

## City of St. Paul

Tarsus: City of St. Paul At the of St. Paul's birth and upbringing, Tarsus was the most important city in the Cilician plain (Cukurova) which was then know as Smooth Cilicia&rsquo;. When St. Paul was born, Tarsus was already very ancient. Excavations at Gozlu Kule tumulus near the present city have shown that this site was occupied since the Neolithic period, from about the seventh millennium BCE. During its later Bronze Age history the tumulus is thought to have been the capital of the kingdom of Kizzuwatna. The famous Hittite queen Puduhepa, before she moved to the Hittite capital Hattusas, was a priestess in Kizzuwatna, whose capital was ' Tarsa'. The first Greek elements in the settlement's culture date from the beginning of the twelfth century BCE, the time of upheavals created by the Sea People. In the Assyrian annals the tumulus appears as &lsquo;Tarzi&rsquo;, and the capital of the kingdom of Que. The reference to Coa (Que or Cilicia) in the Second Book of Chronicles is related approximately to this period of the city' s history in the tenth century BCE: 'Solomon also imported horses from Egypt and Coa (Cilicia). The agents would acquire them by purchase from Cilicia, and would then bring up chariots from Egypt and export them at six hundred silver shekels, with the horses going for a hundred and fifty shekels. At these rates they served as middlemen for all the Hittite and Aramean kings&rsquo; (2 Chr 1: 16-17). King Sennacherid (705-651) of Assyria, is know to have moved the city from the tumulus to its present location on the Cydnus river (Tarsus Cayi) to a point some 15 km from the sea. Before reaching the Mediterranean Cydnus flowed into a large lagoon, which was know as the lake of Rhegma in roman times, and was navigable up to the city. At present the area where this lake existed is a fertile cotton field. In the Old Testament, Tarsi&rsquo;s is used as a place- name in the Mediterranean after the sixth-fifth centuries, from which metals like silver, iron or lead came to Tyre in Phoenicia. Some scholars regard this place as being Tarsus, the major port in Cilicia having connections with inland states of Anatolia rich in metals, horses and slaves: ' Tarsish traded with you, so great was your wealth, exchanging silver, iron, tin, and lead for your wares' (Ez 27: 12). All of what was built in ancient Tarsus after its re- foundation on the plain lies under the silt of the Cydnus River and the city&rsquo;s apartment houses, some six meters deep. Following the collapse of the Assyrian kingdom, Cilicia seems to have survived as an independent state until Anatolia was captured by Cyrus the Great (555-530 BCE) of the Persian Empire. Tarsus was the first urban center with the amenities of civilization after crossing the Cilician Gates to the south, and thus an indispensable stage to recover before traveling on to Syria and the countries beyond. According to Xenophon, Cyrus the Younger, and to Arrian, Alexander the Great did not miss the chance of enjoying the opportunities the city offered. In Anabasis Cyrus, after crossing the ' impassable' Cilician Gates (401 BCE) found himself in large and well- watered Cilician plain ' full of an kinds of trees and of vines&rsquo;, which' produces quantities of sesame and millet and wheat and barley&rsquo;, its capital ' a large and prosperous city ' with a river called the Cydnus running ' through the middle of the city&rsquo;. Strabo in Geography says that an immersion in the Cydnus was ' beneficial both to beasts and to men who suffer from sinews '. It is know if Alexander knew this when he plunged into the river some four hundred years before Strabo, a venture that ended up immediately with acute pneumonia and almost cost him his life. Sometime after it came under Roman rule in 50 BCE the Roman statesman Cicero is know to have served as the first Roman governor of Cilicia, staying at Tarsus. One of the most memorable events of the city's early Roman history, which was later commemorated by Shakespeare, was the love story of Mark Antony (Marcus Antonius) and Cleopatra (41 BCE), which began here. Some eight years before Cleopatra had had herself delivered to Caesar in Alexandria by a merchant, wrapped in a carpet. This time she arranged a parade, which was exaggerated by later writes, but still appropriate to the vulgar and ambitious character of Antony. She had built for herself a barge with fittings in gold and silver and equipped with purple silk sails. The vessel 's crew, young boys and girls, were dressed as Eroles and Nereids. The sound of music and scent of rich perfumes reached across the water to the Tarsians who had flocked to the Cydnus ' banks. ' Cleopatra herself reclined beneath a canopy of cloth of gold&rsquo;. This was beginning of a love story, which lasted about a decade, with the well - know fatal end. Among many things, which Antony would bestow on his beloved after a few years, was the cedar - rich mountains of Rough Cilicia, which was a major timber source of the Roman world for ship - building. Recent excavations have shown that Tarsus was a smaller flourishing copy of Antioch on Orontes during the Roman period. A prosperous city in the first century, St. Paul&rsquo;s pride in his home is evident when he says &lsquo; I am a Jew, of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city' (Acts 21: 39). Acts mentions St. Paul's Tarsus citizenship only twice (Acts 21: 39; Heb 22: 3) and does not give any information about it. The ancient street which has recently been excavated, the remains of the Via Tauris connecting the city to the Cilician Gates and the large floor mosaic which was brought to light in the city give us an idea about the Tarsus of St. Paul 's time. When he begins his defense before the king Herod Agrippa II (150-100), St. Paul makes it clear that he spent all hiss youth among Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 26: 4) having been sent there to study under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Although ancient literature refers to Tarsus as a seat of Greek philosophy, famous for its Stoic school, it is known that St. Paul, having spent most of his youth in Jerusalem, did not have the chance to make use of this opportunity. St. Paul returned to his native city to teach the gospel, before joining St. Barnabas in Antioch. Though not explicitly stated in acts it likely that he visited his city again when he traveled to Galatia and Pisidia during his Second Journey and third journey.

### Journeys of St. Paul

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