

The Society for Biblical Studies
Paul's World & Mission
10 Day Pilgrimage in Greece: 15-24 October 2025
5 Day Elective: Biblical Backgrounds in Italy—Rome, Naples, Pompeii

Course Outline

Objectives:

- To provide an overview of the geographical, social and cultural setting of Paul's ministry.
- To identify key ingredients in Paul's missionary strategies.
- To become acquainted with the key issues in Pauline studies.
- To become acquainted with contemporary mission issues.
- To become acquainted with the concept of contextualization in missionary theory.
- To understand the meaning of mission in the context of modern Greece.
- To study Paul's letters with an interest in learning the ingredients of community building for today's churches: harmony in spite of differences, unity with diversity, managing diversity.

Suggested reading:

1. Balch, David L. and John E. Stambaugh. *The New Testament in its Social Environment*. Philadelphia: the Westminster Press, 1986.
2. Cline, Eric H., *Biblical Archaeology: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
3. Fredriksen, Paula. *Paul: The Pagan's Apostle*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017.
4. Gill, David W.J., Trebilco, Paul R., Walton, Steve, eds. *The Urban World and the First Christians*. Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2017.
5. Meeks, Wayne A. *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.
6. Miano, Peter J. *The Word of God and the World of the Bible: an Introduction to the Cultural Backgrounds of the New Testament*. London: Melisende, 2001.
7. Murphy-O'Connor. *Paul the Letter Writer: His World, His Options, His Skills*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995.
8. Sanders, E.P. *Paul*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Daily Itinerary:

Day 1: Depart Chicago, USA
15.10, W

- Day 2:
16.10, Th Arrive Thessaloniki, touring as time permits
Old City walls, Citadel, St. Demetrius Church, Arch of Galerius (Acts 17: 4, 12), transfer to hotel for dinner, introductions and group building
overnight in Thessaloniki
- Day 3:
17.10, F Theme: Introduction to Classical Greece
Field trip: Pella (birthplace of Alexander the Great), Vergina, Royal
Macedonian tombs
overnight in Thessaloniki
- Day 4:
18.10, Sa Theme: Introduction to Hellenism
AM forum: From Alexander to Jesus
Field trip: Thessaloniki, Via Ignatia, Philippi, Kavala/Neapolis (Acts 16: 9-33).
overnight in Thessaloniki
- Day 5:
19.10, Su Theme: Classical Athens
AM forum: The Perils of Pauline Studies
Fieldtrip: transfer to airport, flight to Athens, driving tour of Athens,
Acropolis, Parthenon, Erectheum, Mars Hill/Areopagus, (Acts 17). Dinner
on your own.
overnight in Athens
- Day 6:
20.10, M Theme: Classical I Hellenistic Athens
Field trip: The Athenian agora: the Stoa of Attalos, Hephaestion, The
Roman agora: Tower of the Winds, Library of Hadrian, Plaka, Acropolis
Museum, Dinner on your own.
overnight in Athens
- Day 7:
21.10, Tu Theme: Free day
Dinner on your own.
overnight in Athens
- Day 8:
22.10, W Theme: Paul in Corinth
Field trip: Corinthian Canal, Corinth excavations, museum, view Acro-
Corinth, Mycenae. Dinner on your own.
overnight in Peloponessus
- Day 9:
23.10, Th Theme: Religious Cults in Paul's World
Field trip: Paleo Epidaurus, Theatre, Asklepion, Propylaia, Museum,
Nafplio, optional: Palamidi Castle. Dinner on your own.
overnight in Peloponessus
- Day 10
24.10, F transfer to Venezelos Airport, return to USA, or continue on the elective
to Rome, Naples, Pompei

5 Day Elective: Biblical Backgrounds in Italy (Rome, Naples, Pompeii)

- Day 10
24.10, F Theme: Material Culture and Biblical Backgrounds
Field trip: Fly from Athens to Italy, visit Herculaneum, transfer to hotel in Naples, dinner on your own, overnight in Naples
- Day 11
25.10, Sa Theme: Material Culture of 1st Century Society
Field trip: Full day visit to Pompei, visit amphitheater, baths, villas, forum, Villa Oplontis—time permitting, free time upon return to Naples, dinner on your own, overnight in Naples
- Day 12
26.10, Su Theme: Imperial Rome and Biblical Backgrounds
Field trip: National Archaeological Museum, Napoli Centrali transfer to Rome, visit baths of Caracalla, Monte Testaccio, dinner on your own, overnight in Rome
- Day 13
27.10, M Theme: From House Church to Imperial Church
Field trip: Catacombs of San Callisto, Vatican City, St. Peter's Square, St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican Museums, Sistine Chapel, dinner on your own, overnight in Rome
- Day 14
28.10, Tu Theme: Rome Through History
Field trip: Spanish Steps, Trevi Fountain, Pantheon, Piazza Navonna, Colosseum, Imperial forum, dinner on your own, overnight Rome
- Day 15
29.10, W transfer to Leonardo da Vinci Airport, return to USA

Lectures: (the following topics can be addressed in morning and evening fora. Topics may be covered in more than one session)

- “From Alexander to Paul: The Influence of Hellenism on Paul’s Writings”
- “The Search for the Historical Paul”: What do we know about Paul and how do we know it?
- “The Social Setting of Paul’s Churches”: Textual and extra textual clues of the social dynamics in Paul’s churches.
- “The Cult of Asclepius and its Influence on Christianity”
- “Models of Modern Mission”
- “Ingredients of Effective Mission”