



Never Been to Spain

The Journals & Journeys of Paul

"Beheaded Home"

In 2009 the Pope announced that the remains of the apostle Paul had been discovered.

Bone fragments were recovered after a tiny probe was inserted into the tomb which lies in a crypt beneath the Basilica of St. Paul outside the Walls in Rome - a church long held to have been built on the site where Paul was buried.

The tomb itself was discovered by Vatican archaeologists in 2006. The fact that it was positioned exactly underneath the epigraph *Paulo Apostolo Mart* (Paul the Apostle and Martyr) at the base of the altar convinced them it was Paul's tomb.

After the fragments were carbon-dated to the correct time period, the Pope announced: "This seems to confirm the unanimous and uncontested tradition that the bone fragments are the mortal remains of the Apostle Paul."

It's interesting but not definitive. The last few years of Paul's life, and even his death, are somewhat of a controversy if not a mystery.

In the Spring of 63AD Paul, under house arrest in Rome, was acquitted of the charges against him and set free. Probably none of the Jews from Jerusalem who had precipitated his arrest many years earlier appeared to give testimony.

After his acquittal he traveled from Rome to the isle of Crete (Titus 1:5) and began his last missionary journey.

Paul left Titus in Crete and went to Nicopolis in Macedonia (Titus 3:12). From Nicopolis he wrote the books of First Timothy and Titus.

We lose track of him until he is rearrested in Rome, about 67AD. There's a lot of speculation - and that's all it is, really - on his final travel itinerary.

This would have been the most opportune time for Paul to travel to such places as Spain, Gaul, which later became known as France, and on to Ludgate Hill which is the present site of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, England.

There's evidence Paul went to Spain. Cyril of Jerusalem wrote,

[Paul] carried the earnestness of his preaching as far as Spain, undergoing conflicts innumerable, and performing signs and wonders.

Chrysostom also wrote about Paul stating, "for after he had been in Rome, he returned to Spain..."

There is also an interesting fragment of a papyrus manuscript discovered in the Ambrosia Library (Italy) in 1700 by Domingo M. Muratori. The document, written in Latin, seems to date around the year 140AD, judging from its content. Among the important references to the four gospels, Paul's letter to the Romans, and other documents, there appear five lines which end with the words "when he (Paul) went to preach the Gospel in Spain."

Why do we think Paul might have gotten as far as England?

George F. Jowett, in his book *The Drama of the Lost Disciples*, records a statement by the Greek theologian, historian and Bishop of Cyrrhus, Theodoret (AD 390-458), "Saint Paul brought salvation to the isles in the ocean."

A more specific reference to Paul in Britain was made by Capellus in his *History of the Apostles*. He wrote, "I know scarcely of one author from the time of the fathers downward who does not maintain that St. Paul, after his liberation, preached in every country of the West, in Europe, Britain included."

R.W. Morgan cites the testimony of Greek theologian and historian, Theodoretus in 435AD as saying: "Paul, liberated from his first captivity at Rome, preached the Gospel to the Britons and others in the West."

Paul was again arrested by the Roman authorities in 67-68AD and was returned to Rome for a second imprisonment. On what charges? Likely he was rounded up as a leader of the Christians following the burning of Rome.

Rumors spread that Nero was responsible, seeking opportunity to reshape the city as he wished. In order to divert suspicion from himself, he accused the Christians of the crime and initiated inquisition and outrageous persecution.

His final imprisonment was rough. He said of himself,

2Timothy 2:8 for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained.

The "chains" he referred to here were not the *halusis* of being chained to a Roman guard in his own rented *house*. He was in a prison; in a dungeon, really.

The Mamertine prison in Rome - according to tradition, the prison in which Paul was held - was subterranean. It was located near the Forum and dated back to the seventh century before Christ, to the reign of the fourth king of Rome, Ancus Martius. Before that, it was the site of a stone quarry.

The prison itself was essentially two large rooms on different levels with iron shackles fixed to the walls. The lower chamber was the Tullianum, or the Tullian dungeon. The Roman historian Sallust, writing a century before Paul, said of this dungeon, "[It] is sunk about twelve feet under ground. Walls secure it on every side, and over it is a vaulted roof connected with stone arches; but its appearance is disgusting and horrible, by reason of the filth, darkness and stench." Lighting was indeed poor, primarily coming from torches or oil lamps. The guards might have had fires to provide heat in the winter or to cook food.

These guards were usually soldiers. Being a prison guard was not an appealing job and was often given to the poorest soldiers. Some of the guards were cruel; and prisoners, particularly ones not Roman, were defenseless. Under Roman law, if a prisoner escaped, the guard was executed. This tended to make the guards cautious about their wards, to say the least.

Prisoners were manacled using different lengths of chain, probably reflecting the security risk, the nature of the accusation, and the attitude of the guards. A short chain could hold a prisoner continually upright, dependent upon others for everything. A longer chain might permit a prisoner to take a step or two from the wall and to sit or to lie down. Some prisoners were placed in stocks, their ankles held apart. These persons were forced to sit on the same filthy spot continually.

A few prisoners might have friends or paid guards to provide them clothing, blankets, food, and water. These persons would also change the bedding straw and clean away the human waste. Other prisoners had no such provision.

Those final days were comparatively lonely.

2Timothy 4:10 for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica...

2Timothy 1:15 This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.

Of his old companions, only Dr. Luke was with him (Second Timothy 4:11). A few new names appear:

2Timothy 4:21 ... Eubulus greets you, as well as Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brethren.

A verse in Second Timothy more than any other captures the feeling of those final days.

2Timothy 4:13 Bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas when you come - and the books, especially the parchments.

Frank J. Goodwin writes,

A prisoner who is being hurried from place to place by unsympathizing keepers is little able to look after his property. But now the apostle is settled again, though his home is but a prison, and he feels that it will be his home for life. Winter is coming on, and winter in a Roman prison, as he knows by experience, may be very cold. He wants to get back his rough traveling cloak. It was one of those large sleeveless garments which we should call an 'overall' or 'dreadnaught.' Perhaps St. Paul had woven it himself of the black goat's hair of his native province.... 'And the books, but especially the parchments,' the biblia - the papyrus books - few, we may be sure, but old friends.

It was during this time that he wrote the second epistle to Timothy and indicated his willingness for imminent departure from this mortal life.

2Timothy 4:6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.

2Timothy 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

2Timothy 4:8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

The most accepted tradition puts his death by beheading as taking place along the Ostian Way outside of the city.

As to his beheading, A.T. Robertson writes:

The details are all wanting. Tradition supplies only a few, which may be true or not. The story is that Paul was beheaded on the Ostian Road. It was customary for criminals of prominence to be executed several miles out of the city so as to avoid the crowds. We may picture the event in a possible manner. One day in late spring or early June the executioners came to Paul's dungeon and led him out of the city. Paul, as a condemned criminal, would be the victim of the rabble's sport. He would have no defender. We do not know if Luke was with Paul to the very last. We may at least hope so. If he could, he would surely walk along as near Paul as would be allowed. But no band of Christians followed with him now. He was going out of Rome on his way to the true Eternal City. He knew Rome well, but his eyes were fixed on other things. Outside the city the busy, merry life of the time went on. The crowds flowed into town. Some were going out. Paul was only a criminal going to be beheaded. Few, if any, of the crowds about would know or care anything about him. At a good place on the road some miles out the executioners stopped. The block was laid down. Paul laid his head upon it. The sword (or axe) was raised. The head of the greatest preacher of the ages rolled upon the ground.

Tradition says that a Roman 'matron named Lucina buried the body of St. Paul on her own land, beside the Ostian Road.' Be that as it may, no Christian can come to Rome, especially by the Ostian Road, without tender thoughts of Paul, the matchless servant of Jesus (A.T. Robertson, *Epochs In The Life Of Paul*, pp. 316-317).

Paul would have been 66 years old.

Rather than come to our own conclusions, or make our own comments, about Paul, let him speak for himself as his life comes to an end.

2Timothy 1:12 For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.

He called it "that day," without anything further to designate it, because it is the great day; "the day for which all others days were made."

It seems to have been so much the object of thought and conversation among the early Christians, that the apostle supposed that he would be understood by merely referring to it as "that day;" that is, the day which they were always preaching about, and talking about, and thinking about.

It's the day you see Jesus Christ face-to-face. It's the day all sorrow ceases; all suffering either makes sense or is understood. It is the day any sacrifice you made seems so minor compared to the glory of knowing Him who loved you and died for you.

Here at the end of our studies about the life of Paul I can only hope that we all hold "that day" to be the preeminent day of our lives; that we look for it, long for it, and live for it.