

## The Hope of Israel

### Acts 28:17-31

#### INTRODUCTION

We all have a reasonably good knowledge of the life of Paul the Apostle. We know that after his third missionary journey he went to Jerusalem where he was arrested because a group of Jewish people caused an uproar at the Temple. Then after several years being in the custody of the Roman authorities Paul was finally put aboard the first of two ships that would eventually deliver him to Rome. The westward journey to Italy is recorded by Luke and his is an excellent account of the sea voyage and shipwreck off the coast of Malta. Paul eventually is brought to Rome and is placed under house arrest with a Roman guard posted. After three days being in Rome, Paul was allowed to meet with the Jewish leaders who lived in the city. During that meeting Paul said that he was bound with a chain, because of ***“the hope of Israel,”*** which is the title of this message. Our text is found in Acts chapter 28, verses 17 -31.

#### Our Text (NKJV)

*17 And it came to pass after three days that Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. So when they had come together, he said to them: “Men and brethren, though I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans, 18 who, when they had examined me, wanted to let me go, because there was no cause for putting me to death. 19 But when the Jews spoke against it, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, not that I had anything of which to accuse my nation. 20 For this reason therefore I have called for you, to see you and speak with you, because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.”*

*21 Then they said to him, “We neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren who came reported or spoken any evil of you. 22 But we desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere.”*

*23 So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening. 24 And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved.*

*25 So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word: “The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, 26 saying, ‘Go to this people and say: “Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand; And seeing you will see, and not perceive; 27 For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.” ’*

*28 “Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!”*

*29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves.*

*30 Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, 31 preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.*

Let me begin with two historical observations about this passage.

FIRST: Consider verses 30 and 31. There seems to be confidence among researchers that the two years spoken here by Luke in verse 30 are the years 60 and 61 AD. Everything that occurred in Paul's life following what Luke writes here in verse 31 involves some speculation and there are various viewpoints on the final years of Paul's life. Did he ever make it to Spain? Tradition places Paul's death near the end of Nero's reign, sometime between 64 and 68 AD.

SECOND: Paul was there in Rome in 60-61 AD under house arrest. It is also generally understood by commentators that Paul wrote the book of Romans from the city of Corinth in the Spring of 55 AD. That means that Paul's letter to the church in Rome preceded his arrival in Rome by about 5 years. Knowing this fact, it is of interest that in his introduction to the book of Romans, Paul says that he had been praying to God for the opportunity to visit the believers in Rome, and he wrote, *"making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you."* – Romans 1:10

Five years after he wrote this, the *"means"* that God chose to send Paul to Rome was by way of being arrested and brought to Rome as a prisoner. This is not what Paul would have anticipated but Paul made his plans, committed them to the Lord and the Lord directed his steps. As says the Scripture, *"A man's heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps."*

– Proverbs 16:9

Surely, what applies to Paul the Apostle, applies to you and me as well.

Furthermore, it was the will of the Lord that Paul should testify before Caesar. This was affirmed by the angel who stood before Paul just before the shipwreck at Malta when he said, *"Do not be afraid Paul; you must be brought before Caesar and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you."* – Acts 27:24

Our key verse from Paul's testimony that day is found in verse 20.

**20** *For this reason therefore I have called for you, to see you and speak with you, because for **the hope of Israel** I am bound with this chain."*

It was not difficult for a Jewish person to answer the question, "What is the hope of Israel?" Every Jewish person would answer, "The hope of Israel is the coming Messiah." So, as soon as Paul had these Jewish leaders gathered in one place, he began to preach to them that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, the Christ, the hope

of Israel and that He had already come to Israel!

**23** *So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening.*

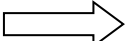
Given the opportunity, Paul spoke all day about Jesus. At least no one fell asleep and fell out the window. (Remember Eutychus in Acts chapter 20?). And as in other places where he preached the gospel, some believed, and others did not.

**24** *And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved.*

LET'S CONSIDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE NATION OF ISRAEL AT THAT TIME.

In those days, the people of Israel occupied the land of Israel. For those Jewish people who were earthly and politically minded, they would have said, "Yes, we do occupy the land, but there are other occupiers here, the Romans. When our Messiah comes, he will deliver us from them and raise up our nation once again above all the other nations of the world."

A noble sentiment to hold in those days, and one held by Zionists today, and the constant focus of dispensationalist pastors and teachers, but we should understand that this was not the message about Jesus the Messiah that Paul was preaching to these Jewish leaders that day. It was not a worldly or earthly temporal kingdom, even one lasting for 1000 years, that Paul was preaching in Jesus Christ. It was a spiritual, eternal, heavenly kingdom that was powerfully ushered in by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Although the O.T. Scriptures spoke of all these things, it was not understood and it was completely unexpected by the Jewish people, perhaps with the exception of people like Simeon and Anna, that when their Messiah did come, that He would come as a servant to die for sin, and then be raised again from the dead to become the firstborn from the dead, the firstborn of all those who would rise to new life, in Him, through their faith in Him. (Colossians 1:18)

PAUL WAS PREACHING IN CHRIST JESUS THAT THE HOPE OF ISRAEL, THEIR MESSIANIC HOPE,  WAS IN FACT, THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD!

Who could have truly understood and appreciated this truth until after Jesus died and rose again from the dead, overcoming the world, sin, the devil and Death itself!

Paul was preaching in Jesus Christ, the eternal, righteous kingdom of God and eternal life for all those who put their faith in Him. (See also Acts 26:6-8)

Even father Abraham who had stood upon the land of Canaan, and believed God's promise that his descendants in the flesh would one day occupy that very piece of earthly ground, but yet before the end of his life, Abraham had come to believe that through the blessing of the Promised Seed, his offspring in the Spirit, were destined to inherit something far exceeding that piece of earthly ground there in Canaan. Jesus said, "*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.*" – John 8:56

Abraham's hope was now in a heavenly inheritance that his offspring in the Spirit would one day enter into by faith just as he would.

*"for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God."*

- Hebrews 11:10

We must understand how important to Abraham was that event by which God tested his faith in Him on mount Moriah, and what Abraham came to know and believe in his heart about the true hope of the believer. Having been called by God to go to Mount Moriah and sacrifice his only begotten son Isaac, the son of the promise, Abraham, as {Paul} writes in Hebrews chapter 11, concluded that if his knife did in fact kill Isaac, "*that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.*" – Heb.11:19

THE HOPE OF ABRAHAM IN THE PROMISED SEED BECAME THE HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD AND ABRAHAM'S ENTRANCE INTO THE HEAVENLY CITY WHOSE BUILDER AND MAKER IS GOD.

Let me conclude this message by saying that I myself, along with all of you who are fellow believers, who rejoice in Jesus along with all those who have entered by faith into the true Israel of God, and like Paul, and Abraham, and all believers in Jesus, the Christ, my hope is the hope of Israel and that hope is the resurrection into His eternal kingdom!

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*"But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them."* – Hebrews 11:16