

Acts Chapter 28

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[0 : 00] All right, if you will take your seat, please, for page number 641, and we are continuing to close out the book of Acts. We are in chapter 28, and we see in verse 16 at the top of the page, right-hand side of 641, and I'll reserve comment until we get to the newer material, that Paul has arrived at Rome after this shipwreck that caused him to spend some time on the island of Malta, and the experiences that took place there.

So we read, beginning with verse 16, And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard. But Paul was suffered, or was allowed, to dwell by himself with the soldier that kept him.

And it came to pass that after three days, Paul called the chief of the Jews together. Now, be mindful that there were a number of Jews living in Rome, because they had been scattered all over the Mediterranean, and there is a complement of Jews living at Rome.

I don't know how many synagogues they had established there, but probably several, because this is a very large city. And word went out throughout the whole community that this man, former Saul of Tarsus, now Paul the Apostle, is in town.

And his reputation has preceded him, because there have been a lot of people who have had contact over the years with Paul the Apostle. And they had occasion to be in Rome, either because they lived there or were traveling or whatever.

[1 : 43] And this name of Paul the Apostle had surfaced time and time again, and people in Rome had heard a number of things about him. But everything had been second-hand information.

Nobody had actual contact with him. So, we read that he called the chief of the Jews together. These are the various rulers in the synagogue, the rabbis, etc.

And when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, And when he uses the term, the people, you may be sure he's talking about the Jewish people, his own kind.

And they, of course, are closely involved with these chief of the Jews that he's called together. And he says, I have committed nothing against the people or customs of our fathers.

And when you see that term, what ought to automatically pop in your mind is Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They are the fathers. Actually, all of these Jews who were living there in Rome, they all had generational fathers.

[3 : 00] You know, a father and a grandfather and a great-grandfather. But when this phrase, the fathers, is used in the New Testament, always in reference to the patriarchs. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Customs of our fathers. Yet, despite that fact, I was delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans, who, when they examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me.

So when the Jews handed Paul over to the Romans, they gave him a cursory examination, and then they said, well, this guy hasn't done anything that would invoke Roman law.

He's not in sedition to the state of Rome. He's not a threat to Rome, etc. And these Jews have all kinds of things that they quibble about regarding their religion. But as far as Rome is concerned, we don't see any reason to hold this man or to punish him.

So we're just going to turn him loose. But Paul knew, and the Jews knew also, that if the Romans just turned him loose, they would in effect be handing him over to a death sentence, because the Jews would soon focus on him and do him in.

[4 : 19] And he knew that. And that's why he appealed unto Caesar, because when he did that, that immediately guaranteed that he would be taken out of the hands of the Jews, not delivered to them, but would be under protective custody, and would eventually have to stand before the Caesar in Rome.

And that's why he did that. It was because he knew he was a goner if they handed him over to the Jews again. So there was no cause of death in me. Now we'll go to our new sheet, 642.

But when the Jews spoke against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar, not that I had ought to accuse my nation of.

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.

And of course, when he uses that phrase, the hope of Israel, what is the hope of Israel? It can be summed up in just one word, the Messiah.

[5 : 34] The Messiah. That's the hope of Israel. That's the one who is going to deliver Israel. That's the one of whom Moses and all the prophets did speak.

That's the one individual for whom and to whom all of the nation of Israel, for not only centuries, but for millennia, had looked forward to his coming.

And Paul is going to tell them, of course, that he has come. And that's the whole basis for his ministry. It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain.

And they said unto him, Well, we neither received letters out of Judea concerning you. That means they had not received any formal letters from the rabbinate or the rabbis in Jerusalem informing them about Paul.

They hadn't gotten any official word from Jerusalem about him, but they've heard a lot of scuttlebutt. They've heard a lot of insinuations, a lot of innuendo, a lot of accusations, a lot of praises, a lot of curses, etc.

[6 : 45] One thing was for certain. Whatever it is about this guy, Paul the Apostle, he is really controversial. He has stirred up a hotbed of conversation, pro and con.

So they said, Neither any of the brethren that came showed or spoke of any harm of you, but we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest.

As concerning this sect, and what is the sect that he's talking about? It's then designated as a sect. It is Christianity.

It is Jews embracing Jesus as the Messiah. And those who did automatically became like a splinter group. They are regarded as illegitimate by the mainstream.

They are looked upon as a sect. And I don't know if the word cult was used back then like we use it now, but if it were, I'm sure that there were those who considered this group a cult.

[7 : 55] And so it goes today. In other words, this group is some kind of a break off. It's not legitimate. It doesn't have authenticity or the right people behind it.

And you don't give it much credence. They are just a bunch of weirdos. You don't pay much attention to them. Just write them off. Probably in a few years, this group will be gone entirely.

That's the way they regard it at the time. So what they are saying is, we want to hear of you, what you think, for as concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against.

I mean, we don't hear too many good things about this group. They're posed as a bunch of rabble-rousers, as a bunch of naysayers, and some are saying that this group even denies the law of Moses and the traditions under which we have been reared and which we have been trained and taught our children.

So we've heard all kinds of negative stuff about this. Now, what we want to hear is your side of the story. We want to hear it straight from you, what this is all about.

[9 : 10] And that's, of course, a very good thing. And we are told that, verse 23, when they had appointed him a day, that simply means they put it on the calendar.

They agreed, stipulated a certain day that would be set aside, and they're going to go to this hired villa that the Apostle Paul is renting, private quarters he's allowed to stay in, never detached from this Roman guard, and they're going to have a time of Q&A.;

There will be people who have all kinds of questions about Paul, his ministry, about Jesus being the Messiah and everything. Boy, I'll tell you what, if ever you'd want to be a fly on the wall to sit on something like that, that would have been something.

The tragedy of it is, no recordings possible back in that day, but wouldn't that have been something? They appointed him a day, and there came many to him into his lodging.

We don't know how many many are, but Williams translates it, that they came in large numbers to see him at the place where he was lodging. And Rue translates it, a large group of them came.

[10 : 25] We don't know if that's 12 or 15 or 50 or 60. It's just designated as a large group. To whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus.

Now I've got a question for you. It is abundantly clear that when John the Baptist arrived on the scene, and when Jesus arrived after him, and was introduced by John as the Messiah, the crux of their message, almost the entirety of their message to the nation of Israel was this.

Repent. Why? You should change your mind. Why? Because the kingdom of God is at hand.

That was the message. Now, fellas, I want to make a really careful distinction here, and this is very, very important. John the Baptist, it is true, he identified Jesus as the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

But, John did not proclaim the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins.

[11 : 42] Not only that, but he didn't even know that was coming. I am convinced that under inspiration he made that statement about the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. But he himself didn't understand the implications of that.

And we know that's true because remember when John was in prison, he had second thoughts about Jesus being the Messiah. And he sent his disciples to him to say, are you the one who should come?

Or if we got this all wrong and we ought to be looking for somebody else. Remember that? John had his doubts. And our Lord's disciples did not believe for a moment that Jesus was going to die on the cross, be buried, raised from the dead again the third day.

They didn't know that. They didn't believe that. And even though Jesus told them that's what was going to happen when he went to Jerusalem, they didn't buy it.

They knew that's what he said, but they also were convinced that he couldn't mean that. Because that's crazy. Jesus is the Messiah.

[12 : 51] He is sent by God. God would never allow something like that to happen to his Messiah. And of course they repudiated it. And we know Peter denied that three times, denied that he even knew the Lord.

So fellas, this is a really important distinction to make. When they preached repent for the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven is at hand, that was a message to the nation of Israel to get ready and prepare themselves to receive this Messiah.

And when they did, he would establish that kingdom. So the key to the establishment of the kingdom is the presence of the Messiah and the acceptance of the nation of Israel of that Messiah.

But we all know that didn't happen. They didn't accept him as the Messiah. They rejected him. So the message that they are preaching, repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, simply meant that God will establish the kingdom of heaven if Israel embraces Jesus as their Messiah.

And we know they did not do that. The vast majority of them didn't. And the question that has got to be on the minds of every Jew, and I'm sure that's on the minds of these who constitute Paul's audience here, is this, okay?

[14 : 13] If Jesus is the Messiah, if he was the one sent from God to bring the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven to earth, where is it?

What happened? Why aren't we living in that kingdom now? What's going on? Did he fail? Were we mistaken? Or what? And that's a very legitimate question.

And it's one that all believers ought to be asking. Two things are required for the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God, these are terms used interchangeably, to be established on the earth.

And when it is, that means everything that is broken and ruined in this sin-sick world is going to be fixed. it's going to be made new.

Corrections are going to be made. Two things have to happen in order for that to occur. Number one, Jesus has to die for the sins of the world.

[15 : 13] That gives God the Father the righteous responsibility and ability to restore the earth, to lift the curse because payment for sin has been made in the person of Christ.

And secondly, Israel, as that spearhead nation for the kingdom of God, must embrace Jesus as their Messiah, which they have never done. The time is coming when they will do that.

Israel, as a nation, did not repent when John preached repentance to them. Only a small percentage of them did. When Jesus himself preached that, they did not repent as a nation.

And when he rode into Jerusalem on that fateful day, that Palm Sunday day, he wept over Jerusalem and he said, if you only knew the things that belong to your salvation, or if you only knew the day of your visitation, but you don't know, you don't understand.

And shortly, they would be rejecting him and saying, crucify him, crucify him, etc. So, that kingdom that was promised, the qualifications of which have been accomplished 50% wise, the first leg is accomplished, death, burial, and resurrection of the Messiah.

[16 : 33] That's a done thing. That's over. But Israel, as a nation, embracing Jesus as their Messiah, has not been realized. And that kingdom that is promised is held in the bayous.

It is postponed until the time of the Gentiles has come in, as Paul says. And then, and then Israel, Israel will be returned to the focus of God's attention on earth.

And that will be in connection with the tribulation period. So, this is a really very, very important concept. And when we're told that he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, I'm sure that this has to be on their mind, and this is what he is explaining to them.

So, as he lays all of this out, these Jews are listening to him, questions are coming up in their mind, and they're going to have an extensive time of Q&A.; And the bottom line of, as he expounds and testifies the kingdom of God, is persuading them, or trying to convince them, about Jesus.

And other translations, Berkeley says, attempting to persuade them about Jesus, both, out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets.

[17 : 49] And this is all Old Testament stuff. New Testament didn't even exist. But you may be sure they had their Old Testament, the Torah and the scrolls right there with them, and as Paul could give these references and point to Christ in the Old Testament, they could look them up.

Some of them, I'm sure, were saying, well, that's not what it means. It's not talking about him. And others were saying, but how else can you explain that? How can you get around that? And when you look at passages like Isaiah 53, Lord, who has believed our report?

He's grown up as a tender plant, etc. And we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities.

The chastisement of our peace was upon him. And I can hear these Jews arguing, well, if that's not speaking of Jesus, and those things happen to him, who is it talking about anyway? Who else fits the bill here?

They had some pretty powerful arguments. And by the way, he was born in Bethlehem. Look here, the prophet Micah says, 500 years before Jesus was born, Thou, Bethlehem, Ephrata, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, who is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

[19 : 06] Who else can that be talking about? He fits the bill. He's the only one who does. And others were saying, no, no, no, that can't be, that can't, and then they would present their objections and, you know, as the old saying goes, anytime you get three Jews together, you got four opinions.

And I can imagine they were just going at this hot and heavy. And the text says, look at the text here. It says, from the law of Moses, from morning till evening.

This was a day long, a day long Bible class. This must have been something. I, like I said, I would love to have been a fly on the wall listening to this conversation.

That must have really been something. And I want you to notice the upshot of it because this is the way it always is. some believed the things which were spoken.

Others say, some hearkened to his words, were in agreement with what he said, were persuaded by the things that were spoken. Some were inclined to accept what he said.

[20 : 17] Some indeed were convinced by his reasonings. and some believed not. Some refused to believe. Some rejected it.

Some remained skeptical. This is a typical kind of mixed audience where you've got three different opinions. And fellas, the book of Hebrews addresses this.

See you Larry, have a great day. The book of Hebrews addresses this and there are three different classes of Jewish people in the book of Hebrews and the writer whom I believe is probably Paul but we can't say for sure, addresses all three groups.

There is the Jew who hears about Jesus being the Messiah, he puts it together, he connects the dots and he says, you know what? This is true.

The evidence is overwhelming. You can't deny it. I believe it. They are those Jews who are convinced Jesus is the Messiah. They embraced him as such.

[21 : 18] There were others at the other end of the spectrum who said, no, no, no, no, no, that can't be. In the first place, he didn't act like a king.

He acted more like an ordinary guy. He didn't have a regality and a royalness about him and he didn't fit the bill and so they had their objections and then there were those in the middle who stroked their beard and said, boy, I don't know.

In some ways, I think he was probably the Messiah. In some ways, I don't see how he could have been. These are the fence straddlers. They can't make up their mind. They are the undecided. You know, in every election, we hear these polls, you know, 47% are this and 22% of this and then there are the undecided in the middle, people that don't know which way they're going to go.

Well, you've got that group just about everywhere the gospel is presented and nothing has changed. It's the same way today. You go into an audience and preach the gospel, you're going to hear some people who say, you know, this all makes sense.

I believe it. I accept it. I think that what the Bible says about Jesus Christ is true and I need to get with the program and I embrace him as my Messiah.

[22 : 37] And there are those who for whatever reason refuse to believe it. and by the way, anybody who is looking for reasons not to believe can find plenty.

And for this individual, very often there is an issue of morality lurking somewhere as to why they don't want to make that commitment. They may feel that it would alter their lifestyle and their ambitions which they don't want interfered with and they reject it on that basis.

There may be those who are just honest skeptics who just simply are not intellectually convinced because they haven't thought enough about it, haven't heard enough evidence, etc. So you find this wherever the gospel is proclaimed and it's no different here.

A couple of thousand years ago when Paul got these Jews together and they were arguing and haranguing among themselves and one would present an argument and Paul would answer it and another would have a question and Paul would answer that and he would present more from the Old Testament and he would talk about what Moses said because one of the big accusations was that he teaches against the law of Moses and in some respects he did.

This is what makes this time so difficult to understand because when Paul went to a strictly Gentile audience he didn't tell them you people have to become circumcised and become Jews and you need to keep the Sabbath and you need to...

[24 : 05] He didn't tell them that. What he told them was you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. It is by grace through faith alone.

And Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. But do you think that Paul was going to go into a Jewish synagogue and tell them? Folks, you can forget all about the Sabbath.

You really don't need to keep that. And you don't need to abstain from pork chops and bacon and all of that. You can eat that stuff now. Can you imagine him doing that? No.

So what does he sound like? He sounds like a man with two different messages. And he is! He is! He does have two different messages. And this is why this is so confusing as you work through the book of Acts.

And one of the reasons why so much controversy and disagreement has arisen over the book of Acts. And some say that, some say that, well, you know, there is only one gospel.

[25 : 05] Don't let anybody tell you there is more than one gospel. Well, there is more than one gospel. And this is confusing too. There is the gospel of the kingdom, which John the Baptist preached, and which Paul the apostle is going to preach.

The gospel of the kingdom has to do with the Messiah coming, dying for the sins of the world, and Israel as a nation embracing him, and that kingdom will be established all over the earth.

There is that gospel. But that is not the gospel that we preach today. We preach today the gospel of the grace of God. And for us today, as believers, as Christians, it is true.

There is but one legitimate gospel to proclaim. And that is, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will have eternal life.

That is the gospel. That is the gospel of the grace of God. God, that was committed unto Paul. And it does not include, keep the Sabbath, keep the law of Moses, observe these sacrifices, everything that went with it, all part and parcel of that, which was for the Jewish people at that time in that place.

[26 : 22] And that's not part of our gospel today. So you've got a gospel that is passé, no longer in vogue. To my knowledge, nobody is preaching the gospel of the kingdom today, although a lot of people use that term and they think they are.

But this day is the day of grace, the dispensation of grace, and the gospel that we proclaim is called the gospel of the grace of God. And it is justification by faith and faith alone.

That's the only legitimate gospel to be preached today. Now, to muddy the waters further, once Christ returns, during the tribulation period, let me put it this way, before Christ returns, during the great tribulation period, the gospel is going to be preached again.

And what gospel will that be? It will be the gospel of the kingdom. Because the gospel of the grace of God is for the dispensation of grace, it is for the church age.

But where will the church be then? Gone. Gone. When Christ returns for the church, the rapture, we are out of here.

[27 : 41] This is 1 Thessalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians 15. And we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment. The twinkling of an eye.

The dead in Christ will rise first. We who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the air to be with the Lord. We're out of here. We're gone. That's the rapture.

That's the church. And what is left are going to be all unbelievers. All unbelievers. There will be no Christians left behind.

That's the time that the 144,000 will be then raised up during that tribulation period time. And what are they going to preach? They're going to preach the gospel of the kingdom.

They're going to say, you people need to repent because the king is coming. And what they will be talking about is not the rapture.

[28 : 39] They will be talking about the second coming. And Christ will come the second time at the end of the tribulation period when Israel Israel is on the brink of annihilation.

He will return. So this chronology also involves eschatology or the doctrine of last things. And all of these things have to be taken into consideration between the gospel of the kingdom and the gospel of the grace of God.

So in essence, today, now, there is one gospel. The gospel of the grace of God. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. But once we are gone, then the gospel will revert to the same message that John the Baptist preached.

Only this time, Israel will believe it. This time, Israel will repent. This time, it will be different.

And in essence, guys, this is what's going to happen. It's going to be almost like a reversion right back to Acts chapter 2, when Peter preached to that Jewish assembly on the day of Pentecost, 3,000 believed, but we are not told how many several thousand did not believe.

[30 : 02] The 3,000 were a drop in the bucket compared to the population of the nation who had to embrace that message. Only a tiny minority of Israel believed that message.

This time, when that message is preached, the Jew will be under intense persecution worldwide. 144,000 will be proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom worldwide.

And they will succeed in converting their Jewish brethren to Jesus as the Messiah during that time. And the Antichrist will be operating full bore.

And persecution will be worldwide. The Jew will be the target of it. Christians will be the target of it. There's going to be a lot of people saved and a lot of people persecuted.

A lot of people will be beheaded during that time. And Revelation 7 and Revelation 14 makes that quite clear as well as Revelation 19 as well. Okay, food's here.

[31 : 02] Any questions? Yeah, Joe. How does the covenant, the first covenant, the second covenant, how does that tie in? You're talking about the nation of Israel?

Yeah. Well, the Mosaic law constitutes the first covenant. This is between God and Israel.

And it was a conditional covenant. It was conditional. It had strings attached. And it was conditioned upon the obedience of the people of Israel. Well, we know they were disobedient.

And God says, if you obey me, I will bless you. I'll fill your barns with plenty, etc., etc. And if you don't, I will curse you and I will scatter you throughout the whole earth.

And that's exactly what he did because of their disobedience. The second covenant or the new covenant is spoken of in Jeremiah 31. And he talks about the institution of a new covenant.

[32 : 03] And God says, the time is coming when with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, I will establish a new covenant, not like the covenant which they broke.

And that new covenant is what Jesus was referring to when he was betrayed, the night he was betrayed. And he said, this cup is the new covenant in my blood.

As often as you eat of this bread and drink of this cup, you do show forth the Lord's death until he comes. That was the new covenant. And that's the covenant that replaces the old covenant.

And Hebrews talks about that, too. Talks about he's taken away the first that he may institute the second and so on. Dan. How is the time frame between the second coming and the Jews accepting the Messiah?

Did the Jews accept the after the second coming? Yeah, well, I think the scriptures indicate that during the tribulation period, which is going to be seven years.

[33 : 10] And by the way, the tribulation does not begin with the rapture. The tribulation, seven year tribulation period of Daniel chapter nine begins with the Antichrist and Israel entering into a covenant in Daniel nine.

And that will be a covenant that will supposedly guarantee the security of Israel. And by the way, is there anything today that they're more concerned about than their own security? And then we are told that in the middle of the seven years, he breaks the covenant.

And that's what Jesus was talking about when he said in Matthew 24, when you see the abomination that desolates stand in the holy place, then you know it's time to flee to the mountains.

That abomination of desolation, of course, is the Antichrist and he will desecrate the temple that will have been built then. So everything is going to be cranked up during this tribulation period.

And Christ himself said that it will be a time of tribulation such as the world has never seen and will never see again. It will make the Holocaust pale by comparison.

[34 : 21] We don't know how much time is between the rapture and the tribulation. No, we do not know how much time will transpire between the rapture and the disappearance of the church and the signing of that covenant.

Could be weeks, months, years. We don't know. We aren't given that time frame. But we know that once that covenant is signed, the tribulation clock starts ticking and it will be seven years and it's divided into three and a half years each.

And it will be a really, really very significant time. Forty-two months, forty-two months each way. And during that time, during that time there will be worldwide evangelization through the efforts of the 144,000.

And they are not Jehovah's Witnesses. They are all Jews from 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes. And martyrdom will be so common. I mean there will be people who will be martyred by the thousands during that time.

And this is when the mark of the beast comes into play as well. That's going to be part and parcel of it. So it's a very, very involved time and somewhat complicating, I will admit.