

***The Great Stories of the Early Church***  
***80-Paul in Roman Custody04***  
***The Promise of God***  
***and The Hope of Israel***  
***Acts 26:1-23***

1 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself:

2 I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews:

3 Especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.

4 My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews;

5 Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

**6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers:**

**7 Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.**

8 Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?

9 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

10 Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.

11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

12 Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,

13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.

14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

19 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:

20 But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for

repentance.

21 For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me.

**22 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:**

**23 That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles. KJV**

### **Introduction:**

Paul, in his defense before Agrippa, and because of his certainty that Agrippa had a firm handle on the major principles of the Jewish religion, made some extraordinary statements that seemingly are not well understood anymore in Christianity. At least we do not hear them affirmed in the way that Paul was stating them to his audience on that day.

**6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers:**

**22 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:**

Think about this idea, “The Promise that God made to the fathers of Israel about which Moses and the prophets spoke.” If I asked you to write an essay on that topic, what would you say?

Think about something else, when was the last time you heard a preacher say that his preaching concerned “the hope of the promise that God made to the fathers of Israel?”

Yet this is how Paul characterized his preaching both to Jews and to Gentiles. Remember that his audience on this day was Gentile.

### **Parenthesis**

One of the great errors that has circulated among people who have had contact with scriptures is that God has saved people (brought them into a relationship with Himself) in different ways during different segments of history.

Some say that there was one way of salvation before the flood, another from the flood to Sinai, one from Sinai until Jesus died, and still another from the Resurrection until He comes again. But Paul said to Agrippa that he was preaching The Hope of Israel and saying the same things that Moses and the prophets taught.

If one thinks that there were all of these different ways and plans for men to be right with God then the Bible becomes a very confusing book and causes me to wonder what part of it, if any, has any application to and for me.

(Paul was literally saying that Israel has always had one single Hope and that is personal salvation in and through Jesus Christ.)

In fact, it was not just Israel.

Why did the sons of Seth call on God?

The were sinners and dead in sins just like Cain and his children.

Why were they concerned? What were they looking for?

Why did Noah live by faith and demonstrate his faith by building an ark?

Was he only concerned about physical life?

Would he have been unconcerned with what would happen to him after this one?

Why did Abraham believe God?

Both Moses and Paul indicated that there was a concern about Justification.

Humanity, all of it, has a desire to believe that when this life ends the next life will be something other than misery.

The Hope of Israel is God's True and Real Provision for that concern and He has made only One Way to handle it.

John 14:6-7 (to Thomas)

6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

7 If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. KJV

And that way was the way of Justification by Faith, the way that Abel, Enoch, Noah and Abraham as well as all the rest found, regardless of the time period in which they lived.

Heb 11:4-10

4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he **obtained witness that he was righteous**, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation **he had this testimony, that he pleased God.**

6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that **he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.**

7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and **became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.**

8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, **the heirs with him of the same promise:**

10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Notice v.10, did Abraham think that such a city existed on earth? In the land of Canaan? Of course not! He, like all the rest, was looking for personal salvation - The Hope of Israel.

### **End of Parenthesis**

What did the communications of God to the elders of Israel, to Moses and to the prophets have to do with Jesus and the Resurrection and personal salvation?

We know that God made some serious promises to Abraham which He repeated in different words over many years.

The first instance that Moses recorded of the revelation to Abraham concerned the initial call for him to move out of his home, an place called Ur of the Chaldee, to an unspecified place that God was going to show him.

Gen 12:1-3

- 1 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:
- 2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:
- 3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. KJV

The words, on the face of them, declare that God was going to take Abraham and his children and make of them a nation so blessed and so great that ultimately the entire earth would receive benefit from their blessedness.

As I said, the promise was repeated on other occasions. When he and Lot parted company some years later the Lord came to Abraham again with similar promises.

Gen 13:14-17

- 14 And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward:
- 15 For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.
- 16 And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered.
- 17 Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee. KJV

The Promise here seems to be primarily concerning his ownership of the land that belonged then to the Canaanites and the great number of people who would descend from Abraham and occupy

the land.

Later, Abraham became frustrated that he had no son even though he was growing old. There was no heir to carry on in spite of the promises that God had given him. He spoke to God about that and the Lord came to visit him once again.

Gen 15:5-6

- 5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.
- 6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness. KJV

This is the text, if you recall, that Paul quoted as his proof for the doctrine of Justification by Faith.

Rom 4:3

- 3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. KJV

But, again, the promise itself was God's assurance to Abraham that indeed he would have a child who would, in turn, be the father of an incredible multitude of people.

And, there was another visit of God just before Isaac was conceived.

Gen 17:1-8

- 1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.
- 2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.
- 3 And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,
- 4 As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.
- 5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.
- 6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.
- 7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.
- 8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. KJV

Here we see that Abram's name was changed to Abraham and the promise concerning the land and the greatness of his descendants as spoken of.

Then, God referenced the promise when he revealed to him what he was going to do to Sodom.

Gen 18:16-18

- 16 And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way.
- 17 And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do;
- 18 Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? KJV

He referenced it again when He commanded Abraham to offer Isaac and he obeyed.

Gen 22:15-18

- 15 And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,
- 16 And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:
- 17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;
- 18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice. KJV

The same Promise was reiterated both the Isaac and to Jacob. but we do not have time to explore them all

Again though, what does that Promise have to do with Paul, with the Resurrection and with the Gospel, especially as it is preached and believed among the Gentiles?

**Hidden in that Promise to Abraham is a secret which only God could reveal and He did so to and through Paul.**

Listen very carefully to these words.

Gal 3:13-14

- 13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:
- 14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. KJV

The 'blessing' that was promised to Abraham comes to Gentiles (as well as Jews) through Jesus Christ.

Now we have already seen that the issue of Justification by Faith is clearly linked to Abraham but how is the Promise to Abraham tied to Gentile believers?

Both Jews and Gentiles seem to remain forever confused on this matter even though it is not difficult.

Gal 3:16

- 16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

The real intent and focus of the Promise was not what it seemed to be. It seemed to be a promise concerning the future and the home of the physical descendants of Abraham. And, indeed, it was in a sense. But the physical fulfillment was only a picture of a greater, eternal and spiritual fulfillment that was not at all obvious.

Gal 3:26-29

- 26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.  
27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.  
28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.  
29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

So, superficially read, the Promise said that the descendants of Abraham, specifically through Isaac and Jacob, would be a great nation and would inherit all of the territory over which Abraham traveled during his life.

Spiritually read, all who would ever truly believe would be counted as children of Abraham, Jesus Christ would take them to Himself and pay the penalty of their sins, and they would inherit an eternal home in the fellowship of God.

What did the prophets say?

**Moses:**

Deut 18:15-19

- 15 The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;  
16 According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.  
17 And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken.  
18 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.  
19 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him KJV

John 1:45

- 45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of

Joseph. KJV

Acts 3:22-23

- 22 For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.
- 23 And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. KJV

Acts 7:37

- 37 This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. KJV

### **Isaiah very clearly prophesied of Christ:**

His virgin birth.

Isa 7:14

- 14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. KJV

His Kingship and His Righteous Rule

Jer 23:5-6

- 5 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.
- 6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. KJV

The Personal Salvation of His People

Jer 33:14-16

- 14 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah.
- 15 In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.
- 16 In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness. KJV

Through Him and in Him there will be salvation by Grace through His Suffering

Zech 12:8-10

- 8 In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them.
- 9 And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.
- 10 And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and



shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. KJV  
He will be the Messenger of the Covenant with Abraham (not with Moses)

Mal 3

1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. KJV

These are just samples of the many references to Christ in the OT scriptures.

It was not ignorance that motivated the Jews against Paul. They knew that the scriptures said these things but it was the idea that Jesus of Nazareth was the fulfillment of them that they rejected.

The fact that God was not Who they thought He was irritated them to the point that they had killed His Son and sought to kill anyone and everyone who professed Him as Deity.

This is always and ever the irritating element in the gospel. God is Who He has declared Himself to be and men do not like that reality. Affirm it to them and they will reject you just as they reject Him.

Men do not generally mind religion but they want a 'God' who serves them, one they can shape and mold to their preferences.

It is not uncommon in our time to hear someone say something like this, "well, the way I see God is....." or "the God I believe in is....." Or some other such foolishness. You do not get to be the Potter, He is the Potter, you are the clay, not the other way around.

The reality is that God is and He rewards those who embrace Who He Is. We have already reference this text.

Heb 11:6

6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. KJV

Those who diligently seek Him are those who seek to find out what He has said about Himself and when they do, they embrace and believe His revelation and worship Him for it. They don't seek to re-shape Him nor do they lie and pretend that He is something else. They seek Truth, embrace Truth, and worship the God of Truth.

Paul dared not try to reinterpret God to make Him seem more acceptable to the Roman governor or the vassal King who represented Caesar. He simply affirmed Him as the God of scripture and His Son as the Savior Who rose from the dead. The fact that Festus declared him insane did not bother Paul at all.

This is the thing about Christianity, True Christianity, that has always aggravated the Christ

deniers. It affirms reality for what it is and rejects all attempts to define God according to the wicked arrogance of men who would have a 'God' who serves and caters to them.

The God we serve is the One Who had Moses write concerning the 'Prophet' that God would raise up and that 'Prophet' is Jesus Christ, the virgin born Son of Mary but also "The Word" Who "became Flesh and dwelt among us," Jesus Christ of Nazareth Who died for our sins according to the scriptures and was raised again the third day. He has ascended to the Father and now sits on the throne of Glory awaiting the Day when He will return to gather His people to Himself and rain judgment upon those who have rejected Him.

We are neither ashamed of those facts nor will we apologize for them. They are the Truth whereby all who embrace Him are saved and they are the condemnation for all who reject Him.

Hear again the words of Paul.

**6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers:**

**7 Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.**

**22 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:**

**23 That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.**

There is One Hope of Israel, the slain and resurrected Christ, Savior of believing Jew and Gentile alike.