

THE BOOK OF ACTS | GOD'S REVELATION OF TRANSITION

SESSION 83 | ACTS 28:21-27

ACTS 28:17-29 | PAUL MEETS WITH ROMAN JEWS

- Verse 17 -20 – see session 82
- Verse 21 –
 - The Jews speak of **the brethren**. These are Jewish men speaking of other Jewish men, none of whom are followers of Jesus. Thus we must remember that the term has primarily Jewish origins and Jewish usage. We cannot conclude that it is exclusively Jewish, but we should not understand the term to be exclusively a reference to believers alone. Many preachers are guilty of saying, “such and such a passage is to believers because it is addressed to the brethren.” For example, James uses the term 19 times in his epistle.
 - We can only speculate as to the veracity of the claim or the reason why the Jewish brethren in Rome appear to have been in contact with those in Jerusalem, yet have no insight into Paul’s imprisonment.
- Verse 22 –
 - The Jewish brethren reveal a positive attitude toward Paul, and even more so toward **this sect**. The terminology here is interesting, because it is a word that would be used of a *section* or *faction* within a larger group. Even by this late date (63 A.D.) there had not been a removal from the Jews by the members of *the Way*, though the sect was **spoken against** by Jewish brethren.
 - If this is true, there is the almost astonishing fact that believers in Jesus Christ (such as the Apostles) are *living within Judaism*, and thus clearly obedient to the laws of Judaism. This testifies to the fact that:
 - Believing Jews (who were the first of all believers) did not view themselves as separate from their Jewish faith, and did not consider “Christianity” to be a separate religion from Judaism.
 - The epistle to the Hebrews would have meaning within this *Jewish* context and should be interpreted with this in mind.
 - The most important insight is that there was *two separate groups* among the followers of Jesus. The believing Jews were obedient to Torah and living with the Kingdom in view.
 - The non-Jewish believers who did not live under the Law and were gathered in assemblies that worshiped and served in a different way than the Jewish brethren.
 - If indeed there were two separate groups, then the “overlap” of the Kingdom Gospel and the individual gospel is almost completely a necessary understanding of this time period.
 - To *rightly divide* includes dividing the Pauline era into Kingdom ministry and Grace (Pauline) ministry.
 - When, then, did **this sect** join with the Gentile churches to become Christianity as we know it?
 - The prevailing historical view is that Jewish believers were forced out of Judaism by Jews themselves after 135 A.D. (the end of the Jewish revolts) when the prevailing Jewish leadership strengthened its grip on Jewish life.

- For more information, see <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/how-jewish-christians-became-christians/> or “*From Text to Tradition, a History of Judaism in Second Temple and Rabbinic Times: A History of Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism*” by Lawrence Schiffman.
- Verse 23 –
 - One challenge that Christians have with the book of Acts is that they see it as “the history of the birth of the church.” In many ways, however, it is much more “the history of the diminishing of Israel” (Rom. 11:12).
 - At this point, Israel is much less in view than in Acts 2, but still very much on the scene and very much in the plans and purposes of God. He is, after all, still offering **the kingdom of God** to the nation.
 - Paul desires to see His nation accept this offer, which has the prerequisite of receiving Jesus as their Messiah/King. Therefore, rather than inform them about the mystery, he informs them about the prophetic plan (i.e.: the Kingdom), and does so **out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets**. The mystery gospel of grace cannot be taught out of the Hebrew Scriptures (though they are foundational to the mystery and cannot be ignored).
 - Why would Paul, to whom the Gospel of grace was committed, not be sharing this Gospel?
 - Because Paul’s Gospel was divinely appointed as the **Gospel of the uncircumcision** (Gal. 2:7). Paul is among the circumcised, and is required to share the right Gospel for them (such Gospel being set aside with the full diminishing of Israel).
 - Perhaps also because *he only has one day, from morning till evening*. Could it be that the epistle to the Romans is Paul’s “fuller” answer? Romans is (it appears to me) written to a Jewish audience explaining to them the work of grace in Paul’s day.
- Verse 24 –
 - This is almost universally the response to any new way of thinking. A witness to *anything* should not be discouraged when some do not believe.
- Verses 25-27 –
 - Before leaving, Paul quotes Isaiah 6:9-10.
 - The prophets always said a day in which the nation would be **dull of hearing** would come. Paul here, in effect, says that such a day has now come.
 - In the prophetic plan we expect judgment to follow.
 - Compare Isaiah 6:11-13, for example. The prophetic plan, however, did not know of the mystery plan, which involved a postponement of judgment and of the kingdom and instead an age of grace.
 - See 2 Peter 3:9-10 and Romans 10:12.