

Scripture Reading:

Acts 26:19 "Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, 20 but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance. 21 For these reasons the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. 22 Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come-- 23 that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, & would proclaim light to the Jewish people & to the Gentiles." 24 Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!" 25 But he said, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason. 26 For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner. 27 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe." 28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian." 29 And Paul said, "I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains." 30 When he had said these things, the king stood up, as well as the governor and Bernice and those who sat with them; 31 and when they had gone aside, they talked among themselves, saying, "This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains." 32 Then Agrippa said to Festus, "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.""

"What Have You Done With My Son?"

We have spent quite a number of weeks studying Paul's final visit to Jerusalem along with his trials and imprisonment here in Caesarea. For the past few weeks, we have studied Paul's final speech recorded by Luke in the Book of Acts.

- Last week saw various reactions to the Gospel from those present in the auditorium & now I want to take a final look at the obligation of those who were present before we have Paul sail for Rome next week.

We want to consider the great question that will ultimately be asked of all mankind:

- What have you done with my Son Jesus?

The Apostle Paul has now languished for well over two years here in jail, knowing that Jesus had promised that he would eventually go to Rome.

- Before we consider the text before us and the decision that was made by these leaders, I want us to reflect on what may have been going through Paul's mind at this time.

While we cannot be sure, I think it is not much of a stretch to think that Paul was in and around Jerusalem during much of the ministry of Jesus.

If he was not personally there during the final week Jesus spent in Jerusalem or at the various trials and even the crucifixion of Jesus, he would have gotten first hand reports shortly thereafter.

- He was very familiar with what had happened and as he has testified before these rulers, that he did all he could to destroy the Way.

Thus I do not think it would have escaped his notice that he, as the one chosen to be the Apostle to the Gentiles by Jesus Himself, had now faced a very similar series of events!

If we think back to the week leading up to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus here is what happened:

- **Jesus was often confronted by hostile Jewish leaders in the Temple who wanted Him dead!**
- **Jesus faced two trials before an informal and more formal Jewish council the morning He was crucified.**
- **Jesus was then brought before the Roman Governor Pilate for a trial.**
- **Jesus was sent off to King Herod to determine his fate as a Galilean.**
- **Jesus was sent back to the Roman Governor for His final judgment.**

Now we can compare this with Paul's final visit to Jerusalem which the Spirit of God led him to make:

- **Paul was also confronted by hostile Jews at the Temple who wanted Him dead!**
- **Paul faced two trials before an informal and more formal Jewish council: One in Jerusalem and the other here in Caesarea.**
- **Paul was brought before the Roman Governor Festus for a trial.**
- **Paul was then brought before King Herod Agrippa II to determine his fate.**
- **Paul will now be sent to the Roman Caesar for His final judgment.**

After His confrontation with the nation of Israel and the Empire of Rome, Jesus is presented as the great sacrifice for sins, He is raised from the dead and ascends to the Father's right hand.

The Apostle Paul, who has now faced a very similar set of events, is being sent off to Rome as a prisoner who will be Christ's witness!

The Temple at Jerusalem was destroyed in AD70 as the final judgment on the nation of Israel that Jesus had predicted.

- **But, Jesus is still seated at God's right hand!**

As Paul is about to sail for Rome, many historians would point to this time when Nero's trusted advisors passed from the scene as the beginning of the end of the mighty Roman Empire. Today you can only visit Roman ruins, but the witnesses for Jesus now number in the hundreds of millions.

- **In both cases, what the world powers and their father Satan intended for evil...
God used for great good!**

We see again the great theme of Luke's orderly account in Luke & Acts:

- **The coming of Jesus has changed everything:**
- **That is the BIG picture which Paul understood so well and this is why we see him so bold in his presentation of the Gospel to both the Jews & the Gentiles.**

If we are to be well-equipped witnesses today, we must remember that the Bible is telling God's story of salvation, from Genesis to Revelation. The Apostle Paul writes to the Saints at Ephesus with this glorious introduction:

“ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and

without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.”

The story of salvation began before the foundation of the world where the beloved Son chose to serve His Father through the power of the Spirit, agreeing to be the Lamb who would be punished for the sins of God’s people. In the early chapters of Genesis, man is created in God’s image and falls into sin. Immediately the promise of the Savior is given when God assures Adam that Jesus, the seed of the woman, will crush the head of the seed of the serpent who beguiled them. We see how in just a few short generations the ravages of sin brings the destruction of all things living on the earth, save Noah and his family.

- With God’s promise and the sign of the rainbow, we know that the world will not be destroyed again & once more look for the promised salvation.

Abram is called out and God blesses him with a son through which he will become a father of nations:

- A son who is saved when God provided a lamb for the sacrifice!

God demonstrates that He is the Savior and deliverer of His people with the great exodus from Egypt and then he gives Moses all the instructions for the Tabernacle, the sacrificial system and the various holiness laws that teach people the need for Jesus to come as THE Savior of God’s people!

Davis & Solomon demonstrate that Jesus will usher in God’s Kingdom...

- And as we have often pointed out, Daniel learns that this Kingdom will grow to fill all the earth when God gave him the interpretation the King’s dream.

Finally the star and the angels announce that the time has come for the lamb to be born in a manger.

In the Gospels we see Jesus confronting the leaders of Israel, much as Paul has done here in Caesarea with the fact that they had missed THE point of the Old Testament Scriptures: They spoke of Jesus, who they now wanted to kill.

As we saw in the reactions last week, the Roman Governor could not be bothered with all of this talk of salvation and King Agrippa did know that it was true, but wanted to ignore it because it was too inconvenient. I am sure that Paul and the other Saints prayed fervently for the conversion of these magistrates, but such was not to be the case this day.

So at verse 30 we read, “When [Paul] had said these things, the king stood up, as well as the governor and Bernice and those who sat with them; 31 and when they had gone aside, they talked among themselves, saying, "This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains." 32 Then Agrippa said to Festus, "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.””

- This meeting had been called to allow King Agrippa to hear Paul himself and now the King has heard enough and decides that this meeting is over and all the others simply follow his lead.

There are two very important things to notice about their follow-up conversation...

- First, and foremost, there is NO discussion about what Paul had confronted them with...
The Truth of Gospel.

They ignore what Paul has said and quickly return to the business of the day: What do we do with the prisoner.

- Paul has clearly told them what God’s beloved Son has done for them and they simply cannot be bothered!

It is also interesting to note that after more than two years of abuse and mock trials, it is now their opinion that it is Paul’s fault that he is going to Rome because he asked for an appeal! We will talk a bit more about this next week.

I am sure that Paul was at times humanly frustrated by all those delays and mock trials and this day would have been particularly difficult because he knew the cast of characters he was brought before in this auditorium with all their pomp and circumstance:

- Leaders who now choose to ignore all that he proclaimed.

During this time, Paul might often have thought of one of the Proverbs we read in our daily readings this week: “Do not fret because of evildoers, Nor be envious of the wicked; For there will be no prospect for the evil man; The lamp of the wicked will be put out.” Proverbs 24:19,20

- The lamp of the wicked is not always put out when we think it should be, but when we see history from God’s perspective, there are, in the end, no wicked lights left.

This is what the Psalmist Asaph learned when he entered the Temple of God after becoming VERY frustrated with the seemingly prosperous wickedness that he saw around him: *[not unlike our own day!]*

“Truly God is good to Israel, To such as are pure in heart. 2 But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; My steps had nearly slipped. 3 For I was envious of the boastful, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked. *[like the pomp Paul saw in this auditorium]*

4 For there are no pangs in their death, But their strength is firm. 5 They are not in trouble as other men, Nor are they plagued like other men. *[Rome had its grand city & mighty Emperor, and Israel had Herod’s Temple and proud religious leaders!]* 6 “Therefore pride serves as their necklace; Violence covers them like a garment. 7 Their eyes bulge with abundance; They have more than heart could wish. 8 They scoff and speak wickedly concerning oppression; They speak loftily. 9 They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walks through the earth. 10 Therefore his people return here, And waters of a full cup are drained by them. 11 And they say, “How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?” *[Such is the case now with these leaders who chose to ignore all that Paul shared about God’s beloved Son]* 12 “Behold, these are the ungodly, Who are always at ease; They increase in riches. 13 Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, And washed my hands in innocence. 14 For all day long I have been plagued, And chastened every morning. 15 If I had said, “I will speak thus,” Behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children. *[I would argue that this Psalm confirms that it is OK to have a bad day occasionally as a Christian! BUT it cannot last for long if we are faithful...]*

16 “When I thought how to understand this, It was too painful for me-- 17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end. 18 Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. 19 Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment!”

- The Psalmist goes on to even struggle with understanding God’s wrath and then concludes:

26 “My flesh and my heart fail; But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. 27 For indeed, those who are far from You shall perish; You have destroyed all those who desert You for harlotry. 28 But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in Jehovah God, That I may declare all Your works.”

So in the end, whether you are a ruler of nations or a humble servant, the question will ultimately be:

- What have you done with God’s Beloved Son Jesus?
- Have you deserted Him for vain idols or have you loved and obeyed Him as you should?

The question is asked of national rulers in Psalm 2:

“Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against Jehovah and against His Anointed, saying, 3 “Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us.”

- We see such arrogance and pride in many high places today, but it is not a good place to be...

4 "He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; Jehovah shall hold them in derision. 5 Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure: 6 "Yet I have set My King On My holy hill of Zion." 7 "I will declare the decree: Jehovah has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. 8 Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession. 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.' " 10 Now therefore, be wise, O kings; Be instructed, you judges of the earth. 11 Serve Jehovah with fear, And rejoice with trembling. 12 Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, And you perish in the way, When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.""

- The Apostle Paul called upon these gathered magistrates to 'kiss the Son' but they refused to obey and put their trust in Him.

The same question is asked of religious rulers like in the discussion that Jesus has with the Pharisee Nicodemus:

John 3:3 "Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."... 16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. 18 He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

The question for the religious leaders was not how many Scriptures had they memorized or how many laws had they kept:

- The question was, what have you done with my beloved Son Jesus?
- A question God continues to ask all of the Church leaders today!

And finally, it is to be asked of each and every individual as they hear the Good News presented by the Lord's witnesses:

Romans 10:8 "But what does [the righteousness of faith] say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): 9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. 13 For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

- So yes, we must continue today to be the witnesses who carry the Good News that Jesus saves.

As I said at the beginning, the ultimate question is very personal for every man or woman, boy or girl...

- What have you done with My Beloved Son Jesus?

It is appropriate to ask about those who have never held the name Jesus: Something you will be asked about and something that Paul addressed in his letter to the Saints at Rome:

Romans 1: "14 I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. 15 So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also. 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, 21 because, although they knew God, they

did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man--and birds and four-footed animals & creeping things.”

➤ Paul makes two things very clear in this passage that we could spend weeks studying!

1) The power of the Gospel is sufficient to save all those who Jesus came to save and as the Spirit of God fills the earth with the Kingdom of Jesus, He will bring the Good News to each and every one of the sheep who belong to Jesus!

2) There are NONE who will be judged unjustly: Paul makes it clear that the creation itself [the creation that each and EVERY man or woman must live in] clearly demonstrates God’s existence and glory.

Paul also makes it clear that everyone’s conscience tells them that they are guilty.

➤ These great truths are suppressed by those who refuse to repent and come to Jesus for salvation and they will be judged accordingly.

So yes, we should each honestly answer the question: What have you done with God’s beloved Son Jesus? As God’s covenant people it is a question that not only impacts our salvation, but also our lives...

We not only rejoice in the grace that gave us saving faith, but also in how that same faith enables us to work the works that we were created in Christ Jesus to walk in! We should always and everywhere rejoice in what God has done:

“4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

Communion Meditation: Hebrews 6:11

“13 For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, 14 saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, & multiplying I will multiply you." 15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. 16 For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. 17 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, 18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. 19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, 20 where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”