

PAPHOS

After the mission team left Salamis, they traveled throughout the island (at least one hundred miles) and came to Paphos (Acts 13:6). This was a port city on the western coast of Cyprus.

Paphos served as the capital of the island, and it was the headquarters of the imperial proconsul. The one governing at that time was named Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man who summoned Barnabas and Paul in order to hear the word of God (Acts 13:7). An inscription found at Soli, on the northwest shores of Cyprus, mentions “the proconsulship of Paulus,” corroborating Luke’s testimony. Other inscriptions have been found mentioning “Sergius Paulus” in Rome and Pisidian Antioch, and these may relate to the same figure. (See [https://biblearchaeologyreport.com/2019/11/15/sergius-paulus-an-archaeological-biography/.](https://biblearchaeologyreport.com/2019/11/15/sergius-paulus-an-archaeological-biography/))

It is ironic that Elymas Bar-Jesus, who served as an advisor to the proconsul, was a *Jewish magician*, since such activity was condemned by the law of Moses (Ex. 22:18; Lev. 19:31; 20:6, 27). However, Simon the Sorcerer was present in Samaria (Acts 8:9), and the seven sons of Sceva practiced exorcisms by invoking various names or powers in Ephesus (Acts 19:13-16). Elymas was blinded for trying to hinder the gospel of Christ (Acts 13:10, 11). This is the only detrimental miracle attributed to an apostle. (God, not Peter, struck down Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5.) The blindness of Paul’s opponent was a sign confirming the truth of the gospel that had been preached to the proconsul (Acts 13:12; see Mk. 16:20).

As Luke narrated the mission, he shifted from using the Hebrew name “Saul” to the Roman name “Paul” (Acts 13:9). Since Paul had been born a Roman citizen (Acts 22:25-29), he would have been given three Roman names soon after birth; one of them was “Paul” (*Paulus*).



Luke referred to him by his Hebrew name “Saul” in a Palestinian context (Acts 7:58), but then shifted to his Roman name “Paul” in Greco-Roman circumstances (Acts 13:9). The common idea that Saul’s name was changed to Paul (because the proconsul Sergius Paulus had come to faith) goes back to Jerome (*On Illustrious Men* 5), but it is not supported by the Scriptures.



Chrysopolitissa Church (Originally Built in the Fourth Century A.D.)







Floor Mosaics



St. Paul's Pillar

According to the law of Moses, the Israelites could deliver forty stripes maximum as a punishment (Deut. 25:2, 3). In the first century, the Jews subtracted one in case they accidentally miscounted; they wanted to avoid delivering forty-one stripes (see Josephus *Antiquities* 4.8.21, 23 [238, 248]). Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 11:24 that five times he had received "forty lashes minus one" from the Jews. According to local tradition, one of those five times took place at Paphos. Supposedly, he was strapped to the pillar below while being beaten. However, the only Jew encountered by Paul in Paphos in Luke's account of the first missionary journey was Elymas Bar-Jesus, whom Paul blinded (Acts 13:6-12). The tradition is possible, but it has no concrete support.



Tombs of the Kings

Historians believe that no kings were buried in these tombs; rather, the name comes from their magnificence. The architecture of this underground burial site was apparently borrowed from the Egyptians. Having been cut out of the rock, the tombs were the resting place of aristocrats from Paphos as well as their possessions. They were used from the 4th century B.C. to the 3rd century A.D.



House of Dionysius

The House of Dionysius dates from the second or third century A.D. It was named in modern times after Dionysius, the Greek god of wine, who is featured in one of the scenes of the mosaic. Of course, many other Greek gods are also represented. These mosaics contain mythological, hunting, and vintage scenes.



House of Aion

This is part of a mosaic from the House of Aion. This house was named after the Greek god of time, who is featured in one of the scenes. Mosaics were used to teach Greek mythology and provoke discussion. This mosaic, believed to have been in the dining room (*triclinium*), apparently dates from the fourth century A.D. It was during this period that the Roman powers rejected pagan religion and converted to Christianity. Some think that this mosaic is a pagan polemic against Christianity.

Petra tou Romiou

Paphos, the capital city of the island, was known as “the city of Aphrodite.” *Petra tou Romiou* (“Rock of the Roman”), also known as Aphrodite’s Rock, is a sea stack located south-east of the city of Paphos on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. According to Greek myth, Aphrodite, the goddess of beauty, was born from the foam of the sea. Moreover, if people swim around the Rock of Aphrodite three times, they are supposed to be granted eternal beauty, love, and good luck. Aphrodite’s Rock is a popular tourist attraction today.



Aphrodite’s Rock