

Throughout most of this portion of God's Word, The Acts of The Apostles, recorded by Luke, a Gentile physician who accompanied Paul throughout his earthly ministry, it has focused primarily on what God had commissioned Paul to do: to take the Gospel the Jews first and then, more importantly, to be the man whom God tasked with learning God's plans in His New Covenant, the Gospel of Grace, learning it face to face from the Lord Jesus Christ when he was taken up into Heaven and then writing it out in the international language of Greek and finally taking it, personally, out into the Gentile world. Now, he has reached his final destination, Rome, where he will eventually be killed which was always his first choice since he had been miraculously chosen, called, saved and protected until his Earthly ministry was completed; he wrote:

'For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²² But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. ²³ For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: ²⁴ Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you (for us). ²⁵ And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;' Philipps 1:22

We are coming to the end of our study of the Book of Acts; this is the end of Paul's life and ministry and it is, most importantly, the end of the beginning of Jesus Christ's True Church, His chosen and elect, precious and beloved, Body and Bride for whom He chose to be crucified as the only acceptable full and complete sacrifice for all the sin of each and every one His Father had chosen from the foundation of the World.

At the very beginning of Acts, Jesus had said: *'But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. ⁹ And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.'* Acts 1:8

That became the Church's history; it began in Jerusalem and Judea; the Gospel then spread north into Galilee and all Samaria and finally It was taken to the uttermost parts of the earth: all the Gentile World. Throughout time, from Adam until Abraham, God's priority was the Gentile world; from Abraham until Jesus' first coming, God's main focus was Israel, to and through, whom He would reveal Himself until finally He fully revealed Himself as He came in the Person of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ Who had been prophesied for 1000's of years. He came to His own, Israel, and they rejected Him so completely that they murdered Him on a cross.

God then set Israel aside, on the back burner, so to speak, and offered Himself and His Eternal Salvation to all the Gentile World. During this gap of time, between the crucifixion and His return in the Rapture to remove His mostly Gentile Church, His main focus has been: Gentiles from every people, tribe and tongue, millions and even billions of Gentiles which had been His Eternal Plan all along but then, once He does remove His Bride in the Rapture, Israel will once again be His main focus.

I believe it is wrong belief and wrong teaching to think that Jews/Israel is somehow God's favorite child; God has only one favorite Son and that is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God. 'For God so loved the World... not just Israel... God so loved **all the World**... Jew and Gentile alike... that He gave His Only Begotten Son... that **whosoever** believeth on Him should not perish but have eternal life!' Israel is special to God but so is every Gentile He chose for Himself from the foundation of the World. He especially chose one human genetic line... Adam through Seth through Enoch through Noah through Shem through Abraham through Isaac through Jacob/Israel through Judah through David with some Gentiles thrown in just to make certain that we knew Gentiles were always also beloved... all the way down to Mary and finally to His Only Begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ! God called, preserved and loved Israel, choosing to reveal Himself to and through His special chosen race: Israel and then especially revealing Himself completely in the Lord Jesus Christ!

Israel is special to God but no more so than every Gentile He also chose for Himself from the foundation of the World. Israel is the special Earthly people of God and they will be far more blessed than any Earthly people throughout Jesus Christ's 1000-year reign on Earth and then forever as they remain as head of the nations forever in the New Earth but we... the True Church... mostly Gentile, and Jew as well... we are the Heavenly

people of God... we are the Body and Bride of the Lord Jesus Christ... we will rule and reign with Him, as His beloved Bride... forever! I really don't think you can get any more special than that!!!

Truly... if I had to choose... I'd far rather to be the Heavenly people of God whom He specifically chose as the beloved Bride for His Faithful Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to rule and reign with Him forever than to be the Earthly people of God... just saying...

Anyway... moving on...

Now, in these last few verses of Acts, we'll see the end of Paul's evangelistic ministry after which he will write out, for us, in his Epistles, all the most important Doctrine for the True Church. This final chapter of the Book of Acts is the last that we will learn of Paul and the last we will read of the history of the True Church, beside what we read in his Epistles to various churches but the Book of Acts really has no ending because the history of the True Church has no ending; Jesus said, 'I will build My Church...;' the history of the True Church will have no ending; It, She, We will continue on forever. The Lord Jesus Christ will continue filling the True Church with all we whom He did choose from the foundation of the World until one day soon when He calls that final, single man or woman, giving them His precious gifts of repentance and faith to believe and then calls us all up to Himself in the Rapture; then, during the next seven years, we will rejoice in the presence of our Savior while receiving many of our eternal rewards from Him and then, for the next 1000 years, we will rule and reign with Him over the Millennial Earth, followed by our ruling and reigning with Him, forever, over His newly recreated Earth and Universe. We will always be His beloved Bride, and we will continue to rule and reign with Him forever.

And now Luke continues...

Acts 28:16: 'And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered (allowed) to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.'

God gave Paul favor in the eyes of the centurion; he had proven himself faithful and trustworthy; the centurion knew Paul could be trusted to remain where he had been placed with only a single soldier watching over him; this would have been quite the cushy assignment for the soldier as well, living the easy life while listening to Paul explain the Gospel; this soldier was, doubtless, one whom God had chosen for Himself so long before...

Paul has finally come to Rome, the place he long expected to be his address until he finally was permitted to leave his earthly body behind while always anxious for his eternal, glorified body he would have expected to receive at the Rapture, whenever that might be.

Paul's number one plan for Rome is exactly as it has been in every city the Holy Spirit has taken him, evangelism: to lead as many as possible to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and he begins just as he has before: first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles; if he had ever gone to the Gentiles of a city, first, he knew that he would have immediately alienated all the Jews of that city, whereas this way, at least, he was able to speak freely with the hope and success in leading some of the Jews to faith in their Messiah and, so...

Verse 17a: '... it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together...'

Historians estimate there were as many as 12 synagogues in Rome; each one would have had several Jews in leadership and, there would have been many wealthy and influential Jewish businessmen throughout Rome; all these, Paul called for an official meeting. For all these years in Acts, Paul has been lied about, beaten, abused, stoned, left for dead... all by the Jews and still he has only love for his nation... the love of Jesus Christ... but here, in Rome, he couldn't go to the Jews; he was confined to one place still in chains... they had to come to him...

Verse 17b: '...and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me.' I have always been innocent of any crimes...

No matter what you've heard from other Jews, I have done nothing wrong regarding Israel, the Law or even any of your non-Scriptural customs which Jesus Christ Himself railed against... and I was especially cleared of any wrongdoing whatsoever regarding the real human authority, Rome! They would have set me free! But NO...

Verse 19: *'But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of.'*

The Romans would have freed me but the Jews so loudly and viciously complained that I was forced to appeal to Caesar... which is the right of every Roman citizen which carries an automatic ticket to Rome; if I had not done so, the Romans would have freed me but the Jews would have torn me to pieces.

Verse 20: *'For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.'*

What did Paul just say to these leading Jews!? He just gave them the heart of the Gospel without their even knowing it; he just gave the Holy Spirit His first ammunition in leading some of them to saving faith...

'For the **hope of Israel** I am bound with this chain!' and just what is the 'hope of Israel?' It is the very same as it has always been since the days of Abraham... the True Hope of Israel is the Salvation of God-Anointed One.

In Hebrew they say: Jehoshua-Hamashiach; in Greek they say: Iésous-Cristos; in English we say: Jesus-Christ. All three mean the same thing: God is Salvation-Anointed One.

The Jews hearing Paul would have immediately heard that when he said, '... the hope of Israel...' Paul knew it.

But what about all the Jews who had died since the nation of Israel began with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob... how could there be hope for them... they were dead and gone...

Remember back in chapter 23 vs 6... Paul stood before all the Jewish leadership while the high priest commanded that Paul be struck on the mouth; *'But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. ⁷ And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. ⁸ For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.'*

Not only is Messiah the hope of Israel and every Gentile but also is the Resurrection! The Lord Jesus Christ was crucified for our sin but then, beyond amazing, He was raised back to Life in a Glorified Eternal Body like ours will be. Because He was raised to Life, we will be raised in the Rapture whether we are alive at that moment or our bodies are in the grave; that is the hope of Israel: Messiah who brings resurrected Life Eternal.

Remember, we who are born again, have already been raised: *'Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? ⁴ Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:'* Rom 6:3

'If ye then be risen with Christ, (we are, then) seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. ² Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.' Col 3:1

The Resurrection, even the Rapture! had been promised way back in Isaiah's Book: *'Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.'* Isaiah 26:19 The Rapture was prophesied in the Old Testament!

Let me take this opportunity to clear something up: We hear wannabe-Jew Gentiles call him Yeshua which is what they hear many Jewish believers say who are attempting to differentiate themselves from Gentile Christians but that was never God's intent and it is not how Jesus Christ presents Himself to the primarily Gentile Church.

The Church is not an extension of Judaism. God revealed Himself to Gentiles, through Paul, as Jesus! or, in Greek: Iesous. God intended the universal language of the first century to be Greek and that is the language He used to reveal Himself to His brand new, never before known... Body and Bride, the True Church.

He gave Himself a Name in Greek through Scripture written in Greek to people who primarily spoke Greek, the language of the Gentile World which was also spoken by most 1st century Jews. The Church is not a Jewish thing offered to Gentiles... it is, in fact, a primarily Gentile thing offered to Jews, and if Jews want to be saved... they must come to the Savior on His terms. He called Himself Jesus! They were Jews who were first called 'Christians' at Antioch. They rail on about the Jewish Yeshua, the Hebrew Yeshua... we're not Christians! We're Messianic Believers!

But never forget: Jesus Christ is even less than 50% Hebrew. He has Gentile DNA as well, and fully half of His DNA is Divine, from the Holy Spirit Who is not Hebrew!

And now... before and after Acts, it's all delivered in Greek. Those who claim the N.T. was originally written in Hebrew are simply mistaken or they are lying. It was given in Greek! Not Hebrew!

Hebrew Israel is presented as the unfaithful wife of God the Father; the primarily Gentile True Church has been made to be the spotless and holy Bride of the Lord Jesus Christ.

moving on...

Verse 21: *'And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee. ²² But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.'*

And there we see the Holy Spirit at work: He had kept any negative letters from coming to Rome from Jerusalem. Many wicked, lying accusations were written by the Jews but guess what! All those wicked, accusing letters were all on that same ship meant to take Paul to Rome but were all among the baggage thrown overboard in that great storm before everyone was shipwrecked on Malta for 3 months.

Paul makes it all the way to Rome but the influential Jews of Rome have not been poisoned against him or the Gospel before they can hear it directly from Paul Himself! Waddaya know! God is always hard at work!!

'We really want to hear all that you have to tell us even though everywhere the Jews speak against Christianity but we've heard nothing bad about you and since you are a brilliant Pharisee, we are ready to hear all that you have to tell us!'

Verse 23: *'And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.'*

For more than 12 hours straight, the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to say exactly what He intended for all these influential Jews of Rome to hear! Paul took them through Moses and all the Prophets, showing them all the proof of the Lord Jesus Christ as Jehoshua-Hamashiach... Jehovah is Salvation, the Anointed One.

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

And just like always, as with the Gentiles in Acts 13:48: *'And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: **and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.***

From the foundation of the World, God chose for Himself a certain and specific people made up of Jews and Gentiles who would believe God's Word concerning His promised redeemer. To every one of those Elect, He would, at His exact chosen moment, give His gifts of Repentance and Faith to Believe and they would all believe! Among these Jewish leaders in Rome, those He chose, did believe; those he did not, did not believe.

Verse 25: *'And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word,'*

As they began to break up and leave, Paul gave a final warning from the Holy Spirit:

'... Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, ²⁶ Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: ²⁷ For the heart of

this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.'

God did not choose these who disbelieved, and He did not give them His gifts of Repentance and Faith to Believe but the blame lies upon themselves because they, even with the clear and living Word given through Paul, himself, they refused to believe; they closed their own eyes and ears, and they closed the understanding of their own hearts unto their own eternal damnation!

And so, Paul pronounces the sentence which will ring in the ears of these and countless others for all eternity:

Verse 28: *'Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.'*²⁹ *And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.'*

With that, the disbelieving Jews left to remain in spiritual darkness until they would begin their eternity in Outer Darkness forever.

Verse 30: *'And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him,'*

Paul was in Rome for at least 2 years in his own rented house, receiving everyone who came to visit. How could that be?

Paul had been active in traveling evangelism for more than 20 years during which time he had personally led many to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; he had planted many churches and mentored many pastors and elders. Every church and every believer knew of Paul while most owed their very salvation to his ministry. Many visited him in Rome, seeking out his wisdom; many faithfully supported him financially, seeing to it that his rent was covered while every other financial need was met. Even though he was not free to move about in Rome or away from Rome, his ministry continued until his death.

'And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him...'

Verse 31: *'Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.'*

Until God called him home in physical death, Paul spent the rest of his earthly life doing what he loved the most: preaching and teaching about what was most important in this life: Eternal Life in Jesus Christ!