

From Saul to Paul

His transformation and our own

Rod Carmona

Note 2: How we calculate the date of Paul's birth

The present note is based on comments of R. Picirilli in his work, "Paul, the apostle".

In Acts 7:58, with the account of the death of Stephen, Saul is described as a "young man" (in Greek "neanias"), a term used for men between 20 and 40 years of age. This occurs shortly after the crucifixion of Jesus, in approximately 35 A.D.

Not long afterward we find Saul in a role of leadership persecuting the Christians, and able to "cast his vote" in the Sanhedrin, whether as a member, or at least as one invited to vote. Considering the norms of the period, his age upon occupying such a position could not be less than 35 years.

When he writes his epistle to the Philippians, approximately in the year 60 A.D., Paul describes himself (v. 9) as aged (in Greek "presbytes"), a word generally used to refer to persons of 60 years or more.

Tradition (Chrysostom) places the date of Paul's martyrdom at 68 years of age, in the year 66 A.D., which would place his birth in the year 2 A.D.

The best estimate is that Paul was born approximately at the juncture of years at the beginning of the Christian Era (year 1 A.D.), between the years measured in B.C. and those measured in A.D. This would probably have coincided with the birth of Christ, currently estimated as between the years 1 and 3 A.D., or perhaps a few years earlier.