

Paul's Execution Site and Burial Location

67/68 AD - The body of St. Paul according to tradition was buried by a Christian matron of the name of **Lucina** in a plot of ground, which was her property, about a mile nearer to Rome from the place of Paul's execution on the Ostian Road. It was not a subterranean cemetery but one on the surface, and the piece of land was confined, being hemmed in between the Ostian Road and another road, which has since disappeared, known as the Via Valentiniana. This spot in the time of the presbyter Gaius, about 200 A.D., was marked like that of St. Peter on the Vatican by a memorial oratory (trophy) probably erected by Anencletus at the same time as Peter's *memoria* was erected.

95 AD - The erection of these monuments may therefore be placed in the early years of Domitian's reign. The evidence from traditional sources as to the exact position of the spots where the two Apostles were martyred and afterwards buried is very detailed and complete.

200 AD - 'If thou wilt go to the Vatican or to the Ostian road thou wilt find the trophies of the Apostles Peter and Paul who founded this Church.' These words of the Roman presbyter Gaius (or, Hippolytus bishop of Portus) in his treatise against the heretic Proclus are a positive testimony to the existence at the end of the Second Century of trophies or *memoriae*—*i.e.* small oratories—over the graves of the Apostles Peter and Paul. It further indicates in what localities these visible monuments were to be found.

320 AD - Emperor Constantine built a small basilica to receive the pilgrims visiting Paul's tomb.

325 AD – Eusebius makes the further statement that the names of the Apostles were to be seen in the cemeteries of Rome in his day.

390 AD – Emperor Theodosius enlarged the building of Constantine and encased Paul's remains in a sarcophagus located on view in the middle of the basilica which is the same sarcophagus we see today because it is embedded in the layer of the Theodosian basilica from 390.

433 AD – part of the building collapsed during an earthquake. During renovations the floor was elevated and the sarcophagus was buried and covered by a marble tombstone.

The tomb of St. Paul on the Ostian Way. The Apocryphal Acts all declare that St. Paul as became his status as a Roman citizen suffered martyrdom by decapitation and that he was led out to a place known as *Aquae Salviae*, near the third mile-stone on the Ostian Way. This tradition has not been seriously disputed. In the Greek Acts the addition is made that the Apostle suffered under a pine-tree—εἰς μάσσαν καλουμένην Ἀκκοῦαι Σαλβίας πλησί τοῦ δένδρου τοῦ στροβίλου.

604 AD - An extant inscription of Gregory the Great, 604 A.D., records the gift by him of a piece of land at the *Aquae Salviae* to the basilica of St. Paul

650 AD - A memorial chapel was built here in the fifth century, whose remains were discovered in 1867 under the present Church of S. Paolo alle Tre Fontane,

1823 - a fire completely destroyed the ancient basilica, and the modern Saint Paul's Outside-the-Walls was built on the site. At this time the sarcophagus and the tombstone were covered by concrete and debris. An altar was placed on top.

1875 - in the course of some excavations for a water tank behind this church a number of coins of Nero were found together with several pine-cones fossilized by age.

2002 – work began to excavate to make the sarcophagus visible. A window 28 inches side and 39 inches deep was made through the concrete layer under the altar so that the sarcophagus could be seen. There was found a hole in the cover of the sarcophagus about 4 inches wide where people in 390 AD would lower fabric or an object in order to place them in contact with the bones to make their fabric a relic. The hole is filled in with debris.

2006 – from National Geographic News: St. Paul's stone coffin has been found beneath Rome's second largest basilica, but its contents remain a mystery, Vatican archaeologists announced today. "For now we didn't open the sarcophagus to study the contents. Our aim was to unearth the coffin venerated as St. Paul's tomb, not to authenticate the remains," said Giorgio Filippi, the archaeologist of the Vatican Museum, who directed the excavations. "The sarcophagus was buried beneath the main altar, under a marble tombstone bearing the Latin words *"Paulo Apostolo Mart.,"* meaning "Apostle Paul, Martyr."

2009 – the white marble sarcophagus under the Basilica of St. Paul's Outside-the-Walls in Rome is opened. The bones are tested revealing they are from the first/second century. They discovered alongside the bone fragments some grains of incense, a "precious" piece of purple linen with gold sequins and a blue fabric with linen filaments.

The basilica "rises on the place where, according to tradition, Paul of Tarsus was originally buried after his martyrdom.

(Sources include Wikipedia, National Geographic and multiple news sources)