

FERDI IRMFRIED WOEBER

***How did the first Christians live after the death of Jesus?
Where was Apostle Paul?***

Ladies and gentlemen

It was always my aim to visit the places related to Paul by myself in order to get a more precise picture and not just copy what was already written. I would also like to answer the skeptics that based on the many known indications, there is an overall picture that proves that Apostle Paul was actually in Sicily and also visited the well-known places. However, there is no evidence to the contrary that could claim that Apostle Paul did not visit other places in Sicily besides the days in Syracuse mentioned by Luke. New research from the University of Haifa may refute previous opinions about nautical science. The writings of medieval historians can be described as close-ups and are therefore a very important source for the study of antiquity. They are additionally supported by archeology.

First: **The life of the first Christians in Sicily** and
Second: **Apostle Paul in Sicily.**

First a few words about the weather. Even during the Greek and Roman periods, nautical weather was changeable and at times dangerous and prone to disasters, as evidenced by the many sunken ships on the southern coast of Sicily, which still rest on the seabed. For example, a shipwreck that was discovered some time ago about 150 m from the port of Porto Ulisse and which probably dates from the 4th to 7th century and was loaded with coins, amphoras and ceramics as well as agricultural products.

In a conversation with David Gal from the University of Haifa, head of the Department of Maritime Civilization and researcher on the possibilities of sailing in the ancient world, especially in the eastern Mediterranean, told me that the weather situation at the time of the first Christians was not significantly different for today's situation. The sea level fell, see the discovered ship in Pantano Longarini, which was found 500 meters from the sea in an inland lake. In Naxos near Taormina, today's Giardini Naxos, it also sank by two meters, as excavations show, as there are already the first groups of houses that are identical to Megara Hyblea and where the sea used to be. In Santa Maria del Focallo, the sea rose and swallowed the entire port, **1** so that only traces of carts that led into the former port into the sea can be seen. **2** It is interesting that the remaining headland, which leads 50 meters into the sea, has a particularly positive aura. Research by Karin Zonneveld's team at the University of Bremen has shown that a warm period of 200 before to around 150 after Christ was replaced by a cold period that

lasted until 266 after Christ. This period brought increased disease and higher mortality rates and was the cause of pandemics such as the so-called Antonine and Cyprian Plagues, which affected the entire south of Italy. In 79 after Christ the eruption of the volcano Vesuvius occurred, which can be seen as the cause of the weather change. The exploding crater had a devastating effect that has been compared to the Hiroshima atomic bomb. The ash and stone shower rose to a height of 14 km and created a screen that was opaque to the sun's rays. The resulting cold period was also influenced by a lack of rain. A huge setback for both nature and the population. (says Alberto Angela in Pompei)

At the invitation of the University of Haifa **3**, I was able to sail on a replica ship from the period 500 before Christ and get a good idea of the efforts of the group around Apostle Paul. **3a** They had to sleep on deck and get their own provisions, hence the apostle's frequent shore trips. In Porto Ulisse, on the southern tip of Sicily, waves as high as 14 meters were measured during storms in the Middle Ages. It is therefore entirely understandable that the evangelist Luke reported almost exclusively on the sea voyage. It was common practice to plan several stays on merchant ships and to take in fellow travelers. The arrival destination was always problematic and uncertain. The information that Evangelist Luke gave in Acts 27 and 28 was recreated and compared in a research project on computer technology. What was remarkable were the precise descriptions of his experiences, which show his great understanding of nautical science. However, Luke's relatively precise descriptions end with the ship sinking off Malta. **4** From now on he only reports in a few short sentences. Here you can ask the question why? It is certain that his notes were written much later, probably between 62 and 65 after Christ, and that the experience with Apostle Paul seemed more important to him. A precise historical list was obviously not as important to him because it was not as life-threatening as sea travel itself, otherwise we would be better informed today. Through the scientific treatment of his journey, it is now possible to better understand the habits and daily life of the first Christians and to get answers to many questions.

How did the first Christians live in Sicily?

The life of the first Christians in Sicily changed little from the life of the first Christians along the Mediterranean and other areas. It is therefore imperative for a researcher to visit **5** Caesarea, Magdala and other places in Israel where it all began. **6**

Visits to other important places of the early Christians show that not everyone was just poor and afraid. They also had to take care of daily life. Christianity was open to all people regardless of their social status. The differences in everyday life and after death were probably familiar. **7** Particularly large burial sites in catacombs with canopy tombs testify to wealth. **7a** In a document found by Professor Hübner in Basel, **8** it is

reported: Quote "Since Menibios is traveling to you, I found it necessary to greet you together with our father. And now I remind you of the high school archy, so that we don't have to worry. Because Herakleides can't worry about it. Because he was appointed to the city council." A difference in the Christian population was recently noticed in Ephesus. Around 250 after Christ, a magnificent burial house was found in the center of the city. Lined with paintings and floor mosaics. A total of 55 burials were uncovered in five multiple-occupied graves. No doubt it was a burial place for the wealthy in Ephesus. In particular, the brocade interwoven with gold revealed valuable clothing with which the dead were covered. Of great "cultural-historical significance" is the fact that there were also Christians among them, as could be seen from memorial lamps with depictions of the cross.

The Christians in southern Sicily left the coastal area. People withdrew more inland from endangered areas, but robbery and persecution were not always omnipresent. They sought shelter in the caves of Cava d'Ispica, in a gorge 13 km long. Particularly noteworthy here is the rock church of Santa Maria della Cava, built between the 3rd and 4th centuries after Christ. **9** There is also the assumption that it was carved into the rock as early as the 1st and 2nd centuries. The great earthquake of 1693 destroyed much, so there is no clear evidence of this today. In Pantalica, where there are the most graves, namely 5,000, most of which could only be reached via rope ladders, you can still understand the problems of the first Christians. The martyrdom of the first Christians was mentioned by Cardinal Cesare Baronio (1538 to 1607) in the *Tractatio de Martyrologio Romao*.

It must be taken into account that southeastern Sicily is very different from the rest of the island. The weather conditions were different, up to events that only affected this part and which we know from history.

Above all, it was the so-called Peace of Constantine that brought a huge boost to Christianity. Everyday life consisted of work and the provision of sufficient food by the father of the family; housework and child-rearing were in the hands of the women. The day began with just eating freshly baked flatbread and a few olives in the morning. The same applied to families then as it does today. The family should be well and the children should have a good future. The family also included grandma, grandpa and aunts, all of whom had tasks to fulfill. People were interested in what was happening in a manageable area and also knew how to eat well, especially when they had visitors. Hospitality was very important to them. It was certainly possible that the Jewish custom of leaving a place free for an accepted guest was also adopted by the Christians. Perhaps in anticipation of someone who has died. A shared meal with a deceased person was quite common, as excavations in the catacombs of Syracuse show us. The food was prepared in cauldrons, clay pots over an open fire or on hot stones. Eating was only done with the fingers. Recent research in Herculaneum by Silvia Soncin of the University of York found that the majority of the diet consisted of grains (49 percent), proteins such as dairy products and nuts (40 percent), and the rest was fish.

In general, men ate almost twice as much fish as women, but the proportion of grain was higher for women. About 20 liters of olive oil were consumed annually. **10**

From the age of 6 or 7, the children were taught the basic concepts, which mostly happened at home. Only from the age of 12 could one go to school and learn astronomy, geometry, geography, history and rhetoric. However, this affected a maximum of 20 percent of young people. The girls learned how to do household works, but also how to dance, play music and sing. Children had to help adults. They had to collect wood and look after younger members. The marriageable age was between 13 and 15 years. Saturday, or Sabbath, was a day of rest. No work was done. There was enough time to rest and play. Recently discovered documents attest to the importance of beautiful appearance to the ladies of that time. They used particularly decorated clothing and a special perfume called Patchuoli, an essential oil essence from India that was extracted from a plant and mixed with olive oil. Black pepper was also imported from India and used specifically for inflammation. The way of life given by the Apostle Paul was followed and since he was an excellent speaker, he succeeded in converting many Jews and Romans to Christianity. Ancient literature from the 16th century tells of 6,000 Jews and Romans converted to Christianity by Marciano, the first bishop of Syracuse. Prayer leaders were chosen to ensure that the communal prayers were carried out. An important clue for understanding the first Christians can be gained by exploring the numerous catacombs. Many of these burial sites were used by the Siculi, Greeks and Romans before the Christians. See the tombs in Akrai, today's Palazzolo Acreide. In the coastal area between Pachino and Noto to Porto Palo there is still a catacomb, in Cittadella di Vendicari there are four churches and a burial site. There are also examples of Christian reuse of pagan buildings in the districts of San Lorenzo Vecchio and Eloro. The first Christian graves are characterized by their simplicity, faithful to the teachings of Christianity. Some graves indicate the name of the dead person and the date of his baptism through inscriptions, such as: Renatus dicitur naturae solvit, with the date April 28, 352, the date of his baptism. It was customary to only give first names. An inscription from the 4th century monastery of Sant'Agata in Catania shows: "By the grace of faith, he came to rest in Abraham's bosom. Here lies Eutybios, he lived 35 years." In a grave inscription in Mazara del Vallo from the 4th century, three young people are reported, Konstantinos 12 years old, Mellosos 10 years old and Niketas 8 years old, on December 27th, probably on one smallpox epidemic, died. It also says "Remember, O God, these people who lie here in God and enter your kingdom." In fact, baptism and death were in constant memory through the grave inscriptions of the first Christians. Christian teaching says the law of prayer is the law of faith. The description of the death looks like this: The dead person walks towards a light. Light means life. It is an illusion of two principles of Christianity, symbolizing the life of Jesus Christ, on the basis of which believers hoped to

find their salvation. Inscriptions about this can be seen on Christian monuments, especially in the oriental part of the Roman Empire, as well as on funerary monuments. The person who practices and the baptized should fast for one or two days beforehand. After death, the deceased was wrapped in linen and prepared for burial. Afterwards, relatives and friends were able to come to honor him. **11** On the third day after his death, shortly before sunrise, the funeral procession carried the body to the burial site, where, according to Christian beliefs and atonement rituals, burial took place in a catacomb or cemetery in the presence of the family. The rite was intended to help the deceased enter the kingdom of God and help the family overcome their grief. Prayers were held with hands raised towards Jerusalem throughout the entire ceremony, including by the prayer leader, who wore the same clothing as the faithful congregation. Since there were no prescribed rules for a funeral, one can assume that the previous ritual of the Jews and Greeks continued to be used, only slightly modified. For some time people lived with the dead, see the catacombs in Syracuse, the second largest underground city after Rome. People tried to be buried as close to a martyr as possible. Graves were temporarily used as dwellings. As early as the 1st century, a so-called agape, a communal meal with bread and wine, was celebrated in canopy graves. Ceremonies for the deceased took place on the 3rd, 9th and 40th days after the funeral. But that doesn't mean that people didn't also devote themselves to dance and music. In general, the first Christians could not immediately convert their long-standing habits and rituals to Christian rituals; they were too firmly anchored in their habits. Their language was ancient Greek. The influences from the religion of the Jews were still noticeable everywhere, especially as long as they still had their meetings in Jewish houses, which were marked by the menorah and the cross or the sign IC and IN **12 12a** for Jesus Christ. Christian symbols were placed at the entrance to a cave to mark it as a meeting place. In the letters of Apostle Paul you can find references to the music and songs of the first Christians. The dance ritual consisted of those present shaking hands and forming a circle, in the middle of which the leader or singer stood and led the song, usually a psalm, while the participants moved in the circle. Hebrew music, particularly unison church singing, had a great influence on early Christian music. Since there were no precise regulations about how a ritual should be carried out, it was at the discretion of the prayer leader to carry out the process as he saw fit. Regulations were not written down until 150 years later. In his Letters to the Corinthians, Apostle Paul criticized the misuse of communion as a normal meal to satisfy the hunger of those present. He also criticized the ever-increasing fanaticism of the first Christians, especially in Rome. They identified themselves as Christians in order to be accepted into the kingdom of God through martyrdom. The historian Riemann writes "...that in contrast to the predominance of the text over the melody, which was characteristic of Greek vocal music, a much greater independence of the melody from the text developed in the ancient

church songs, with the melody being the fixed basis to which the text adhere to". In contrast to the treatment of language in ancient Greek and Roman music, which was sung in early Christian times, in Christian sacred music the melody is more important than the text. The songs, especially those sung in seven tones, one has omitted the highest notes, allowing a greater concentration and a greater influence on the thoughts and meditation of the believers. The historian Grove says "...that the character of church ceremonies became more public after the emancipation of Christianity under Emperor Constantine in 313 "in view of the services now held in basilicas compared to those in house churches of earlier centuries". See the rock basilica in Rosolini, **13** which was built around 303 and continually expanded until 412. It became the largest rock basilica in Sicily. It is also interesting that they were not afraid to install a prison room.

The life expectancy of the first Christians was very low. All social classes were affected by great mortality; a high percentage in young people (under 20) and extremely low percentage in old people (over 50). It can be assumed that 10 percent of women died giving birth to a child.

Child mortality was very high and affected every second child. The average life expectancy for both sexes was around 30 years. If you survived this critical phase, you could easily live to be over 50 years old. Epidemics such as the smallpox epidemic, which affected 20 percent of the population and lasted several decades, as well as malaria and diarrhea caused by contaminated water as well as broken bones were the causes of the high mortality rate. Means had to be found from nature to alleviate the suffering of the population. Sulfurous water that emerged from a rock in Cava d'Ispica was used by the population to cure skin diseases. **14 14a** Shellfish such as shrimps, crabs are also reported to have been particularly effective in treating serious illnesses. The reports from eight doctors in Roman Sicily probably also existed among the first Christians. Doctors in Catania and Chiaramonte Gulfi can also be found on grave inscriptions. There is also said to have been a surgeon in Messina and a doctor in Syracuse. The importance of the family was very high. From today's perspective, it is interesting that wives were honored more than husbands. The first Christians had an average height of about 1.65 m, as can be seen from the sizes of the sarcophagi and skeletons. The first travelers in the late Middle Ages who visited the south of Sicily reported swamps, especially south of Rosolini, malaria and bites from poisonous snakes and scorpions. Here you can also make a connection to Malta and Luke's account, and re-evaluate the snakebite description. There were hardly any roads, so dry rivers served as paths. **15** It was only through the wanderings of Dominican preacher Tommaso Fazello in the 16th century that we can imagine the landscape in southern Sicily.

The women were in the house most of the time and only left for funerals or religious events, with the exception of neighborhood gatherings. Women

tended not to take part in social life. One of the main occupations of women was spinning and weaving.

In every home, wool or linen was spun to turn it into hanks or balls of very long threads, and then rectangles of fabric were made using looms. They were worn by both men and women, but the women's were decorated with lace and embroidery. They consisted of capes from the shoulders to the feet, fastened to one or both shoulders with buckles or double buttons. In addition to this most common garment, women wore a light shawl, often folded into a triangle, worn on the shoulders or over the head, and secured with a ribbon or ornament, or used as a veil. This triangle was also worn by children at work. Fabrics could be whitewashed and dyed by vigorous washing with soapwort ash and prolonged exposure to the sun. Many colors were derived from plants. Yellow from saffron flowers, red in all shades up to blue from purple snails, gray from pomegranates, violet from indigo, a bush with pink flowers, and black from antimony, a silvery-white, shiny metal that was also used to glaze the ceramics.

To impregnate the materials, especially the sails, they were immersed in sea water, as researchers in Israel reported to me, who only came to this conclusion after long tests.

The youth wore short clothes above the knee. The shoes were open like sandals or closed like boots. The latter were also worn by women on unpaved paths to protect their legs from thorns, stingers or snake bites. People were barefoot in the house. The head was usually not covered. It was a sign of illness and old age to wear a hat in public. All of this can already be found among the Greeks and Romans and was adopted by the first Christians.

The particular wealth of fish on the south coast should be mentioned; there were up to 24 species of fish. Swordfish was already a specialty at the time of the first Christians, as was the Garum fish sauce, which was served with "Alici di Menaica sotto sale". There are said to be families in the Porto Palo area today who know how to prepare this sauce. Fishing was mostly done with a trawl net. The southern coast of Sicily was known for its particularly tasty fish. Possibly the good water quality was the reason for the confluence of the Ionian Sea with the Mediterranean.

A document from 230 after Christ was found and is currently kept at the University of Basel. It is the oldest document known to date and gives a good insight into the social life of a well-educated Christian family. In the document, a brother writes to his traveling brother: Quote: "Greetings, my incomparable brother Paul. I, Arrianos, greet you. Then he continues: But send me also the fish sauce in which you believe, that it is good. At the end it says: I pray that it goes well with you in the Lord". The brother's name, Paul, which was rather rare, shows the family's connection to the Apostle Paul. In the Busaitone and Busaitonello ponds in front of the Cava d'Ispica, the Macrostigma trout was caught, which was very popular. There were already numerous types of wine. The so-called polio wine was very popular in

Syracuse. The name comes from Polio Argivo, in Messina there was Mamertino wine made from the Murgentina grape. Strabo and Pliny mention Entellani and Inittini from the area around Taormina. Many varieties had a honey flavor, especially Balinzio wine, which later received the name Muscat. The production of beer was also known, as recently demonstrated by a document found at the University of Graz in Austria. Water usually had to be fetched from far away and was one of the housewife's duties, but was not drunk. Only the water from wells could be drunk. Hence settlements near a well, see Cozzo Collura near Solarino, Cava d'Ispica, Belliscola, today's San Paolo and Eoro.

The diet was mostly vegetarian. Flatbread was part of the main meal. Back then, people mainly ate beans, peas, lentils and leeks. Food was roasted in olive oil. To make the food more varied, spices such as caraway, mint, asparagus, dill and other herbs were used. Fresh fruit, such as grapes, dates, figs and pomegranates, were only available at harvest time. The rest of the time we had raisins, dried dates and figs. Nuts were also easy to save. Many dishes were prepared with salt or preserved in salt. People didn't know about sugar. Rather, honey was taken from wild bees. Sugar cane was also suitable, but was very complex to process. A sweet sauce was released by grinding it several times, cooked on a fire, bottled and then turned into a sugar mass when it cooled down. In order to achieve good quality, the process had to be repeated several times.

It was up to the master of the house to distribute the food that was in a bowl. He sat on a straw mat on the floor. I assume that there was also prayer. Little by little, houses were built into settlements that were already very stable but small, for example with shopping streets like in Naxos. They had flat roofs and only small windows. Oil lamps were used for lighting.

At the time of the first Christians there was already a well-established and organized monetary system. One can assume that simple counting originally began with the fingers. Later, especially in trade, counting had to be quicker. You then counted in increments of tens and hundreds. An open hand represented a certain amount and today would mean five. Double the amount was equivalent to two open hands. Apostle Paul urged Christians to pay their taxes and pay off debts. For archeology, coins are an important marker of time. It is to the credit of Mariarita Sgarlata and Vittorio Rizzone that the numerous copper and bronze coins that they found in catacombs were evaluated. In general, the early Christians were influenced by the lifestyle and habits of the Greeks and later the Romans, but the four major religious festivals had great significance for them.

Christmas, the celebration of the birth of Jesus, dates back to the ancient culture of the Greeks and Romans. The Epiphany is of oriental origin. Easter, as the day of commemoration of the death of Jesus Christ and his resurrection, is the greatest holiday and was closely related to the Passover festival of the Jews of the Old Testament. The Aramaic exclamation Amen and the Jewish exclamation Alleluia were adopted by the first Christians. The

Feast of Pentecost is the fiftieth day after Easter and the end of the Easter season and originally dates back to 150 before Christ as a festival of thanksgiving.

Ladies and gentlemen. Now I would like to come to the second part of my speech, namely **Apostle Paul in Sicily**.

Along with Jesus, Ignatius of Antioch, Paul is one of the most important personalities of the first Christians. In the Acts of the Apostles by Evangelist Luke the shipping to Malta is described in great detail. Unfortunately there is very little about the stay and nothing at all about Syracuse. Tradition assumes that Aristarchus met the apostle Paul again in Rome. This would mean that he did not necessarily accompany Paul in Sicily. There is no information about Evangelist Luke. Contrary to this is the information provided by Octavio Caietano, who includes both of them as part of the group. Nevertheless, Apostle Paul's journey in Sicily is well documented. He was around 50 years old at the time. All that remains is to collect evidence to fill the empty pages with text.

There are two different dates about the departure of Apostle Paul from Caesarea **16**. The historian Christine Hofmann writes in her doctoral thesis: If we go by the Jewish calendar, the Apostle Paul left on October 5, 59. But if you use the Syrian-Jewish calendar, the departure date would have been October 28th. But if one assumes that the departure was not in the year 59 but in the following years - here experts even mention the year 62 - the departure date changes again. There is a certain amount of uncertainty right from the start. The uncertainty lies even more in the time information, which hardly mentions a date and can therefore only be used as a guideline. It is interesting that the evangelist Luke often uses the number three. He writes about three people Paul, Luke and Aristarchus, a student of Paul from Thessaloniki, that the southern storm Notos lasted three days before the dangerous typhoon Euraquilon, a left-handing easterly wind, hit them, which ultimately led to the shipwreck in St. Paul's Bay in Malta. Tommaso Fazello (1498 to 1570) dealt in detail with the last part of the journey of the Apostle Paul in his book *Storia di Sicilia*, published in 1817, and came to the conclusion that the storm Euraquilon allowed no other destination than the Bay of Malta. **17**

The stay in Malta would have been three months and Publius' treatment would also have taken three days. Cesare Gaetani (1718 to 1808) from Syracuse writes that Saint Paul, recovering from his shipwreck, baptized, thanks to his intercession, the rescued companions of his journey in Malta: thereby becoming a co-founder of Christianity in Malta. If you follow the critics who even question Syracuse, all the research results of the well-known historians in Sicily would be wrong. But the critics' assumptions

cannot be substantiated. So these are assumptions with question marks. What do you do with a time when nothing was written down? Is it enough to ignore it? It is also said that there is no suitable port to stay at, but what about Porto Ulisse? **18** In return, there are documented descriptions that cannot be dismissed as simply unbelievable. Paul and his company could easily have reached Syracuse after two days and could even have covered the remaining 32 nautical miles in half, after about 30 nautical miles, with a break one day later.

The merchant ships for transporting grain and agricultural products were up to 36 meters long and up to 12 meters wide, as the historian Ernst Haenchen calculated and could apply to the ship with Paul. **19** So it must have been quite large, because it still had 276 passengers on board. Ships used to transport wine were somewhat smaller. The wine was stored in amphoras, which were all the same size and already indicate mass production, even if only by hand. See the Camarina Museum. All ships had a large square sail, usually over 100 square meters, and a small headsail of about 30 square meters, but no rudder, just a stable, interconnected double rudder at the end of the ship, which was held by one person to maintain the specified direction. There was a dinghy at the end of the ship. Changes in direction were made using the sail, but these could not go beyond 60 degrees and there was no rowing. **20** It also happened that in a storm people sailed upside down and without sails, because it was too dangerous to turn around, as Luke described in the Acts of the Apostles. Usually there were several anchors made of iron or stone blocks. The ship may have weighed a total of 300 tons. The maximum speed was 6 to 7.5 knots, which is around 10 to 14 km/h, without sails the speed was around 2 to 4 km/h. The speed of travel was measured in stages according to the waves, which is about 185 m. The draft was about 5 m. The ship's crew consisted mostly of slaves. It is also interesting that some of the individual ship planks were nailed down with wooden nails at small intervals. After the launch, the planks swelled to make them watertight. In general, ship construction has not changed for several hundred years. It can definitely be compared to the construction of Viking ships. Luke writes: When they arrived in Syracuse they traveled on again after three days. He mentions the three six times. The number three can therefore not only be a coincidence but also, according to today's understanding, a translated version of an approximate period of time. The symbolic number three, which also means an indefinite period of time, is not taken into account. The original meaning of the number three was "the comprehensive", which can also be translated as an entire duration. In the Bible, the number three stands for the moment when something is finished. Apparently a specific date wasn't that important back then, what was important was that something was finished. If one assumes that the ship was stranded in St. Paul's Bay off Malta at the end of October and beginning of November. According to Gaius Plinius Maior (he lived from 23 to 79 AD), the departure from Malta would have been on February 7th. Quote: "On March

11th, Apostle Paul came from Malta to Syracuse, where he was greeted with joy and stayed for three days,” writes the liturgical calendar by Francesco Mancaruso. In the 4th century, Flavius Vegetius gives March 10th as the date of arrival. Then where was Apostle Paul in February?

In 1748, the historian Cesare Gaetani asked in the *Dissertazione Istorica Apologetica*: What did Paul do in the three days in Syracuse? Francesco Rizzo da Santa Croce (around 1500 to 1550) thinks that Paul was just passing through, while others write that he preached in the area. He probably visited the Christian communities in the area. But the time would have been far too short for that. In reality he had about four weeks to stay in Sicily. There are no further dates after that, so the stay in Syracuse should also be viewed with caution. Only the arrival date was always given, but not the departure date. One can therefore ask the question why this date was left open; it should correctly have been called March 14th if Apostle Paul actually arrived in Syracuse on March 11th. Three was a divine number and symptomatic of the idea of size and number. When historians repeatedly mention the three days in Syracuse, this does not mean that their repetition is necessarily the truth. But why did you forget a whole month? Was it thought that the ship journey from Malta to Syracuse, which could actually take a maximum of three to four days, would have taken that long? Nor can it be the case that one generally dismisses traditions as unbelievable. Niccolo Maggiore wrote in 1834 that we only have the certainty that the Apostle Paul was in Syracuse, but nothing more. The rest remains obscure due to the lack of authors. Nothing is mentioned about his ship landing in Porto Ulisse, at the southernmost tip of Sicily. Melchiorre Trigilia proves in detail that it was Porto Ulisse where Paul's ship docked. Porto Ulisse was considered the most important port in southern Sicily and was a preferred destination for trade with the island of Malta. The port Portus Ulysses was also called Longona di Catania by Diodorus Siculus, also Diodorus of Sicily, a Greek historian from the 1st century before Christ, and could accommodate up to 230 ships. Today, due to destruction caused by lava and earthquakes, the harbor is no longer visible. It would have been no problem for Apostle Paul to be taken on one of the numerous merchant ships that sailed between Malta and Porto Ulisse. **21** As we now know, the journey from Malta to Messina could also involve a week of standstill due to no wind, just as a storm could also be possible. That would also explain the stay in Briga Marina, as the event before Malta was still a bad memory. The arrival point is still called San Paolo Bay today. This is also how one can explain the remark, as described in *Isagoge 26* by John Chrysostom (349 to 407 after Christ), Quote: "There is no lack of evidence to confirm that Paul's journey from the island of Malta to Syracuse was a slow one." Apparently he already included the Apostle Paul's journey on land and did not just refer to the sea voyage. Octavio Caietano (1566 to 1620) also refers to this knowledge. Cornelius A. Lapidè (1567 to 1637) writes and leaves no doubt that this place must be Porto Ulisse, on the south side of the border between

the territory of Ispica and Pachino. **22** The only port "on this side" of Pachino is Porto Ulisse, while a port "beyond" is excluded, which applies to Porto Palo, Marzamemi, Vendicari and Eloro. John Chrysostom further says: About 8 miles from Syracuse there is In the town of Solarino there is a church that was dedicated to the Apostle Paul, as the ancient architecture proves. The water from a nearby spring brought about the healing of the sick in prayer to Paul. In Syracuse there is an old traditional story that the Apostle Paul, when he came to Syracuse and built a church in Solarino for the Christians in his memory. **23** The fact is that in this place there are remains of ancient settlements from this period (see Cozzo Collura) and perhaps the residents had this church built out of love for Paul. The famous historian Paolo Orsi (1859 to 1935) **24** mentions a waterhole belonging to St. Paul near Cozzo Collura, which means Solarino. Thoma de Angelo from Messina wrote in 1730: There is a tradition among the inhabitants that before coming to Syracuse, Apostle Paul disembarked at Pachynus and reached the area of Elorino, known as Saccolino, 6 miles away. After three days in Syracuse, Paul is said to have received permission to preach the Word in the surrounding towns, far from Syracuse. About 8 miles in a field called Solarinus, a well is seen in ancient records, in whose water and the washing of the sick, with the invocation of the Apostle Paul, many miracles are performed every day. Solarino wanted the name Paolo to be immortalized in the place name, which the Franciscan Father Paolo Serafino Gozzo advocated for, but this was not allowed. Apostle Paul's one-month stay in Sicily for the month of February can therefore be plausibly explained. Many historians of Sicily, especially Melchiorre Trigilia in Ispica, have dealt extensively with the Apostle Paul in Sicily and processed ancient literature. We are very grateful to them for this, because this research made it possible to carry out further subsequent research. Apostle Paul therefore had enough time to visit the existing Christian communities. He traveled on to Spaccaforno via the "Via Elorina". There can be no doubt that he came across the source "La Favara", as Antonio Moltisanti reported in 1950, which is why Paul came from Porto Ulisse to Cava d'Ispica, where Christianity was already being taught by disciples of Marciano of Syracuse and Pancrazius was introduced by Taormina. He visited the town of Belliscala, as excavations show that there was already a larger town here in Greek times, which was renamed San Paolo after the Apostle Paul's visit. **25** There is still a story that Apostle Paul and his companions refreshed themselves at a well at the end of the town and rested on the opposite side of the street. Biagio Pace (1889 to 1955) reports about it: In the town of Belliscala there are ruins that indicate the existence of a city of ancient origins. At the entrance to the town, on a small street, there is still an old well. The tradition of the place says that the fountain has existed since "time immemorial". It is not without reason that many places have adopted the name Paul and to this day the Apostle Paul is venerated through ceremonies in many places in Sicily. Regarding the number of Apostle Paul's accompaniment, Octavio Caietano

writes: Quote: "In the meantime, Apostle Paul arrived to promote the Christian community in Syracuse, who landed there, accompanied by the most holy men, Luke, Aristarchus and 7 other Christians, to then be taken prisoner to Rome." I was able to find some names of people who accompanied Apostle Paul and who were also there on his previous journeys and by far his most important journey, which was to take him to Rome, where he was threatened with trial, were Barnabas, Timothy, Titus, Erastus and Silas certainly weren't missing either. The five companions already mentioned could also have included Artemas and Tychicus, whom he once mentioned in a letter to Titus (3:12). The letter was probably written in 64 or 65.

A Christian community was founded 18 years ago in Syracuse by Bishop Marciano, introduced by the Apostle Peter, which quickly spread Christianity to the surrounding areas. Apostle Paul visited Bishop Marciano and inhabited the caves called Pelopia, which were opposite the synagogue of the Jews. Today the church of San Giovanni Evangelista stands there. Criticism is expressed about the credibility of the bishops' stories across generations. They would have become untrue over time. But it's hard to believe that the bishops didn't pass on the truth; I see it more as a sign of a living church. It seems to me like a desperate attempt by the critics to find something to portray Paul in Sicily as untrue. The Franciscan Father Paolo Serafino Gozzo from Solarino believes that naivety and lack of arguments on the part of some people are denying ancient and venerable traditions of historical value. Biagio Pace of Comiso writes: Archaeological documents written in reference to a small town in the Peloponnese or a tyrant in Syria are more likely than those to represent early Christian history.

We also like to tell important events from our grandparents and parents to our children; no one doubts that they are untrue. When talking to residents, I often experienced a willingness to talk about the old times that they learned from their great-grandparents and parents. They were absolutely convinced of the truth. It's just a shame that not everything was written down. But here we find ourselves transported back to the time of the first Christians. Nothing was written, just told.

We know the appearance of Apostle Paul from numerous pictures, but there is also a direct description. A man named Onesiphorus from Iconium reports about Paul, around 50 after Christ: **26** Quote: "And he went to the royal road that leads to Lystra, and looked at those who were coming, according to the description of Titus. But he saw Paul came, a man of small stature, with a bald head and bent legs, with a noble posture, with his eyebrows growing together and a slightly protruding nose, full of friendliness, he then appeared like a human being, then he had the face of an angel."

Much has already been written about the Apostle Paul's journey from Caesarea to Rome. Only Luke's Acts of the Apostles was always used, as there are no other stories. As early as 1834, Niccolo Maggiore regretted the lack of authors. Not much has changed since then. In my opinion, you can

only report something about it if you read Italian literature and also visit all the places that are relevant to the stay of the Apostle Paul. Only on site do you become certain that Paul was actually in several places in Sicily and not just in Syracuse.

Gabriel Zuchtriegel from Germany and currently head of the excavations in Pompeii says: "We are finding something that is our past, in which we are all somehow influenced by the Roman Empire. An example is the spread of Christianity, which happened without the Roman Empire and without the unity of the language and the infrastructure in this form would not have been conceivable."

In June 2005, Italian archaeologist Giorgio Filippi discovered a Roman sarcophagus during excavations under the Basilica of San Paolo. In 2009, after a radiocarbon test, the bones found were dated to the 1st or 2nd century. Additionally, purple linen and blue cloth decorated with gold were discovered. Pope Benedict XVI made the archaeological sensation public on Sunday evening at the end of the international year of remembrance of St. Paul: "In the stone sarcophagus, which has never been opened before, with the help of a probe inserted through a tiny hole, material and human bone remains were discovered." Paul who died around the year 67 where he was supposed to have died: in the sarcophagus under the altar of the Roman basilica. "So it seems to be clear beyond a doubt that these are really the remains of the Apostle Paul," announced the Pope.

New research, especially in Egypt, gives us insight into the lives of the first Christians. The Roman world was strongly influenced by the community of Christians, most of whom could neither write nor read. So it's the wealthy people who left us records. Especially over the period of the 1st and 2nd centuries. We only have our knowledge from inscriptions in catacombs, on stones and sarcophagi. It is only Christian people such as priests and monks who have written something down, and usually only something with a religious connection, which is why the lives of the simple population have remained hidden from us until now. Special mention should be made here of Sabine Hübner in Basel, whose studies gave us new insight into the first Christians. Vittorio Rizzone and others believe that epigraphy plays an important role in the study of liturgy, particularly in epitaphs. We can be sure that further research will continue to broaden our awareness of the ancient world, the first Christians and the Apostle Paul.

Thank you for your attention.