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### Paul's Personal Witness before King Agrippa

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PAUL'S PERSONAL WITNESS BEFORE KING AGRIPPA

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS  
NUMBER 129  
ACTS 26:1-12

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ACTS 26:1-12 "Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself: 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: 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. My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: 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. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead? I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 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. 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. Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,"

We have already studied the first few verses of this chapter, and we have noticed the amazing poise of Paul as he stood before King Agrippa, Bernice, and Festus. Paul was polite, concise, and stuck with the main theme of his message. After telling them that he had been reared as a strict Pharisee, Paul launched out into the main part of his witness.

ACTS 26:6 "And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers:" The word "now" is used as a word of contrast. When he was a Pharisee, all the Pharisees praised him, but now that he had become a Christian the Pharisees hated him and persecuted him. Later on in this study, Paul will refer to his unsaved condition, and he will refer to his state of mind as "a madness." At that period in his life, his hatred for Christianity was absolutely unbelievable. Paul was indeed the worst sinner that ever lived, with maximum scar tissue on his soul, but he emerged to be the greatest saint. So this word "Now" means that he had changed from his past way of life and was now oriented to grace. Then Paul said, "I stand" and this refers to the fact that he is secure, relaxed and in complete command of the details of his life. Then he referred to "being judged" and this is a present, passive participle of "krino" and this means he has received this condemnation and this status will not change as far as the antagonism of the Jews is concerned.

Now we come to one of the most important phrases Paul ever used--"For the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers." Now this phrase introduced the whole issue of the place of the Jews in God's plans for the human race. This statement referred to the unconditional covenants the Lord made to Israel. To understand what Paul means by "the hope of the promise" let us take a look at those unconditional covenants.

1. The Abrahamic Covenant.

GENESIS 12:1-3 "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: 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: 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."

GENESIS 22:15-18 "And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, 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: 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; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."

Now this covenant was repeated in many ways and places throughout Scripture It is just as true today as when the Lord spoke it to Abraham. God never goes back on a promise.

2. The Davidic Covenant.

2 SAMUEL 7:12-16 "And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever."

PSALM 89:34-37 "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah."

God has promised that the greater son of David, even Jesus Christ, will eventually sit on David's throne forever.

3. The Palestinian Covenant.

GENESIS 15:18 "In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:"

Then in Numbers 34, a passage too long for us to read here, God gave very specific direction concerning the exact intent of this promise.

EXODUS 6:6-8 "Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the Lord."

4. The New Covenant To Israel.

HEBREWS 8:10-12 "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

JEREMIAH 31:33 "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."  
 These words expressly state that God is not finished with the Jews, but he will reestablish them in their own land and they will return to him in faith.

Now each of these covenants has an eternal life clause in it, and these covenants only apply to born-again Jews. These covenants tell us that the Jews have a future and that God has provided for his people. This is exactly what Paul was referring to when he said, "The hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers."

In the Abrahamic Covenant God promised that Abraham will have a seed that will live forever. Then this seed will have a land that will be their eternal possession. They will also have a king on the throne of David forever. The Jews have gone away in unbelief, but the New Covenant assures us of the fact that they will return in faith and belief and will love the Lord with devotion. God is going to see to it that these covenants will be kept. Now the land God promised the Jews has never yet been occupied by them, though they reached their zenith in Solomon's day and became one of the great kingdoms of the earth. But one day they will occupy all the land God has promised to them. Now this Palestinian Covenant has not yet been fulfilled, and cannot be until the Church Age has run its course and Christ has returned to the earth. Then this covenant will be fulfilled, and the fifth cycle of discipline to the Jews will be at an end. At that time the Jews will return to their land with faith in Christ as their redeemer.

Now there is a warning in the Abrahamic Covenant to any nation that will seek to destroy Israel, that they will be destroyed. (Hitler and the Third Reich in Germany is an example.) Any nation that helps Israel will be blessed, states the Abrahamic Covenant. In history, nations have gone down when they tried to destroy the Jews. Now Paul knew that these great promises from God were to be kept and that is why in the beginning of his speech before King Agrippa he referred to "the hope of the promise." Premillennialism is the doctrine which believes that at the end of the Church Age the church will be raptured, then will come to pass the Tribulation, at the end of which Jesus Christ will personally return to this earth and end the Tribulation and will set up his reign of a thousand years. At the end of that time, Satan will be released for a season and then will come the end, when the earth and heaven will be destroyed and there will be a new heaven and a new earth and Christ will rule and reign forever.

There are two theories mainly followed by those who oppose the premillennial view. First, we have the Amillennial group, and they believe that the Jews have no future, that he is totally out of it. They believe that when the Jews failed the Lord that the promises were nullified and the promises were transferred to the church. They say, "The church is Israel and that the church originated in Abraham's tent." This group says there will be no second coming as such, no tribulation, no rapture of the church, and that the covenants no longer apply to the Jews. This, to me, is the most terrible distortion of Scripture and has its origin in Satan himself.

Then there is the Postmillennial view and these simply believe that things will improve and finally the kingdom will be established, at the end of which time Christ will return.

Now the real sad thing about these views is that they are an attack upon God himself. The character of God is involved. You see, when God makes an unconditional promise, it depends on his character. God's character demands that he stand behind his promises, and he will. God can't go back on the promises he made to Abraham and to David, and he won't.



Now these covenants have an eternal life clause in them and that is why the Scripture says in Romans 9 that "All Israel is not Israel." To be a recipient of the promises the racial Jew must be a born-again Jew. So these covenants are to be fulfilled, and when Christ returns there will be the baptism of fire and the unbelieving Jews will be put off the earth and the Millennium will begin with only born-again Jews and Gentiles on the earth. This is the substance of Romans 9 and 10 and 11.

So the hope of the promise made unto our fathers means--

1. A nation built on the seed of Abraham.
2. A land that is to be the eternal possession of the Jews.
3. A King, from the loins of David, to sit on that throne forever and this is none other than Jesus Christ.
4. And the new covenant to Israel which means that the Jews will return to their land in faith and belief.

Now there are a number of hindrances to the fulfillment of this Davidic Covenant.

One is the curse of Coniah, who is the same as Jehoiachin or Jehoniah.

JEREMIAH 22:30 "Thus saith the Lord, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah."

JEREMIAH 36:30-31 "Therefore thus saith the Lord of Jehoiakim king of Judah; He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost. And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not."

Now this takes us back to David and Bathsheba. They had two sons, Solomon and Nathan. From the line of Solomon, we have the kings of Israel and the line of Solomon goes down to Coniah and is there cut off. Now that other son Nathan had a descendant named Mary, and it is from her line that Christ was produced. Though Joseph is the legal father of Jesus he is not the blood father. So God used the Virgin Birth to cut off the line that came down through Solomon and Coniah, but the curse of Coniah did not hinder the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant. In other words, God always keeps his word.

Now there was a second reason for the Virgin Birth. God keeps his word in spite of judgment. The point is this: Christ died physically, but before he died physically, he died spiritually and paid for all of our sins. Then after his physical death came his resurrection, and the resurrection nullified his physical death. So for three days it looked like the Davidic Covenant had been broken, for Christ was dead and in the grave. But the resurrection put an end to that kind of reasoning, and assured the world that the Davidic Covenant would be kept. One reason the Pharisees hated the resurrection of Christ so much was right at this point. They thought that when they crucified Christ that would be the end of him and they would be able to take over. But three days later Jesus arose from the grave and their dreams of grandure were shattered.

Now the third hindrance to the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant was the Ascension of Christ and the fifth cycle of discipline to the Jews. The Jews are scattered and Christ is in heaven and how is this thing going to ever work out? Well, Christ is going to return a second time to this earth and then the Davidic Covenant will be fulfilled. God keeps his word.

At the end of the Millennium, after the devil has had his turn and has gathered in his own, then a new heaven and a new earth will be brought forth, but this same land and location of the land promised to the Jews will be in the new earth, and even in the new earth God will keep his promise to the Jews to give them this land forever.

Now what is the personal application of this principle to our own lives? Just this-- that after we are saved we all commit a certain number of sins. For these sins God disciplines us, but he does not and cannot take away our salvation from us. The character of God stands behind his promise to us that no one can take us out of his hand.

ACTS 26:7 "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." This should read, "The twelve tribes earnestly serving God day and night" and it means that even after the cross they kept right on with their animal sacrifices, and this means they had rejected the cross. The cross occurred about 30 A.D. but Paul is here speaking in 60 A.D. and thirty years later those Jews were still going on with animal sacrifices. That was just 30 years too long. Once Christ died on the cross they didn't need any animal sacrifices. They had rejected Christ as the Messiah and the words here "hope to come" means that they were still looking for Christ to come.

ACTS 26:8 "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" This should read, "Why should it be judged unbelievable by you if God should raise the dead?" And the "if" is a first class condition and means that Paul was saying, "God has raised him from the dead."

ACTS 26:9 "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." This is Paul's reference to his early life. The words "I thought" really should read, "I made an assumption." So Paul assumed that he should make a practice of doing things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Remember that "Jesus of Nazareth" is the term the Jews used when they rejected him. You see, Jesus was from Bethlehem, not Nazareth, and he was from the Davidic line. But when his critics wanted to slap at him and ridicule him, they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." This is exactly the way Paul thought before his conversion, so he used the term "Jesus Of Nazareth."

ACTS 26:10 "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." Paul was indeed the most terrible persecutor Christianity ever had. He imprisoned many people and every time the Sanhedrin voted he threw down a black pebble and voted for their death. The language doesn't say, "I gave my voice against them" but it says, "I cast down my pebble against them."

ACTS 26:11 "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." This means that Paul took special trips outside of Jerusalem to arrest and kill Christians. "Compelling them to blaspheme" means that under pressure he forced many Christians to renounce their Christianity. But the most important phrase in this verse is "and being exceedingly mad against them." The word for mad comes from "emmainomai" and it means to be psychotic. He had so much scar tissue on his soul he actually had become psycho. He had gone mad against Christianity and was not acting as a normal person.

ACTS 26:12-13 "Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, 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." Paul had gotten so far off the trail God had to use abnormal means to deal with him. God hit him with a light that blinded him on the outside and penetrated to the inside. And Jesus actually had to say to Paul, "When you kill Christians you are hitting me."

In our next study we will see how Paul described his conversion experience to King Agrippa.