

THE BOOK OF ACTS | GOD'S REVELATION OF TRANSITION

SESSION 77 | ACTS 26:18-32

. ACTS 26:9-23 | PAUL BEFORE AGRIPPA: PART 2 - PAUL'S TESTIMONY

- Verses 9-17 – See session 76
- Verse 18 –
 - A rule of Biblical interpretation: *things that are similar are not the same*.
 - There are similarities in the Kingdom offer to the Gentiles and the grace offer to the Gentiles.
 - Both involve **forgiveness of sins**, for example (1 John 1:9 is strongly tied to the Kingdom offer, as well as Acts 3:19).
 - The Gentiles were given opportunity to become part of the Jewish people and thus have the hope of salvation through the Kingdom.
 - While these things are *similar* to the gospel of grace, the grace message is *not in this verse*. For proof, see verses 20 and 22, where works and Old Testament prophecies are shown to be embedded essentially within Saul's message to the Gentiles. Note that Saul's ministry as recorded in the book of Acts confirms this interpretation. If we are in the practice of *rightly dividing the word*, we do not try to put *the mystery* before it has been revealed to Saul!
- Verses 19-20 –
 - Note that Paul is talking to Agrippa (the Jewish king, grandson of King Herod), and he is defending himself against charges from the Jews that he was not teaching Jewish theology.
 - Though the English makes the appearance that he was teaching Jewish theology **to the Gentiles**, that word is anachronistic and can just as easily mean *Jews living in the nations* (i.e. diaspora Jews) as it can *non-Jew*. It is a word that *always* requires interpretation.
 - As proof that Paul is speaking to Jews (not the uncircumcised), note that when Paul was in **Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea** where we know, from the book of Acts, that he was *only* speaking to Jews (and when he spoke to Jews, he spoke to them of the Kingdom).
 - Evidence that Saul was not giving the grace gospel is that he was teaching that **they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance**. That is a *very* unPauline sentence!
- Verse 21 –
 - Paul is *not* being charged with forsaking the law (he had not done so, save with non-Jews), but with following Jesus in the law.
- Verse 22 –
 - This verse makes it impossible to teach that Saul knew “the mystery” at the Damascus experience, or that he taught this mystery to the Jewish nation.
 - Paul's message to the Jews perfectly matched the Hebrew scriptures (which do not testify about the age of grace).
- Verse 23 –
 - Paul mentions several Messianic prophecies specifically.
 - Messiah as Suffering Servant
 - Messiah as the firstfruits of the resurrection

- Messiah as **light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.**
 - The **people** is the Jewish nation, while **the Gentiles** are the other nations. Compare Luke 2:32.
 - Keep in mind that the Gospel of the Kingdom was based on the death, burial, and resurrection of the Messiah, and that the Kingdom was to *begin* with the Jewish people but encompassed all the nations of the world. The oft-called Great Commission clearly included the Gentile people in the Kingdom proclamation (and also required the obedience Paul mentions here (v. 20).

ACTS 26:24-32 | PAUL BEFORE AGRIPPA: PART 3 - THE CONCLUSION

- Verses 24-25 –
 - Festus, with his Roman background and beliefs, proclaimed that Paul had gone mad. He blamed this on **much learning**, which can, if not engaged with purpose, lead to a mental disorder of sorts.
 - Paul, however, claimed to speak **words of truth and soberness.**
- Verse 26 –
 - To defend the legitimacy of his words, Paul suggests that **the king knoweth of these things** because they were **not done in a corner.**
 - That is, anyone of more than a passing knowledge of Judaism (such as Festus) would have known the issues surrounding Messianic teaching and the resurrection.
- Verse 27-28 –
 - Paul (putting Festus in his place), stated his assurance that Agrippa believed the Prophets. Agrippa went further than expected with his reply when he stated to Paul, **Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.**
 - It is interesting to note that though the Body of Christ (i.e.: the church) has accepted this title, it is only used three times in the Scripture, and all three times it is used in connection with Jewish believers in Messiah. Here Agrippa was *not* claiming that Paul had almost persuaded him to abandon Judaism and the Torah and adopt Christianity as we know it. Rather, Agrippa was almost persuaded that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah (the Christ).
 - To *persuade* is always a great method to get someone to change their mind. Paul was always persuading and attempting to persuade. Modern “Christianity” would do well to train ourselves in the art of persuasion (done with integrity).
- Verses 30-32 –
 - This passage says what we knew all along: that Paul **doeth nothing worthy of death or bonds.**
 - It also confirms what we have suspected: that there was far too much politics injected into the judicial system of Rome (sound familiar?) There is no indication that an announcement of innocence was made other than **between themselves.**
 - Furthermore, it is almost certain that Paul *could have been released* even with his appeal to Caesar. Rather, they seem to want to simply get rid of their political problem.