

Galatians 1:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;

Analysis

Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; Paul continues documenting his movements post-Jerusalem visit. "Afterwards" (epeita, ἔπειτα) marks chronological progression. "I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia" (ēlthon eis ta klimata tēs Syrias kai tēs Kilikias)—klimata (κλίματα) means "regions, districts." This journey corresponds to Acts 9:30, where believers sent Paul to Caesarea then Tarsus (his hometown in Cilicia) for safety.

Syria and Cilicia formed one Roman province; Antioch (Syria) became the Gentile Christianity hub where believers were first called "Christians" (Acts 11:26). Paul's extended ministry there (Acts 11:25-26) occurred after this period. His point: after the brief Jerusalem visit, he ministered in regions geographically and ecclesiastically distant from Jerusalem for years before returning.

Paul emphasizes independence from Jerusalem's direct oversight while remaining in visible Christian ministry. He wasn't hiding or inactive but openly preaching the gospel the Judaizers claimed he'd corrupted. If his gospel differed from Jerusalem's, the discrepancy would have been evident and contested earlier. His free movement and accepted ministry proved his message aligned with apostolic teaching, though independently received.

Historical Context

Tarsus was Paul's birthplace (Acts 22:3), a major intellectual center rivaling Athens and Alexandria in philosophical schools. Cilicia's proximity to Galatia meant Paul's

later Galatian ministry (Acts 13-14) built on existing networks. Syria-Cilicia's churches later appear in Acts 15:23, 41 as distinct from Judean churches. This regional separation supports Paul's argument: his gospel wasn't derived from Jerusalem but developed through direct revelation and practiced successfully in different geographical and cultural context. The "unknown years" between conversion (AD 33/35) and first missionary journey (AD 47/48) remain largely mysterious but this reference provides geographical framework.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How has God used geographical relocation or cultural transitions in your spiritual formation and ministry preparation?
2. What does Paul's years of relative obscurity before prominence teach about divine timing and preparation?
3. How can Christians maintain doctrinal unity across geographical and cultural distances without centralized institutional control?

Interlinear Text

ἔπειτα	ἦλθον	εἰς	τὰ	κλίματα	τῆς	Συρίας	καὶ	τῆς
Afterwards	I came	into	G3588	the regions	G3588	of Syria	and	G3588
G1899	G2064	G1519		G2824		G4947	G2532	
Κιλικίας·								
Cilicia								
G2791								

Additional Cross-References

Acts 15:41 (Parallel theme): And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.

Acts 6:9 (Parallel theme): Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.

Acts 9:30 (Parallel theme): Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

Acts 13:1 (Parallel theme): Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

Acts 15:23 (Parallel theme): And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: