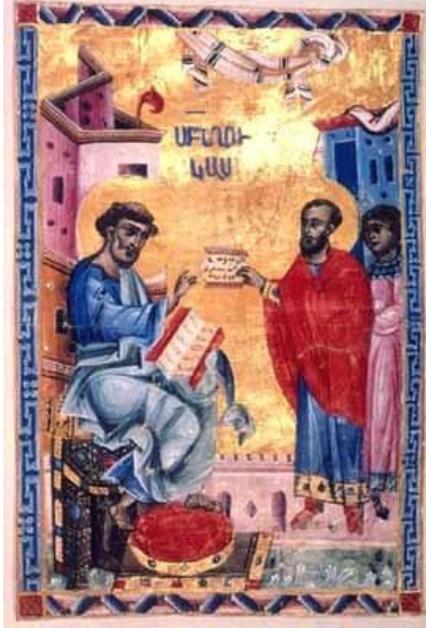


Session #24: Acts, Chapter 28:17-31



Compiled and written by Theresa Lisiecki

Paul and Jewish Leaders in Rome 28:17-22

28:17 *three days later he called...leaders of the Jews*

St. Paul's first act of business now settled into a home was to find out whether the Jews of Jerusalem were pursuing the matter of his conviction by sending information and/or representatives to Rome to argue their case. So he invites the Jewish leadership of Rome to come and meet with him. Since St. Paul is such a famous character of his day there are many who take up his invitation. The mere fact that there is a Jewish community in Rome suggests that Claudius' edict in 49AD to expel all Jews from the Capital was relaxed or evoked.

28:19 *obliged to appeal to Caesar*

Scholars believe that St. Paul is hinting at filing a countersuit against the Temple leadership.

28:20 *hope of Israel*

The hope of Israel is of course Jesus Christ, the Messiah. This is most likely the real reason he called these men together.

28:21 *We have received no letters*

For whatever reason, maybe the Jews of Jerusalem assumed that Paul died in the storm, they have sent nothing to support their case in Rome.

28:22 *this sect*

This is the Jews calling the Christian movement a "sect", so even some of the Jews saw Christianity not as a separate religion but as a movement within Judaism.

Paul Preaches in Rome 28:23-31

St. Paul's final statement, the final writings of St. Luke is a concluding effort to bring salvation to all.

28:23 *the law...the prophets*

As we have seen and heard in St. Paul's

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speeches in past chapters, speaking to a Jewish audience St. Paul knew his best bet was to show Jesus as the fulfilment of the promises found in the Old Testament by discussing the law of Moses and the promises of the prophets.

28:26-27 Go to this people

St. Paul is quoting Isaiah 6:9-10, offering it as a final indictment for those Jews who refuse to accept the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. In its original context, Isaiah was speaking out against all those of the remaining Tribe of Judah who refused to hear the call of God to faithfulness to God's law and Word. Here St. Paul sees it as once again true for all those who do not see and accept Jesus as the Messiah. Some scholars have interpreted this proclamation from Isaiah as the voice of God now severing His relationship with the Jews. This is not the popular interpretation and has led to Anti-Semitism with the Catholic Church condemns. Other scholars suggest the exact opposite view. St. Luke in these final verses uses the word "brothers" four times, first referring to the Christians and then to the Jews. One scholar believes that St. Luke is drawing our attention back to the twin brothers who decorated the bow of the boat to symbolize the relationship that Christians and Jews are to have with one another.

28:28 Salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles

This is a pattern we have seen throughout the missionary work of St. Paul. He first goes to the Jews where most reject St. Paul's teachings but some Jews do come to believe. With the rejection, St. Paul then turns to the Gentiles. Never has St. Paul completely cut himself off from continuing his conversation with any Jew who wishes to know more about Jesus. With many of the Jews refusing to accept the truth of Jesus as the Messiah, St. Luke ends this "book" by proclaiming one last time that the message is now free to go out to all peoples, all nations.

28:29 *

One last time in this text a verse was added reading: *And when he had said this, the Jews left, seriously arguing among themselves.*

28:30 two whole years

Scholars believe these two years that passed were 60-62 AD. We never do hear as to the outcome of St. Paul's case before Caesar. Tradition (meaning the popular belief) has it that St. Paul was released and returned, in his freedom, to his missionary travels. If this is true than there are two possibilities as to the outcome of the trail

1. We have read and heard St. Paul defend himself before the official courts of Rome and each time the official saw no merit to the charges. It is very likely that St. Paul once again took up his defense pleading for his own innocence and receiving his freedom
2. It is also possible, even probably that those who accused St. Paul never made the trip to Rome therefore failing to make an appearance in the court to support their own case. This would give the Roman legal system cause to dismiss the charges and drop the case giving St. Paul his freedom.

28:31 he proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.

And with this St. Luke brings an end to his writing. It may seem anti-climatic wanting to know what happened with St. Paul. But the story is not about St. Paul. For St. Luke the lead character of

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his writing in Acts is the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ and with St. Paul coming to Rome, preaching and teaching in Rome the gospel has been and will continue to be proclaimed throughout the known worlds. Scholars generally agree that St. Luke left the conclusion of this document open-ended to express that the Church's mission to proclaim the gospel had just begun. It is also possible that St. Luke didn't know the ending since this document has been dated as being written about 63 AD.

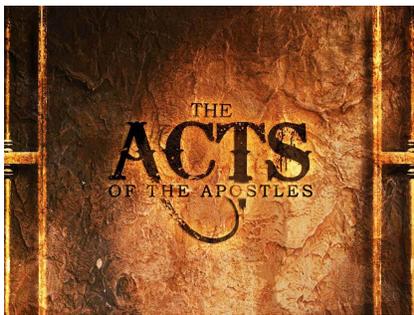
In ending with this episode, Luke has helped his (largely Gentile) readers understand:

1. *Their relationship to the historical Israel*
2. *The majority of Israel's rejection of its Messiah*
3. *How the gentiles have become beneficiaries of Israel's vocation to be a "light to the nations" (Isaiah 49:6)*

Meanwhile, in the spirit of the parables of the barren fig tree (Luke 13:6-9) and the two lost sons (Luke 15:11-32) the door remains open. ... Luke's two-volume work, which began in the Jerusalem temple, ends with the mission continuing unabated in a rented Roman apartment. ... If the ending of Acts surprises us by failing to include the martyrdom of Paul (which was surely known to Luke), that very inconclusiveness serves to remind us that we are invited to continue the story with our lives.

New Collegeville Bible Commentary: The Acts of the Apostles

What did happen to St. Paul?



In truth no one knows. If there is written documentation it has been lost in the course of history. We do know that St. Paul spoke of his intentions to travel westward from Rome to Spain.

- *I desire, as I have for many years, to come to you when I go to Spain. (Romans 15:23-24)*
- St. Paul also spoke of his desire to travel eastward from Rome to Macedonia and Asia Minor.
- *One thing more—prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping through your prayers to be restored to you. (Philemon 22)*

There is evidence that St. Paul was successful on both accounts. We read in Titus 1:5 that St. Paul evangelized the island of Crete. A trip that would have been impossible during any of St. Paul's travels. We also read in the writings of St. Clement of Rome that St. Paul carried the gospel to the limits of the west (Spain), and St. Clement wrote in 95 AD.

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The account of Paul's martyrdom is in Eusebius' 4th century history where he cites the earlier testimonies of Tertullian, a Roman lawyer who converted to Christianity to become priest and Christian apologist (160-225), and Caius, a priest of the church in Rome during the times of Pope Victor and Pope Zephyrinus (early 3rd century):

It is, therefore, recorded that Paul was beheaded in Rome itself, and that Peter likewise was crucified under Nero. This account of Peter and Paul is substantiated by the fact that their names are preserved in the cemeteries of that place even to the present day. It is confirmed likewise by Caius, a member of the Church who arose under Zephyrinus, bishop of Rome. [..]

Reflection Questions:

1. How important is the preaching of the Gospel to you? What have you done to support or further the continuation of the proclamation of the truth of Jesus Christ?
2. As this study ends are you left with any questions or concerns? What are they?
3. Thinking back over the year please name three insights or ideas that you want to make sure you hold onto and not loose over time.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

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