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A0944 – November 1, 2009 – Acts 28:11-31 – Rome, At Last

Question: Acts begins with the kingdom and ends with the kingdom. Would you clarify the relationship of the Church to the preaching of the kingdom?

Answer: The short answer is that the Church preached the kingdom to the nation Israel during the transitional period of Acts. During this period the Church was re-offering the kingdom to the nation Israel and if they repented as a nation then the kingdom would come. That re-offer is rejected by the nation and therefore the nation is judged in AD70. There is no need to preach the kingdom to the Jewish nation today because the offer is no longer there. It will be there in the future tribulation, that's Matt 24:14, but as it stands the first offer of the kingdom was Jesus Christ in His earthly ministry. They rejected Him and He was crucified. He prayed on the cross: forgive them Lord, they know not what they do, that was a prayer for the Lord to forgive them of that sin so that generation was spared and the next was given another opportunity. The second offer of the kingdom by the apostles and others in the Book of Acts was rejected and therefore the nation was judged in AD70. The whole outline of this is in Matt 22:1-14 if you want to read a parable directly explaining the things I just said. But the bottom line is that the preaching of the kingdom is a transitional truth in the book of Acts. During this period, the Church was to preach the kingdom. Early on the kingdom offer was prominent and gradually it has phased out and the Church has become prominent. We would say the kingdom was "at-hand," it could have come, from a human perspective, had the nation Israel repented, but the whole point of Paul's preaching to the Jews over and over and over is to give the nation an opportunity to repent. But like Isaiah his preaching was rejected and rejected and what this was doing was building up hardness of heart, dullness of hearing. They were becoming blind and so they had set themselves for judgment.

Question: You have mentioned on several occasions that the nation Israel was coming under the 5th degree of discipline of Lev 26 and Deut 28. Would you explain more about the five degrees of discipline?

Answer: The five degrees of discipline or cursings are clearly sketched out in Lev 26. They relate to the Mosaic Law. If the nation obeyed they would be blessed and the blessings are described in Lev 26:1-13. If the nation disobeyed they would be cursed and the cursings are described in Lev 26:14-39. Now the nation went through its period of blessing in the time of King David and the Golden Era of Solomon. The nation was in obedience and the nation enjoyed blessing. But then under Rehoboam the Kingdom Divided and the two Kingdoms, both north and south, went into Decline. And they began to come under the cursings and Lev 26 marks off very clearly that there are five stages in the discipline and each one comes with a little more kick. They increase in severity and you can outline the basic characteristics of these five degrees as follows: 1) the human body and mind (26:14-17); 2) agriculture (26:18-20); 3) animals (26:21-22); 4) disease and famine (26:23-26); 5) military defeat and exile (26:27-33). It's this fifth degree of cursing we've said the nation Israel came under in AD70 when the Roman armies under Titus destroyed Jerusalem. Josephus recounts how the Jewish people got to the point they were so hungry they ate their own babies. And they did it on three historic occasions: in the northern kingdom in 721BC, in the southern kingdom in 586BC and in the southern kingdom again in AD70. On three occasions the nation Israel came under such military distress that they ate their own children. If you've heard the expression, "the fifth degree," Lev 26 is where it comes from. Now the problem is most Christians don't recognize that AD70 is the implementation of Lev 26 cursings. You say, well that's over in the Church. Yes it is, but we're in a period of transition. Today you'll see that just as Isaiah warned of the fifth degree and he had to go out and preach to a nation that was not going to listen to his message. Everywhere Paul went he preached to the Jews and the Jews were just like the Jews of Isaiah's day: they were not going to listen to the word of God and therefore both generations come under the fifth degree. Both generations ate their babies and both generations were swept away into exile. And so watch for it when we get to Acts 28:26-27.

Question: Is there any Scriptural indication that Paul died in Rome?

Answer: No. The details of what happened to Paul after the close of the Book of Acts are debated. One view is that Paul was released after the two years in

v 30 and that he had a further ministry and was then arrested again and imprisoned in Rome. This view is attested to by Eusebius, the early church historian. For reconstructions of the events of this intervening period see L. P. Pherigo, "Paul's Life after the Close of Acts," *JBL* 70 (1951), pp. 277–84.ⁱ The other view is that he was not released from prison and that the rest of his life was spent imprisoned in Rome. The evidence doesn't point to a clear answer in either direction. And if F. F. Bruce can't answer the question then I respectfully bow out of the debate. All indications are that he did die in Rome.

Alright, today let's finish the Book of Acts. Unless you have some more questions on Acts next week we'll move on to Galatians and I'm taking you there because in my estimation this is Paul's first epistle which tells you I'm a southern Galatian'ist. There's debate over who he wrote to, the north Galatians or the south Galatians, and that has a bearing on the date he wrote and since I'm a southerner I date the book in AD49 making it his earliest canonical epistle. So we're going to go back in the time period of Acts. Acts has taken us from AD30 or AD33, whichever year is the year of crucifixion, down to AD62. So to get into Galatians we're going to be backing up from AD62 to AD49, it's in that year before the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 that Paul wrote Galatians. So that's where we're headed.

Today we are in Acts 28:11. We've been tracing Paul's voyage to Rome and they've had a shipwreck on the island of Malta. And here Luke gives us the name of the ship, **¹¹At the end of three months we set sail on an Alexandrian ship which had wintered at the island, and which had the Twin Brothers for its figurehead.** So they spend **three months** on Malta to wait out the winter, the seas were closed from November to December or January; they opened on Feb 8th so this is Feb of AD60. The winter is over so they **set sail on** another **Alexandrian ship**. This is another large grain ship; this one had **wintered at the island** of Malta. And to show you the kind of historian Luke was he says the name of the ship was **the Twin brothers**. Literally, in the Greek, it means "twin sons of Zeus." And the reason Luke notes this is because he's writing this to Theophilus who may want to check this out. He has to back up everything with details. And this detail is the name of the ship. In the ancient world they would paint the name of the ship on the hull and on the hull of this ship they had painted the "twin sons of Zeus," who were Castor and Pollux. They had Castor

painted on one side of the hull and Pollux painted on the other. This is how they identified these ships and so Paul says if you want to check out what ship Paul took from Malta, you've probably seen it before, it's the one with Castor and Pollux on the hull. These are the little details that smack us and say, hey, wake up, these aren't just stories we're reading, these are real life events that could be checked out. In fact, Horace in his *Odes* mentions the twin brothers, "Then through the wild Aegean roar The breezes and the Brethren Twain Shall waft my little boat ashore."ⁱⁱ So these twins were well known among sailors.

Acts 28:12 After we put in at Syracuse, we stayed there for three days. ¹³From there we sailed around and arrived at Rhegium, and a day later a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli. Notice how detailed Luke's log book is for this voyage. They came up to Syracuse, after **three days** there he says **we sailed around** (it sounds like he says we went in a circle or something), and what it means is they had a headwind and they had to tack to make it to **Rhegium**. **Rhegium** is on the toe of Italy; Italy's shaped like a boot and **Rhegium** is the toe of the boot, and they get a little south wind and that pushes them up to **Puteoli**, for a total journey of 180 miles. The grain ship will go on to another port that Emperor Claudius had built, and it will unload there but **Puteoli** is where the grain ships put out their passengers and so Paul got off there and he's going to have to hoof it to Rome another 130 miles.

When they get to Puteoli immediately it says in v 14, **There we found some brethren, and were invited to stay with them for seven days;** so here begins Paul's encouragement. He immediately runs into some believers and they're very hospitable and he finishes the verse, **and thus we came to Rome.** The adverb of manner means that verse 15 explains how they got to Rome from Puteoli, they've got to walk to Rome and verse 15 describes the journey. They take the famous Roman road called the Appian Way. It's still there today and you can still walk this road and if you do then you can say you walked where Paul walked. Verse 15, **And the brethren, when they heard about us, came from there as far as the Market of Appius and Three Inns to meet us; and when Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage.** Now again, look at all the details. Luke points out the road Paul walked, the Appian Way, and certain well-known spots along the road that you can still visit today: the **Market of Appius** and the **Three Inns** or

Shops. And you can go visit these places today and say, hey, this is where believers from Rome came all the way out to meet Paul. And you might ask yourself why they are so interested that they would walk 30-40 miles to meet Paul? It's as if they're coming out to meet a great dignitary. Paul is a man in chains. Paul is a prisoner of Rome and I don't think it's common for prisoners to get this kind of reception. Yet here they are trotting down from Rome to meet Paul the prisoner. Why?

Notice that there are believers in and around Rome. How did they get there? Paul never went there. Peter never went there. How did they get there?

Answer: because there were Jews from Rome in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, Acts 2, and so they heard Peter's message, they were a part of the 3,000 that believed that day and they went back to Rome and started churches. There has been a church in Rome since very early on. And Paul evidently discovered there was a church there when he was in Corinth in Acts 18. Evidently, up to that point, Paul was not aware that a church had been established in Rome. But you'll recall that Corinth was the place where Paul was down and out. Everywhere Paul had gone since he came to the shores of Macedonia and dropped down to Achaia he was met with rejection against his message and rejection to the point that Paul was attacked by the locals and run out of town and so when he arrived at Corinth he was depressed. I can't get anything going here God, what's the deal? Everywhere I go I'm met with rejection. But then the Lord sends encouragement - Priscilla and Aquila. Why were they an encouragement? Because they were believers from Rome. And so here's Paul 1,000 miles east of Rome; he's obviously trying to stretch out from Jerusalem and spread the gospel message and two Jewish believers show up 1,000 miles farther west than I've ever been. And so the gospel has gone out ahead of me and this was an encouragement to Paul. That's how he found out there was a church in Rome. And so when he hits the boot of Italy the word gets around, hey Paul's on his way to Rome, and they start coming out to greet Paul. Now how did they know Paul? Paul knew about them from Priscilla and Aquila but how did they know about Paul? Answer, he wrote a letter to them three years before. So turn to Rom 1:8 to see this letter Paul wrote to Rome. He'd never been there before but he wrote this letter to them. And he says, verse 8, "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world." Now how did Paul know that? He met Priscilla and Aquila and they told him. Then apparently everywhere Paul went his ear was open

for what was going on with Christianity in Rome and more and more Paul heard about their witness. So the Church at Rome had a tremendous testimony in the first century. We see early on this church was strong in outreach. Verse 9, “For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the *preaching of the* gospel of His Son, is my witness *as to* how unceasingly I make mention of you, ¹⁰always in my prayers making request, if perhaps now at last by the will of God I may succeed in coming to you.” Now Paul had never been there but this tells you what Paul had been doing for years. Every time Paul would pray he would pray for these believers at Rome. It tells you what he was doing in the Roman barracks at Jerusalem, it tells you what he was doing locked in prison at Caesarea, it tells you what he was doing during the voyage of that ship. Paul was praying constantly for the Church at Rome, people he’d never met. Verse 11 the reason, ¹¹“For I long to see you,” in other words I want to come there so in advance of coming I’m praying for you. Why do you think Paul is doing that? Because Paul knows God controls history and that God will prepare the way for his arrival. “For I long to see you so that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established;” And there you see that Paul’s primary aim in getting to Rome was not evangelistic, that department was going fine. The department he was interested in was getting them established in sound doctrine, edification of the believers. Verse 12, “that is, that I may be encouraged together with you *while* among you, each of us by the other’s faith, both yours and mine.” so this is all edification of fellow believers, “I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles.” And it shows you the heart of the man, Paul wanted to get there. Paul wanted to see what God had done. Paul wanted to share his spiritual gift of teaching with them. Paul wanted to benefit from their spiritual gifts; Edification of the saints. Notice in verse 13 he was prevented. God kept saying no Paul, not now, and then Paul would try another route, no Paul, not now. And you say why? He had a good motive. You may have a good motive but God wanted the church to grow up and evangelize the area some before Paul came and when Paul came he could help get the church established in doctrine. Paul in his later life was primarily a doctrine man. You go through stages in your Christian life as to what God primarily has you doing. So just be aware that God can take you through these stages and you don’t have to always do the same thing. You may be a Sunday School teacher for ten years and then God may move you on to lead a prayer group

and really focus your energies there. Early Paul was primarily an evangelist, later Paul was primarily a doctrine man.

Let's go back to Acts 28:15, this group that's coming out to see him. They've received the letter of Romans and now they're coming out to meet Paul for the first time. They come down to the place called **the Market of Appius** and others to **the Three Taverns** and it says when they got there Paul **thanked God**; he's thankful because he's met other Christians; Christians who had read the Book of Romans and for the first time Paul gets a report on how the Book of Romans was received by the Church at Rome. And he also **took courage** which shows you the kind of reception the Book of Romans got - it was well received. And it also shows you another thing, that even Paul the apostle got depressed, even Paul had difficulties with courage, he could get anxious. Be encouraged if you have these kinds of problems and I'm sure you sometimes have some of these problems, that Paul too had them and Paul had to be encouraged, and you'll notice the vehicle for encouraging a Christian—it's other Christians.

Verse 16, **When we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him.** Alright, **Rome**, at last! This is the climax of the book. Paul has made it to **Rome** but note how he's made it. In chains, he's chained to a **soldier**. Now think of this situation. Can you imagine what this must have been like? Day after day chained to this soldier. For two years, just think, you've got to go to the bathroom and this soldier is there, you have no privacy, you have visitors and there's always this soldier, you go to bed and there's this soldier chained to you, he wakes up and has to go to the bathroom, that's the kind of life it was for two years. That's the way Paul had to live for two full years, always chained to someone else. So you think you've got it tough, look at Paul.

Now you have to think through this carefully, don't go to fast in Bible study or you'll miss what's going on. Something is going on. At first when you see Paul chained to these soldiers you think, man, how great it would be if Paul were loose in Rome. He could go out in the streets, he could get a lot of ministry done, he could spend time with the believers, he could edify them, they could edify him, and wouldn't it be great? But turn to Phil 1:12 to see what happened. Here's Paul chained to a Roman soldier. Every four hours a new Roman soldier takes over the shift, he's got four hours. On these four

hour rotations with different Roman soldiers what do you think Paul was doing? Was Paul pouting in a corner, wha, wha, get me out of here God. Phil 1:12, "Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel," Paul didn't go cry in the corner, Paul saw a ministry opportunity. Think of the situation. He's got a different Roman soldier every four hours. What can Paul do every four hours? Verse 13 tells us, "so that my imprisonment in *the cause of Christ* has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else," Aha, the first thing we can say is that Paul was well-known among the soldiers of the praetorian guard. One after another these soldiers would have to come in for Paul duty and Paul would go at it again for four hours - the word of God, the word of God - and so after a few weeks everyone in the praetorian guard knew about Christ and you can only imagine, probably hundreds of soldiers heard about Christ through Paul and according to Paul they were responding to the gospel and the word was spreading up into the higher echelons of Roman society. We know there were believers high up close to Caesar, so this is tremendous. What can we learn from this? To show you this let's turn back to our patterns of suffering chart. There are eleven basic reasons for suffering, six are direct, meaning they're a direct result of your choices, five are indirect, they don't relate directly to a choice you made. Now Paul is suffering, he's in chains for two years. What have we seen is one of the reasons Paul is suffering? There may be several but which one is Phil 1:13 pointing out. Isn't it number nine? Evangelization of unbelievers. Paul didn't say, woe is me, Paul said, aha, I've got a "captive audience," no pun intended. I'll use it to evangelize these Roman soldiers. When you get in a jam don't go into a hissy. Just wait, ask the Lord, what opportunity for evangelizing unbelievers are you giving me here? But second, there's more going on than just evangelism, verse 14 "and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear." Now we have fellow believers and they look at Paul and they say, man, poor Paul, he's the greatest Christian on the planet and he's all locked up. But as they watch Paul they say, wow, that Paul is tremendous, he doesn't cry and whine about his situation; he gives glory to God and what does this do for them? It edifies them, it builds them up. Now they've seen Paul handle his trial, and they start getting courageous with the word of God. They're not afraid to preach the word of God. They have confidence. What pattern of suffering is involved in verse 14? Isn't it number ten; edification of believers?. It comes through the most unlikely of circumstances but it does

come. Now that's why we're going through Luke's Acts before Paul's epistles. It's for these little gems that fall out when you do things this way and this is what I was hoping for.

So now two very positive things are coming out of Paul's chains, evangelism of the Roman army and edification of other believers. Now ask the Romans 8:28 question: does God work all things together for good? We just answered the question.

Now back to Acts 28:17, **After three days Paul called together those who were the leading men of the Jews, and when they came together, he *began* saying to them, "Brethren, though I had 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"And when they had examined me, they were willing to release me because there was no ground for putting me to death. ¹⁹"But when the Jews objected, I was forced to appeal to Caesar, not that I had any accusation against my nation. ²⁰"For this reason, therefore, I requested to see you and to speak with you, for I am wearing this chain for the sake of the hope of Israel."**

Now what Paul is doing is getting in touch with the Jewish leadership of Rome. Paul couldn't get to the synagogue so the synagogue came to Paul. And Paul very delicately gives his background from Jerusalem. There are sensitive issues at stake here and so Paul is very careful not to be too rough on the Jerusalem authorities. We know what they did to Paul but Paul is careful not to slay them in front of these Jews. In v 17 he calls them **Brethren**, not because they're believers, not yet at least, yet he calls them **brethren**. Why? Because they're fellow Jews. Paul didn't become a non-Jew because he believed in Jesus. He's still a Jew, a Jewish Christian and there's not a problem with that at all. Then he goes on to clear himself of any charges, **though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner...into the hands of the Romans**. This is all very gently said. Verse 19 is the only place he puts some fault on the Jews, **But when the Jews objected, I was forced to appeal to Caesar**, and that explains why he's in Rome, why he's in chains. So he's trying to clear his name. Verse 20, **"For this reason, therefore, I requested to see you and to speak with you, for I am wearing this**

chain for the sake of the hope of Israel.” Alright, so Paul insists the reason you see me here chained to a Roman soldier is **for the sake of the hope of Israel.** I wasn’t convicted in a Roman court of law; I wasn’t convicted in a Jewish court of law. The reason I’m in chains is not a legal issue, it’s a theological issue, **the hope of Israel.** Now what is the hope of Israel? It’s resurrection. The resurrection from the dead. Why is resurrection so important to Israel? Why is she hanging her hat on resurrection? Because if there’s no resurrection then there’s no fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises. See, it all hinges on resurrection. And surely Paul says, you agree with me about the **hope of Israel.** There’s got to be a resurrection. And probably they did agree with him, most Jews believed in resurrection. The OT taught resurrection and Paul says I haven’t said one thing out of line with the OT. And for that I’m in chains.

Now verse 21 their response. **They said to him, “We have neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren come here and reported or spoken anything bad about you.** So Paul is in the clear, he’s got a clear slate except one thing, verse 22, **“But we desire to hear from you what your views are; for concerning this sect, it is known to us that it is spoken against everywhere.”** Now, they’re not totally ignorant of Christianity, they know something about it but it has a bad reputation and we want to ask why? For that we have to get into a little of the historical background. What happened to give Christianity a bad reputation in Rome? Well, in AD50 there was a Roman emperor by the name of Claudius. Claudius ruled in the city of Rome as well as the whole Roman Empire and about the year AD47 he began to notice some problems in the Jewish ghetto in the city of Rome. They started having these riots break out among the Jews and so he’d send the Roman soldiers down to quell the riot and two weeks later another riot and he’d send the soldiers in again; they’d quell it and this kept going on and on so he sent a team of private investigators in to find the problem. And what he found and we know this from Seutonius, a Roman writer, was that apparently the Christian Jews would walk through the market place of the ghetto and they’d begin to talk about Christ to the non-Christian Jews. They were witnessing in the marketplace. And then they’d start arguing over this Christ and if you’ve seen two Jews arguing you know it can quickly turn into a kind, courteous shouting match, and this is what was going on and before you know it they had a mob assembled and they’d start to riot. This is the report that came

back and Claudius said, alright, this has been going on year after year after year and this cannot go on any longer in the great city of Rome. We are going to have law and order around here and I don't know who this Chrestos is but this Chrestos, as they called Him, is a problem. And they couldn't find this Chrestos but they knew the riot had something to do with Chrestos because everybody was talking about Chrestos. And obviously this Chrestos is Christ and the riot was over Jesus Christ in the Jewish ghetto. And so Claudius said, well, I don't know where he is but I know one thing, we are going to have law and order in this city even if I have to throw every Jew out. And so he did. 20,000 Jews, both Christian and non-Christian were expelled by the edict of Claudius in AD50. Among some of the Jews you know that were expelled were the young couple by the name of Priscilla and Aquila, who later told Paul about the Church in Rome. Well, all these Jews had to leave Rome and settle in other parts of the Roman Empire and about 57-58 they were re-admitted and that's the background to verses 21-22. They want Paul to know that they don't want another edict of Claudius, so we're willing to hear your views Paul but we don't want any trouble stirred up.

Verse 23, When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening. ²⁴**Some were being persuaded by the things spoken, but others would not believe.** Now look at the end of verse 23 how Paul did it, **from morning to evening**, by Jewish reckoning, 6am to 6pm. All day long. How would you like to sit down in front of the apostle Paul and have him teach a bible class for twelve hours? Now this is what we have seen over and over and over with the apostle Paul. He was a tremendous bible teacher, he was interested in content and he would go on and on and on until most preachers today would say, now Paul we've had about enough bible for today, I think we need to get a little psychology here, maybe a little sociology, and Paul would have none of it, he says no. I spend 12 hours on **the Law of Moses and the Prophets**, that's the OT. A twelve hour class on the OT, that's what people need and that's what Paul gave them. So this is a condensed version of the whole OT. Wouldn't it be great to have an audio recording of this, twelve hours of the apostle Paul teaching the gospel from the OT? It would just be tremendous to sit there and hear how he did it. The greatest Bible teacher who ever lived from Christ to

our own day. And what was the result? Did everyone believe? No, in verse 24 **some** believed **but others** did **not**. Exactly the same reaction Paul has got everywhere else he preached the word of God.

And now watch verse 25 because they've responded - some positive and some negative. The word of God never returns void, but just like a preacher Paul has one more thing to say. Like some of these preachers he says, now for the conclusion and then five minutes later he says now for the conclusion and you say, now didn't he say that five minutes ago, and so Paul has one last thing to say and it's a quote from the OT. And where does he quote from? verse 25.

Isaiah the prophet. And so verse 26 is a quote from Isa 6:9; verse 27 is a quote from Isa 6:10. Let's turn to Isaiah to see the original passage. We'll start in Isa 6:3 to get the background and see why the Book of Acts ends with this quotation. Isa 6:3, this is the angels speaking, "And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of armies, The whole earth is full of His glory." And verse 5 Isaiah responds to this, "Woe is me, for I am ruined!" he's just been faced with the infinite majesty of God and he becomes very, very aware of his sin. He is cleansed in v 7 and then we come to verse 8, "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? And Isaiah says, "Send me!" So this is the commissioning of Isaiah for his missionary service to the nation and it's a very interesting mission he's being sent on. It's declared in v 9, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on listening, but do not perceive; Keep on looking, but do not understand.'

¹⁰Render the hearts of this people insensitive, Their ears dull, And their eyes dim, Otherwise they might see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, Understand with their hearts, And return and be healed." And you say what kind of a mission is that? You want me to go out and preach the word of God but no one's going to respond positively? Yeah, that's what I want Isaiah. I want you to go and preach the word of God so these people harden up in their rebellion against me and set themselves for judgment. Now that may sound strange to your ears that the purpose of preaching the word of God is to damn this people. But that's exactly what its saying, And Isaiah responds the way most of us would respond, verse 11, "Lord, how long?" "And He answered, "Until cities are devastated and without inhabitant, Houses are without people And the land is utterly desolate." I want you to do it Isaiah until the whole nation is totally destroyed. Why? Because these people had gone on negative volition to the word of God and they had sucked in human view point and they were infested with demons and running rampant into idolatry

and the whole society was collapsing and so God says damn them with the word of God. Because the more a person in that condition hears the word of God the more they harden their heart against the word of God. That's why this is a warning to anyone today who comes in here and hears the word of God over and over and over and has every opportunity to hear God's word and doesn't pay attention and doesn't apply what he hears, that's a very dangerous thing to do. Quite frankly if you're doing that and you just drag yourself in here because someone else wants you to be here, quite frankly the best thing you can do for yourself is drag yourself out of here. You may not like hearing it but all your doing by hearing the word of God with a negative attitude is damning yourself. It's better not to be here until you get the right attitude.

So this is what Isaiah was commissioned to do, damn them with the word of God and what did Isaiah's ministry result in? The Exile of 586BC. You minister until these people come under and are hard as iron to the word of God and then I'm going to knock their block off. And he did and they went into captivity to the Babylonians in 586BC.

Now what's the significance then of Paul quoting the passage where Isaiah was commissioned for this task? To show exactly the same thing is on the horizon in Paul's generation. Paul to his generation is like Isaiah to his generation. They both are sent on similar missions to the Jewish people. A mission to damn the nation Israel with the word of God. And damned they were when Paul finished his mission the judgment fell on the Jews in AD70. Now I've just explained to you a tremendous structure of the word of God.

What I've just explained all comes under the five degrees of discipline in the OT, you can read these for yourself in Lev 26, there are five degrees of discipline upon the nation Israel. First you have a discipline in the area of their human bodies and minds, then you have the discipline in the area of agriculture, then you have the discipline in the area of animal hostility in the land, then you have discipline in the area of disease and famine and finally, the last degree of discipline on the nation Israel He sends a foreign military and sends them into exile. So within 10 years of when Paul said these closing words in the Book of Acts the Roman army has invaded and sends the nation Israel into exile.

Verse 28-31, the last words, **“Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen.”** The gospel was to the Jew first but the reception of the gospel was the Gentile first. Verse 29 is not in the best manuscripts so we’ll move to verse 30, **And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, ³¹preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.** Now we aren’t told how Paul had the means to **rent** his own quarters. It’s my guess that Priscilla and Aquila were back in Rome and if you remember Priscilla was from the Prisci family and they were a very, very wealthy family in Rome, which is probably why you always read her name first when she’s mentioned with her husband. That family is well-known in history so they had a lot of money and a lot of influence and that could be how Paul got his own quarters and enjoyed open visitation.

During these two years, just to give you an idea of what NT books came out of this, with a Roman soldier chained to his wrist, Paul wrote Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon and Philipians. All that came during this imprisonment. And finally, verse 31, **preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.** Notice preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Now we said with the preaching of the kingdom of God that this is the same kingdom Jesus offered the nation Israel. If they would repent the kingdom of God would come. The kingdom of God on earth is the goal of history and Paul preached this to the Jewish nation during the transition period of the Book of Acts. But the moment I preach the kingdom of God as coming on earth as the pinnacle of history I have to ask how do I get citizenship in that kingdom? Answer, I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. So Paul taught concerning the Lord Jesus Christ because Christ’s finished work on the cross is the doorway to the kingdom. The fact that Jesus has died on the cross for our sins, the fact that He has risen from the dead and the fact that He is coming again to judge means you should believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved, be granted citizenship in the coming kingdom of God. And with that we come to the conclusion that the word of God is triumphant in history and you’re salvation and my salvation is a furtherance of this history written by Luke. A history that began with Jesus’ sovereign proclamation of Acts 1:8, you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and Judea and Samaria and even to the remotest parts of the earth and so it is, Christ’s word controls history.

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ⁱ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988).

ⁱⁱ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 501.

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