

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Acts 28:25-31 | Session 76 | Paul's Two Years In Rome | A.D. 65

Paul is under a form of *house arrest* in Rome. He called the *chief of the Jews together* (plural) for a meeting as was his custom (Acts 17:2) whenever he entered a city. The difference here is that the Jews came to him, rather than him going to their synagogue (Acts 13:14; 14:1; 17:1; 18:4,19; 19:8). When Paul was with Jews he *became as a Jew* (1 Corinthians 9:20) *that I might win the Jews*. He had *great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart* (throughout the book of Acts) for his *brethren, his kinsmen...who are Israelites*. Paul said, *for I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ* if it meant the nation of Israel could be saved (Romans 8:2-4). Therefore, he *expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets* (Acts 28:23). From that statement we determined he did not teach them the Grace gospel as we believe today since that Gospel was *not made known unto the sons of me...which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God...*(Ephesians 3:5,9).

Verse 24: *And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.*

Verse 25—

They **agreed not among themselves** concerning Jesus being their Messiah. The meeting appears to be over, but Paul gets in the last word by quoting from the prophet Isaiah (6:9-10) in which the **Holy Ghost** through **Esaias** (KJV uses the Greek spelling) spoke **unto our fathers**. All Scripture is *given by inspiration of God*, that is, it is breathed out by the Holy Spirit.¹ Jesus, in Matthew 13:13-15, quoted this same prophecy from Isaiah that the nation would be *dull of hearing* to the message of the truth of the Messiah. Nearly 2,000 years later the Jews still disagree and the result is that as a nation, they would be one day be judged.

Verse 26, 27—

Paul's ministry concludes like a prophet. While in verse 19, Paul had no desire to accuse *his nation*, he brings a prophetic charge from God against them. This last meeting seals the fate of the nation, judgment would follow. By rejecting the message, they will be judged. We know this from history, Israel has failed to acknowledge Jesus as Messiah. The reaction of the Jews to Paul's final message to them was presented by Jesus in the parable of the Sower, which nearly all Christians misinterpret². This is one of the dangers of trying to make the Gospels for *us* Jesus was speaking specifically of the nation of Israel (See Luke 8:4-18; Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-20. See also, 1 Corinthians 2:14). In Acts 28:24, we see this parable (Jesus quotes from Isaiah 6) played out in abbreviated form.

Paul didn't quote the second half of the Isaiah passage; it goes on to pronounce a judgment on Judah (Isaiah 6:9-13) that would come by the hand of the Babylonians. The Babylonians came to Judah in several stages with the final blow landed in 586 B.C. Just like then, Paul intimates there would be judgment to come. It too would come in stages. One would in 70 A.D. when the Roman army would come into Jerusalem and destroy the city and the Temple, scattering the Jews for 1,900 years (They are still scattered around the world today), but ultimate judgment would come during the seven-year tribulation. The only thing postponing that judgment is the dispensation of Grace.

Verse 28—

Salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it. What is it that the **Gentiles will hear**? Here we have to use the rule of interpretation that states, "When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense. The context of what Paul has been saying would not make sense for him to take the Jewish *kingdom Gospel* to the Gentiles. The prophetic revelation regarding the kingdom always pertained to the nation of Israel, never Gentiles. Gentiles could become Jews, but were not in God's prophetic program. They were "*strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world*" (Ephesians 2:12). My contention is that the message he will take to the Gentiles is *salvation by grace through faith* (Acts 13:38) and it is that **salvation of God...sent to them...they will hear.**

Verse 29—

The Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves. The word **reasoning** in Greek is *suzetesis*, which is from the root word, *to dispute*. We don't have any idea what they were saying to one another, but they obviously made no clear decision to believe. People can dispute the word of God until they are blue in the face, but it's all academic unless they come to a decision to believe. There comes a time when one must believe, by faith.

Verse 30—

When I was in Rome our guide took us to the famed Mamertine Prison. We were told this was where the apostle Paul was incarcerated. And, over the centuries it has been taught that Paul wrote his *prison epistles* (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon) here; he may well have. But this verse tells us otherwise. **Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house.** There is no word about the soldier. Had Paul been released from custody? Was he living as a free man in Rome for **two whole years**? Did he travel on another missionary journey after the two years? He seemed to have the ability to travel (Philippians 2:24; Philemon 22; Some of the letters he wrote which seem to be later indicate he traveled to several places, 1 Timothy 1:3; Titus 3:12-13; 2 Timothy 4:20). These are questions we do not have an answer for, but should make us question what we have always been taught about Paul's imprisonment; even his death (tradition says, by beheading).

Verse 31—

Why would Paul continue to preach the kingdom of God at this point? **A.** Some believe Paul up to this point had never taught the grace message and therefore the kingdom message was all he had. **B.** Some think he was just giving *info* about the kingdom offer that had been withdrawn. **C.** Still, some think the offer of the kingdom was still on the table until the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and Paul was making a last attempt to convince the Jews, while in the meantime he taught the Gospel of salvation by grace through faith and not of works (i.e., the transition position I have proposed during the entire book of Acts). **D.** Finally, there are some who would say Paul was preaching a *spiritual kingdom*: This is what most evangelicals believe today and they reject the literal, future, physical, and fraternal (for the Jews) kingdom message.

The book of Acts appears to end abruptly. As noted above, it seems his ministry continued, but by A.D. 66, when the second letter to Timothy is believed to have been written, *All they which are in Asia had turned away from Paul*. I would contend he means *all of the Jews in Asia had rejected the kingdom Gospel*. Just a few short years later in A.D. 70, the offer would be completely gone, not to be put back on the table until the Great Tribulation. And we will study that in our next series in the book of Daniel.

¹ With that we should be careful how we translate and interpret Scripture. Dumbing down the Bible makes a mockery of the Holy Spirit. Let's not bring Scripture down to a *simpler* level, let's lift people up by sound teaching and make them smarter.

² Always keep in mind that "you are complete in Christ" and you will not fall into the trap of misapplying a scripture meant for the Jews and the nation of Israel to yourself. We must *rightly divide the word of truth*. 2 Timothy 2:15.