

A Study in Acts

Chapter Twenty-Six – Paul’s Defense Before Agrippa.

ACTS 26:1-8:

In our previous lesson, Paul gave his defense to the new Roman Governor and when Festus tried to push Paul to go to Jerusalem, Paul appealed his case to Caesar (remember, Paul knew the Jews wished to kill him). Now that he has appealed his case, Festus finds himself in the unenviable position of figuring out what charge must accompany Paul to Rome. An opportunity has presented itself in the meeting of Herod Agrippa II and Festus, so Festus has arranged for Paul to share his case with Agrippa in hopes that he will be able to determine a charge.

In this lesson, we will present his case Agrippa and set in motion things that would begin the process of fulfilling the promise that the Lord made to him in Jerusalem:

Acts 23:11 *“But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, “Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.””*

Text #1

Acts 26:1-3 *“Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You are permitted to speak for yourself.”*

So, Paul stretched out his hand and answered for himself: ² “I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because today I shall answer for myself before you concerning all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, ³ especially because you are expert in all customs and questions which have to do with the Jews. Therefore, I beg you to hear me patiently.”

King Agrippa – Remember, although Agrippa is not a Jew by birth, he has been brought up in the Jewish faith, thus he has been entrusted with the oversight of Jewish affairs (under Roman rule), because of his knowledge of their religious foundations. Paul is happy to discuss this with him and will see an opportunity to share the foundation around the complete change of his life.

Text #2

Acts 26:4-8 *“My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know. ⁵ They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. ⁶ And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers. ⁷ To this promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain. For this hope’s sake, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews. ⁸ Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?”*

My Manner of Life – As we have already done a thorough biography of the Apostle Paul, sharing the evidence presented here as part of that, there are some things that Paul has shared along the way, that I think are important here.

Acts 22:3-5 *“I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers’ law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today. ⁴ I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, ⁵ as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished.”*

Galatians 1:13-14 *“For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. ¹⁴ And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.”*

Philippians 3:5-6 *“circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness, which is in the law, blameless.”*

2 Corinthians 11:22 *“Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I.”*

Paul is intent on sharing that his credentials as a Jew are of the finest pedigree. This is shared and Paul reminds Christians of this often, so that we can see the drastic change Paul had undergone to serve the hope of the promise (Jesus the Christ). He hopes to impress upon Herod the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to convict, redirect, and set on a new course of life.

The Hope of the Promise – Paul now shares that which all Jews should be aware that God has shared all along concerning the hope in the Messiah. *“The Promise”* is stated as a fact that should be known by all, and it stems from the original promise made to their father Abraham (as they like to call him), **Genesis 12:1-3; 22:18**.

Peter refers to this in the first Gospel sermon –

Acts 2:39 *“For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”*

Paul will share this with the Galatian Christians to make sure they appreciate the Promise and not the Law –

Galatians 3:15-18 *“Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man’s covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. ¹⁶ Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ. ¹⁷ And this I say that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.”*

Paul is introducing this in order to set up what will follow. Paul will share how he misunderstood the hope of the promise, and missed the key element to God establishing the promise, the resurrection.

God Raises the Dead – This last piece to the introduction shares the power of confirmation that the hope of the promise has come, and it is a powerful piece of evidence indeed. This will be the piece that will have Herod, almost believing.

In Peter’s first sermon, remember the words of David and that he understood the power of the hope in the resurrection –

Acts 2:26-27 *“Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; Moreover, my flesh also will rest in hope. ²⁷ For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.”*

Psalms 16:9 *“Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope.”*

Knowing the promises:

The Great Promise – **Genesis 12:1-3; 22:18.**

The Promise of a Great Prophet – **Deuteronomy 18:15-18.**

The Promise of the Great King – **2 Samuel 7:12-17.**

The Promise of a Great Sign – **Isaiah 7:14; 9:6-7.**

The Promise of a Great Covenant – **Jeremiah 31:31-34.**

The Great Servant songs of Isaiah, the Messianic Psalms, volumes of information concerning the coming of the promise and the power that would establish the fulfillment of it. This is what Paul meant when he shared this:

Romans 3:1-2 *“What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? ² Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.”*

Yet sadly:

Acts 4:11 *“This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.”* From **Psalms 118:22.**

The majority of the Jews had rejected the Promise. But Paul himself becomes an example of the remnant that would clearly see Jesus the Christ as the hope that would redeem Israel and Jacob and be the great light to the Gentiles (**Isaiah 49:6**).

Note Paul’s words to the Romans:

Romans 11:1-4 *“I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. ² God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, ³ ‘Lord, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life’? ⁴ But what does the divine response say to him? ‘I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.’”*

Paul sees himself as the remnant that lived to the oracles of God, instead of creating his own righteousness (**Romans 10:1-3**), along with the myriads of Jews on the day of Pentecost and the multitudes that would come after. This all becomes a great commentary of Paul’s lament in **Romans 9-11**, and will help you read those chapters with better understanding.