocritically when faced with pressure from James. Who do you think is the people-pleaser in that situation?



Sorting out the Timeline

Book of Galatians

- 15 days in Jerusalem (Gal. 1:18)
- Jerusalem Meeting (Gal. 2:1-10)
- Antioch Incident (Gal. 2:11-14)
- Founding of Galatian Churches
- Coming of the Outsiders
- Writing of Galatians

Book of Acts

- Paul Visits Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-30)
- Famine Visit (Acts 11:30)
- Mission Trip #1 (Acts 13:1-14:28)
 - Iconium, Lystra, Derbe (14:1, 6)
- Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-35)
- Paul & Barnabas split (15:36-40)
- Mission Trip #2 (Acts 15:40-18:22)
 - Galatia mention (16:6)
- Mission Trip #3 (Acts 18:23- xxx)
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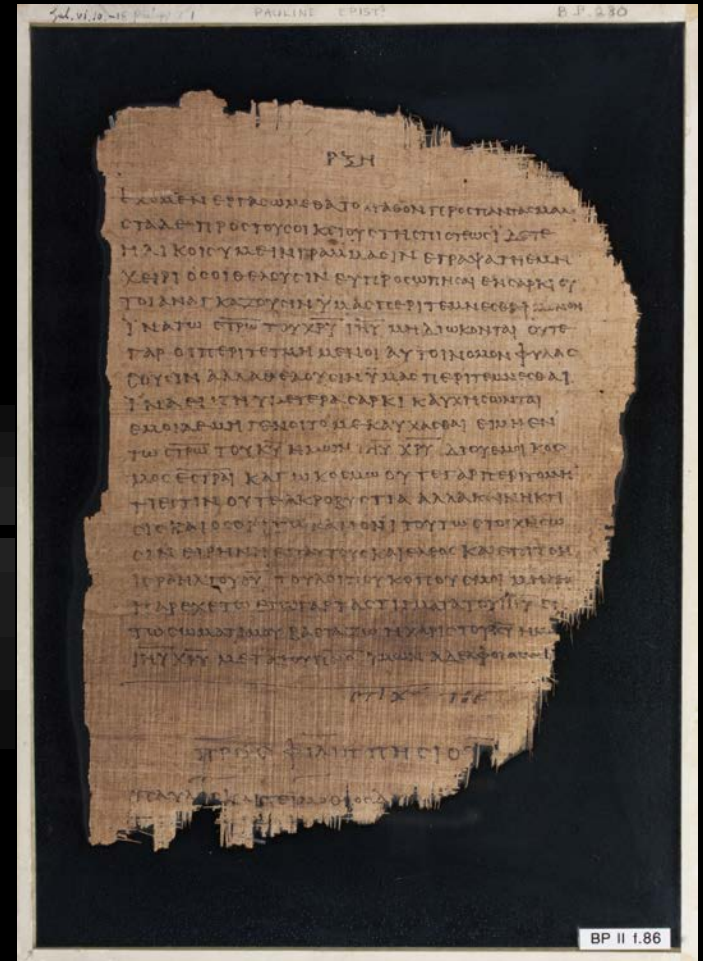
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A Conversation (Gal. 2:15-21)

Galatians: But Paul, they make it so simple and so obvious. It's right there in the Bible. God's blessing goes through Abraham and his descendants. And the true descendants of Abraham, yes, they follow Jesus, but they also get circumcised, they eat kosher, they keep the Sabbath, they follow the Torah the best they can. It's right there in black and white.

No circumcision means no children of Abraham.



A Conversation (Gal. 2:15-21)

Paul: But that kind of reading of the Torah misses the big picture. What is God trying to do in blessing Abraham? He's trying to fix the world; he's trying to make things right. He's trying to "justify" the world. So tell me, has the Torah fixed anything? The Torah has been around for over 1000 years. Tell me one thing that the Torah has fixed in our world. No, obviously, "justification" doesn't come from the Torah.



A Conversation (Gal. 2:15-21)

Paul: What can possibly fix (justify) the world? Only our union with Christ through the cross. Only the cross can fix everything. By uniting us with Jesus in his death and resurrection so that our life is his life, our relationship with God is fixed and we are transformed. Imagine a whole bunch of Jesus's running around. That's how you fix (justify) the world.



