

## What's New about Paul?

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(Plato, *Apology of Socrates* 38a)

“The greatest good for a human being is this: to engage every day in discussions about what is truly great, and the other things about which philosophers speak, and, in the process, to examine oneself and to examine other people, (to come to a true knowledge of who I am, and who they are) for, the unexamined life is not worth living by a human being.” (or “not a life lived or livable by a human being.”)

### Opposites Paul loves to work with opposite terms!

READ 2 Cor 4:5-12

2 Cor 6:8b-9

1 Cor 1:18-25

## What's New about Paul

### 1) Definition of “Faith” (esp. Faith in Christ Gal 3:16)

Danker, Frederick W. (ed.), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the NT and Other Early Christian Literature*, (revised and edited by Frederick William Danker), Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2000.

### 2) Road to Damascus more Call than Conversion.

Rom 7:15-25 not Paul's guilty conscience Phil 3:6 “as to righteousness under Law blameless”  
Krister Stendahl “Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West” *Harvard Theological Review* 56 (1963) pp. 199-215.

### 3) Paul was not a renegade apostle!

For a view that misses the mark see Bruce Chilton's *Rabbi Paul: An Intellectual Biography*, New York: Doubleday, 2004.

## What's Great or Important about Paul:

### 1) His Emphasis on the Second Coming

essential to this is “Resurrection of the Dead” which most Christians think means eternal life. It is much bigger

Go to 1 Cor 15:12-14 16 20 Rom 8:21

See: J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul's Apocalyptic Gospel: The Coming Triumph of God*, Philadelphia, PA : Fortress Press, 1982

James H. Charlesworth, editor, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Volume 1), New York: Doubleday, 1983.

Jon Levinson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life*, New Haven : Yale University Press, 2006.

### 2) Paul's Experience of Christ

John Ashton, *The Religion of Paul the Apostle*, New Haven/London: Yale UP, 2000.

Go to 2 Cor 12:2, 7-10 2 Cor 11:23-29 Phil 3:8-11

### 3) Paul's Conviction about Union with Christ

1 Cor 12 – but notice 1 Cor 11 (relation!) Rom 6:3

Modern phenomenon of fragmentation – not healthy:

**From review of Bruce Chilton's *Rabbi Paul: An Intellectual Biography*, New York: Doubleday, 2004.**

by John Clabeaux (In *Journal for Religion and Society* 2006)

Yet in his effort to engage the popular readers' market, Chilton has departed from the caution demanded of an historian. Conjectures with little or no support appear on nearly every page, yet Chilton rarely resorts to words like "may have" or "perhaps." His reliance on *Acts of the Apostles* is excessive. He sometimes takes dialogue or speeches as direct or nearly direct reports. At times his narrative was an amplified version of *Acts of the Apostles*, but with more, rather than fewer, touches of color and humor.

Chilton's characterization of Paul is highly controversial. He presents Paul as a radical individualist—reflective more of a personality from the Renaissance or later, than of a First Century person. A selective sampling follows:

- "Perpetually restless, reckless with his own life and the lives of others, Paul careened around the Mediterranean...wrecking the tranquility of synagogues, forums, churches, making friends and breaking friendships with the compulsive abandon of a man possessed." (xv)
- "Ruthless independence shaped his personality from first to last." (14)
- "[Paul's] apocalypse burned away any sense of diplomacy he might once have had." (58)
- "An intuitive and brilliant thinker, [Paul] was a dreadful judge of people and situations." (122)
- "Success bred ambition in Paul, as it does in most intellectuals." (197)
- "Despite his inexperience and disinclination [Paul] appoints himself the Ephesian Dr. Ruth. ... The promptings of the Spirit and his own personal preferences got mixed up in his mind within his role as an apostolic teacher." (211) "...in some ways, everyone was supposed to behave as if they had come from Tarsus." (214)
- "In Ephesus Paul was as full of himself as he was with the Holy Spirit." (216)
- "[Paul's] claims may seem outlandish and abusive, but they come without a shred of circumspection." (228)

Chilton consistently presents Paul as under the sway of certain strong personalities, namely, Gamaliel, Caiaphas, Peter, James, Barnabas, and Silas, who dominate a rather needy and cloying Paul. My fundamental concern with this characterization is its dissonance with the message of Paul. Chilton acknowledges "despite his drawbacks, Paul is the most successful religious teacher history has ever known." (128) and he closes the book with a ringing peroration of Paul as the first in a chain of great Christian mystics. But the man he describes looks more like a pushy, eccentric, modern day academic.

To be sure, great people have foibles, but the drawbacks of Paul as he describes them render him a hypocrite and undermine the argument that Paul experienced any success as an apostle. In the ancient world the character of a speaker was judged more rigorously than in today's mass-media culture. One has to ask, "Who would be persuaded by a man as duplicitous, over-bearing, and opportunistic as the Paul that Chilton describes?" The dynamic tension between opposites (e.g., *weakness and strength, freedom and responsibility, already and not yet*) that pervades Paul's thought has been mistaken for contradiction; his epistolary rhetoric for bravado and ill temper.