

Damascus

Considered to be the oldest continually inhabited city in the world, Damascus is capital of modern-day Syria (known as *Aram* in Old Testament times). It is located 70 miles east of the Mediterranean, east of the Anti-Lebanon mountain range, and northeast of the Sea of Galilee. The city lies in the valley of the Abana River which, along with the River Pharpar, waters a great fertile plain 2,300 feet above sea level.



Three major caravan routes passed through Damascus: the route to the southwest led to Canaan and Egypt, the eastern road led to Babylonia and to the south to Edom, the Red Sea, Mecca, and Arabia. The city became the centre of the damask (*a patterned cloth*) trade.

The commercial and agricultural prosperity of the city marked it out for frequent conflict with Israel, and made it a target for other invaders too, namely Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Greece and Rome. In 64 B.C. the Romans invaded Syria, making it a province with Damascus as the seat of government.

In New Testament scriptures, Damascus became greatly associated with the conversion of Saul (later called Paul). As Paul wrote later, the city was part of the kingdom held by an Arabian prince, Aretas, under the Romans.

[2](#)

[Corinthians 11: 32,33.](#)

The account of the dramatic humbling of Saul, his entry to Damascus and his stay at the house of Judas in Straight Street (above, today), is given in [Acts 9: 1-22](#). Saul's departure from Damascus was no less dramatic.

[Acts 9: 23-25](#)

Trailer of the Film "Damascus"

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The importance of the conversion of the "Apostle to the Gentiles" is evident from the three accounts given in *Acts of Apostles*. The other two, Saul's personal account on two occasions, are found in [Acts 22: 1-16](#) ; and in [Acts 26: 9-20](#) . Years later, Paul wrote an account of these events to the Galatians.
[Galatians 1: 11-24](#)