

PREFACE

This book began with Neil Elliott's proposal to create a resource illuminating the first-century context of the New Testament writings, focused on Paul and his world in much the way David R. Cartlidge and David L. Dungan focused on the Gospels in their volume *Documents for the Study of the Gospels* (revised and enlarged edition; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994). Neil proposed a partnership to Mark Reasoner, who benefited from a sabbatical from Bethel University to write a first draft of the whole manuscript, including his own fresh translations of many of the materials included here. Neil then revised, supplemented, and reorganized the materials in accordance with an agreed outline.

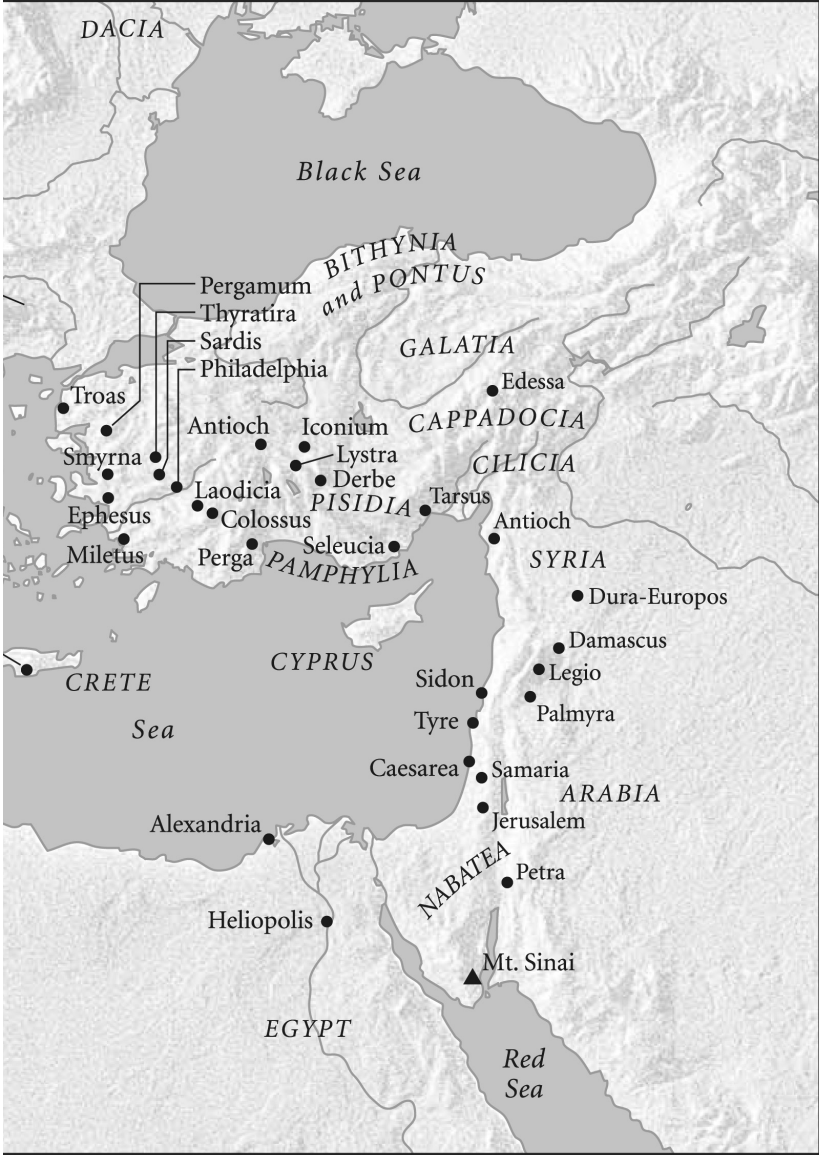
We wish to thank Bethel University for the opportunity accorded by Mark's sabbatical. Thanks are due as well to Fr. Silvio Sassi, Superior General of the Società di San Paolo, for the invitation to Neil to participate in the International Seminar on St. Paul in Ariccia in 2009 and to Br. Walter Rodriguez for his generous hospitality and advice, especially regarding the museums where a number of the photographs in this book were taken.

Warm thanks, also, to Fortress Press Editor-in-Chief Michael West for the confidence he showed in this project from the start and to Marissa Wold, Josh Messner, Esther Diley, Maurya Horgan, Kristin Goble, and Jeff Reimer for their diligent and talented efforts to bring the book into print. In addition to acknowledgments elsewhere in the book, special thanks also to Davina C. Lopez and Laura Nasrallah for advice concerning images.

Finally, our deep gratitude to Mary Ellen and Wendy for their patience and good humor through the process of bringing this book to publication.

A word about style and translation: we have modernized some older translations to avoid "thee" and "thou" language but have often left the masculine "man" or "men," which arguably reflects the male-focused character of one or another ancient text. We use "god" when the term is used generically and "God" when an author speaks of or to his or her own deity.





Paul's World

TIMELINE

We include here only a selection of significant dates that may help orient readers to the materials included in this book. The chronology of events in Paul's life is a subject of considerable discussion among scholars: See the brief review and bibliography by L. C. A. Alexander, "Chronology of Paul," Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, 115–23.

- 63 B.C.E. Pompey invades Judea, asserts Roman control; *Psalms of Solomon* is probably written soon thereafter. Returning to Rome, Pompey allies himself with Cicero (106–43) and Julius Caesar (100–44).
- 44 Caesar assassinated; his grandnephew and adopted son Octavian (63 B.C.E.–14 C.E.) vows to avenge him.
- 31–27 After defeating the armies of Mark Antony and Cleopatra and compelling their suicides, Octavian returns to Rome and is hailed as Augustus by the Senate; he rules with tribunician power until 14 C.E.
- 10 B.C.E.—10 C.E. Paul is born some time in this period.
- 4 B.C.E. Herod the Great, who had deftly negotiated alliances with Mark Antony and then Augustus, dies; his son Antipas rules Galilee, his son Archelaus rules Judea and Samaria.
- 6 C.E. Archelaus proves so unpopular that Augustus deposes him and imposes military rule in Judea.
- 14 At Augustus's death, his stepson Tiberius comes to power.
- 30 Jesus is crucified.
- 31 At Tiberius's death, Gaius (Caligula), whom Tiberius had made his son in his will, comes to power.
- 34/35 After some time as a persecutor of the *ekklēsiai* in Judea, Paul receives a "revelation" of the risen Christ. He goes away to Arabia then returns to Damascus three years later.
- 37/38 Paul comes to Jerusalem to meet Peter and other apostles, then travels to Syria and Cilicia. He proclaims the gospel over the next fourteen years in Galatia and, perhaps, Macedonia.
- 38–41 Some Jews in Alexandria sue for citizens' rights; Greek citizens respond with violence in "history's first pogrom." Philo (c. 30 B.C.E.–45 C.E.) leads an embassy of protest to Rome; they hear Gaius's plan to install a statue of himself in the temple.
- 41 Gaius is assassinated by his own officers; the Praetorian Guard puts Tiberius's nephew Claudius in power. He immediately issues a decree suppressing riots in Alexandria. *Fourth Maccabees* may be written shortly thereafter.

- 49 Claudius orders the expulsion of some Jews from Rome.
- 51/52 Paul visits Jerusalem again for a conference with the other apostles; the “Antioch incident” may have happened close in time. Paul travels to Macedonia (if he did not do so earlier) and is arraigned before Gallio. He subsequently works in Ephesus, organizing the collection for Jerusalem.
- 54 Claudius dies, probably poisoned. His adopted son Nero requests that the Senate confer divine honors upon Claudius.
- 55 or 56 Paul writes Romans in anticipation of his trip to Jerusalem with the collection.
- 56/57? That trip ends in disaster as Paul is confronted by a mob in the temple precincts (according to Acts); he is subsequently hauled before a series of Roman magistrates, being imprisoned for two years in Judea according to Acts.
- 59-62 According to Acts, Paul is tried by Festus; appeals to Rome; spends two years awaiting trial in Rome (according to Acts).
- 64–68? According to *1 Clement* 6:1, Paul and Peter are put to death under Nero, who targets Christians for persecution in the wake of the great fire in 64.
- 66–70 Roman provocations spark revolt in Judea. In 68 Nero kills himself to avoid capture in a military coup. The Romans at last conquer Jerusalem and destroy the temple. Yohanan ben Zakkai escapes Jerusalem; he will be a leading figure in the formation of what will later be called “rabbinic Judaism.”



Fig. 0.1. *Saint Paul. Byzantine fresco from the monastery in Sopotani, Serbia. Photo: Scala/Art Resource, New York.*