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Acts 28:11 - 28:31



Acts - Steve Gregg

In this presentation, Steve Gregg discusses the final chapters of the book of Acts, highlighting the kindness Paul and his companions received in Malta and Paul's message about the kingdom of God. Gregg explains the competition between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness, and how the new Israel is made up of faithful believers in Christ. The presentation concludes with uncertainty about the outcome of Paul's trial and the historical narrative of Christ's witness in preaching the kingdom of God.

Transcript

We're very near the end of the book of Acts. We've already gotten into chapter 28, the final chapter, but we have not finished it. We got through verse 10, which brings us through the period of time that Paul and those who were with him, who had been shipwrecked, were being hosted by the barbarians on Malta.

The barbarians treated them very kindly. Of course, they benefited from Paul being there too, because he healed virtually all their sicknesses on the island, the Bible says. I would point out a couple of things that Ron brought to my attention during the break.

I had heard one of these two things, but not both. And that is that, you know, it says that they cut the four anchors loose and left them in the sea when they were there at the place where the two seas meet. Ron was telling me that a Calvary Chapel pastor who was taking a tour of a group from the church in that region, they were on Malta, and there's a little museum there or something like that.

Over one corner, there's these four anchors. And apparently, they were found by a diver in the 1960s, who did not know what to think of them. They're just four anchors.

He brought them in, and they put them in the museum. They're old anchors. But he didn't know anything about the Bible story.

So he wasn't thinking, oh, these are the anchors that are in the Bible, you know. And actually, this pastor, this Calvary Chapel pastor actually talked to the diver himself and got information, found out the man totally inadvertently had discovered something that

seems to be another confirmation of the biblical story. These four anchors were found in that very region where they cut them loose and left them in the sea.

That's kind of a cool little story. And then another thing that Ron shared with me, I had heard this before, but I didn't bring it up in our last session just because I was rushing through. But Publius, the first man of the island, we remember his father was sick with the dysentery.

And he was the first person on the island that Paul healed before others came to be healed. And there is a known malady called Malta fever, which is a form of dysentery. It's not generally fatal, but it's a very uncomfortable dysentery that lasts for many months.

And it is caused by some kind of a microbe in goat's milk. And it wasn't until World War I, when British stationed troops in Malta, and their troops started getting sick, that I guess inquiry was made into where this was coming from. They found out that there's this particular ailment that is spread through goat's milk in Malta, and they call it Malta fever.

There's a good chance that this is what this man had, although it's hard to say that the same diseases were there 2,000 years ago as now. But Malta is fairly isolated. I mean, in the sense, at least the goats are.

I think people probably travel from Malta to other countries and so forth and pick up new things, but the goats probably don't. So it's very possible that what this man had 2,000 years ago on Malta was the same disease that's known today as Malta fever. All right.

Good points, Ron. Thank you for that information. Now, they stayed there for three months, and then the weather presumably got better.

It was still at this point pretty early to start sailing again, but they must have been in a hurry. Because generally speaking, sailors would not take ship again until March 10th, and it's not likely that three months in Malta brought them quite that far. It was sometime in October when they found themselves in the storm, and therefore it must have been late October that they found themselves shipwrecked in Malta.

Three months after that would not bring you so far as March. So the fact that they set sail three months later may have suggested that they were in a special hurry or that unseasonably mild weather had arrived and they didn't have very far to go the next leg of their journey. They had to sail to Cilicia.

I'm sorry, not Cilicia. That's where Paul came from. They had to sail to Sicily, which is an island south of the peninsula of Italy, and then from there they sailed to Regium, which is on the, we might say, the toe of Italy's mainland.

And these were relatively short trips, so apparently they didn't worry too much about the weather or the time of year. They just wanted to get where they were going. Now again,

I mentioned that they lost everything in the sea, so they spent three months without any of their goods or monies or anything that they had had when they left Caesarea.

So they must have been entirely supported by the locals in Malta, including their ship's fare to get all the way to wherever they had to go because they had no money. I also think it interesting that Luke, who was shipwrecked at this time, must not have had any documents with him. Some people think that Luke was writing the book of Luke while he was in Caesarea, those two years while Paul was in prison, and maybe even, you know, putting together some rough drafts of Acts.

But if he had written documents of Luke or any part of Acts at that time, they'd have been lost in the sea. If they weren't lost, they'd be ruined in the sea. So I have to assume that Luke actually wrote those books after he got to Rome and not prior to that.

Many scholars talk as though Luke was writing the book of Luke while he was in Caesarea, but he must have written from research. He did research while he was in Caesarea, no doubt, because much of the information in Acts and about Jesus must have come from some of those witnesses in Caesarea and Jerusalem and so forth that Luke had contact with. But when he wrote, it would have to be after the shipwreck because anything he would have written before the shipwreck would be lost in the sea, you know.

All right, so after three months, we sailed in an Alexandrian ship. The ship they had lost was an Alexandrian ship also, but there'd be many Alexandrian ships bringing wheat from Alexandria, Egypt to Rome. So there was no shortage.

And this Alexandrian ship probably had been stranded in Malta for the winter also and was eager to get its cargo all the way. So they were, maybe that's why they left early because the ship, it may have been that the ship was leaving at that time and they, it was their only, only option. So they found an Alexandrian ship whose figurehead was the twin brothers and it had wintered at the island as they did.

Now the twin brothers, this would be the, you know, the figure at the front of the ship you've seen from movies, these ancient ships that had maybe a mermaid or a unicorn or something carved on the prow of the ship. This one had the image of the two brothers. Now who are the two brothers? We don't need to know that to understand the Book of Acts, but just so you'll know, the two brothers are the two persons depicted in the image of the constellation Gemini.

Gemini is the twins and that's, it's a reference to these two brothers. These are, in the mythology of the Greeks, these were two sons of Zeus. Their names were, what were their names? I've got down here somewhere.

Castor and Pollux were their names. Castor, as in castor oil, c-a-s-t-o-r, and Pollux, p-o-l-l-u-x. These were the twin sons of Zeus and they were considered to be the patron gods of

sailors, of not, actually of navigation.

And if a sailor was at sea in a storm and they were able to catch a glimpse of the Gemini constellation, it was considered to be a good omen because the patron gods of navigation were revealing themselves to you there. It's a little bit like how Catholics have patron saints of different kinds of groups of people. So the Greeks had patron gods.

In fact, it's very much like that. Okay, verse 12, and landing at Syracuse, we stayed three days. Syracuse was the chief city of Sicily, so they left the island of Malta and got to Sicily, and they stayed three days there.

Nothing is said about what they did for three days there. It may be that they're continuing on the same ship and they had to unload their wares and load new wares there, hard to say. And after one day, the south wind blew, and the next day we came to Puteoli, which is further up the coast of Italy, the west coast of Italy, and we found brethren, and we're invited to stay with them seven days.

And so we went on to Rome. Now, Paul's a prisoner, but the brethren invited him to stay for seven days, and he's able to do that? That's interesting that the centurion would be willing to be delayed for seven days. Now, it's possible that we should understand that the centurion had other reasons for staying for seven days, and that the brethren invited Paul to visit them during that time.

I don't think Paul would be the one calling the shots in the itinerary as a prisoner. So it may be that the centurion had to, you know, reprovision or something, and it was going to be there for seven days, and during that time the brethren invited Paul to stay with them, and apparently he was allowed to do so. Remember, this particular centurion was very lenient with Paul and very accommodating to Paul, as this would show, and says, and so we went toward Rome.

This doesn't record them arriving at Rome in verse 14. They're just on their way to Rome in this manner. They get to Rome in verse 16.

Verse 15, and from there, when the brethren heard about us, they came to meet us as far as the Apii Forum and the Three Inns. Now, the Apii Forum is 43 miles from Rome, and the place that's called the Three Inns is 33 miles from Rome. Apparently, there were two groups of Christians from Rome who got wind of the fact that Paul was coming to their city on foot as a prisoner, and delegations of the church came out to meet him.

Some came out 33 miles, some went out further 43 miles to meet him, and when it says they came out to meet him, the word meet, the verb here that Luke uses, is found only two other places in the Bible. I'd like to show you where they are, because it gives you some idea of what this particular word means. These people came out to meet him.

One of the other places, the first place you find this word in the Bible, is in Matthew

chapter 25 and verse 1. Matthew 25, 1. It says, Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Okay, this word meet is the same word as the word used by Luke, referring to these brethren coming out to meet Paul. Now, what do these two uses have in common? Namely, the bridegroom is coming to the wedding.

The bridesmaids are there at the wedding location. They're waiting to go out and meet him and accompany him the remainder of the way. They're a welcoming committee, so to speak, welcoming the bridegroom and accompanying him on the final leg of his trip to the bride's house.

Likewise, those who met Paul, they come out from Rome to meet him, like a welcoming committee, and then they accompany him the way back. So meeting here has to do with coming out as a welcoming group, so that the person they're meeting will not finish his trip alone, but will be accompanied. The third and final place that you find this word in the scripture you might already know is 1 Thessalonians 4. In 1 Thessalonians 4, verse 16 and 17, it says, For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, and the voice of an archangel, and the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. Now this is the same word, meet. Only three times in the Bible, two times very clearly, it speaks of a welcoming committee coming out to meet somebody who's on a journey and to finish the journey with them.

That is, the welcoming committee meets them and turns around and returns to where they started with the person they're meeting. Now the Bible says that when Jesus comes, the living saints, after the dead saints have risen, the living saints will rise to meet the Lord in the air. Possibly the most popular view about the rapture in the modern American church is that we will meet the Lord in the air and then he will turn around and go back to heaven and take us up to heaven.

We'll have the wedding supper of the Lamb. This is the most common view you hear in popular evangelical teaching, that we meet the Lord in the air and then he takes us back to heaven. But that's not what the word usually means.

It usually means you go to meet him and you accompany him the remainder of the way. Now I've heard some who take the more popular view mocking this view. I have one book by Tim LaHaye, who is like a huge advocate of the pre-tribulation rapture.

He believes that the church will be raptured and go to heaven for seven years with Jesus at the rapture, then come back at the end of the tribulation. He speaks of the alternative view where someone goes up to meet the Lord and then comes down again. He calls it the elevator view.

You take the elevator up and you take the elevator down or people have the yo-yo view. This is their way of trying to mock this idea. However, they don't realize that their idea is as much an elevator or yo-yo as is the one they're mocking.

They're saying Jesus comes down and goes back up. Somebody goes up and comes down or someone comes down and goes up. I mean there's somebody reverses direction.

It's not that Jesus comes all the way to earth and we pass him going up to heaven. There's a meeting here and somebody turns around and goes back where they came from. Since it is we who rise to meet the Lord in the air, it is almost certain that we are the ones who return to earth with him.

It's just an interesting fact of this particular word, which occurs only three times. In the other two occasions, it's very clear that the persons doing the meeting are a welcoming group who then continue the rest of the way. That's what it says in Acts 28 15.

When the brethren in Rome heard about us, they came out to meet us, certainly to accompany them on the way back to Rome. Now, when we came to Rome, verse 16, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him. Now, it's not known whether this captain of the guard who would have been stationed in Rome and would not know Paul, whether he was just naturally as kindly disposed toward Paul as the centurion was, or whether the centurion, you know, made some recommendations when he turned Paul over to him and said this is not a dangerous prisoner here.

This guy is probably not even guilty of anything. He's repealed to Caesar, so procedure requires that he go to Caesar, but you know, you don't have to worry about it. I wouldn't be surprised if the centurion had given Paul a good recommendation when he turned him over to the local Roman authorities.

In any case, we find that the local Roman authorities treated Paul with leniency also, as the centurion also had before him. So, Paul was able to dwell by himself in a private dwelling, though of course there had to be a guard there. He couldn't just be a free man, and it came to pass after three days that Paul called the leaders of the Jews together.

So, when they had come together, he said to them, men and brethren, though I have 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. Now, he's trying to familiarize them with his case. They apparently don't know who he is.

They know what Christianity is. They've heard of that. We'll find that they say so, and they haven't heard good things about it, but they apparently don't know anything about Paul, so he's bringing them up to speed.

Now, it's obvious he's saying the Jews in Jerusalem delivered me over to the Romans as a prisoner, which would immediately cause the Jews in Rome to say, well, then you must have done something wrong against our laws. He says, no, it's in spite of the fact I didn't do anything against our laws, in spite of the fact that I've done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered by those in Jerusalem to Romans as a prisoner, who, that's the Romans, when they had examined me, wanted to let me go because there was no cause for putting me to death, but when the Jews spoke against it, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, not that I had anything of which to accuse my nation. You know, I appealed to Caesar not because I wanted to bring some case against the Jews.

I was just doing it to save my own skin. I'm not doing it to bring any charges against our brethren here. He's trying to make it clear.

I'm not an enemy of Jews. I'm not trying to use the legal system or pit the Romans against our Jewish country. I'm just, this is all defensive action on my part.

I'm just trying to parry the actions of the Jews who are trying to kill me. Now, it's interesting. He says in verse 18 that the Romans had wanted to let him go, but it says in verse 19, but when the Jews spoke against it, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar.

So the Romans wanted to let him go, but the Jews didn't let them. This particular concept is found also in Peter's preaching when speaking about Jesus. In Acts 3.13, Peter is preaching in Jerusalem and he says, the God of Abraham, Isaac, et cetera, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate when he was determined to let him go.

So just as Pilate was determined to let Jesus go, but he was blackmailed and persuaded by the Jews to do otherwise. Paul says, the Romans wanted to let me go. They wanted to let Jesus go.

They want to let me go. But in both cases, the Jews prevailed to go against the justice, which the Roman courts acknowledge because Pilate, who wanted to let Jesus go, announced three times, the man is innocent. I find no fault in him.

I mean, you bring the guy to the judge and the judge says, I decree he's innocent. That should be the end of it. But the Jews didn't like that verdict.

And so they pressured Pilate. And that was the same thing that happened with the Roman courts that Paul was subjected to. All the Romans who examined him said, you know, this guy hasn't done anything wrong.

If he had appealed to Caesar, we could release him. But the Jews wouldn't let them do so. And it was to please and do a favor to the Jews that they kept Paul in prison.

So this contrast between Roman justice, which is prepared to let him go, as in the case of Jesus, is there between Jesus and Paul, there's this parallel of this situation. Verse 20, for this reason, therefore, I have called for you to see you and speak to you, because for the hope of Israel, I am bound with his chain. Paul has many times referred to the hope of Israel as he's made his defense in different situations.

He keeps referring to the hope of Israel. I'm kind of looking back to see where the first instance might have been. Is that the first time? That's true.

Yeah. I have hope in God. 24:15.

I have hope in God, which they themselves accept that there will be a resurrection of the dead. And there are several other references to he's referring to the Jewish hope and his chapter 26, six. And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers.

And he says the promise of our 12 tribes earnestly serving God night and day that they hope to obtain. So he refers to this also here as the hope of Israel in 24:15, in 23, six, and now again, in 28, 20, I'm on trial for the hope of Israel. I'm bound because of the hope of Israel.

Now, when Paul says the hope of Israel, he is speaking of the resurrection of the dead. He makes it very clear in some of those earlier references, but it's essentially the resurrection of Jesus from the dead that has got him into trouble. As I said earlier, he did get the Sadducees mad at him by saying, I believe in the resurrection of the dead.

And that's simply because the Sadducees didn't believe in any resurrection of the dead. But Paul was using that to divide the council when he said that. His real trial, he wasn't arrested because he believed generally in the resurrection of the dead.

All the Pharisees believed in that and they weren't on trial. It was not illegal. It wasn't even heretical in the Jewish faith to believe in the resurrection of the dead, though not all Jews believed in it.

It was an accepted option, but it's because of his belief that Jesus rose from the dead in particular, which is Jesus is the hope of Israel and his resurrection being the Messiah, being set at the right hand of God by the virtue of his resurrected life. The kingdom of God, with Jesus reigning, that's the hope of Israel. And we're going to see that twice in the remaining verses of Acts, Paul refers to his message or Luke refers to Paul's message as being about the kingdom of God.

That's the hope of Israel. Israel is hoping for the to become king. And this occurred through the resurrection of Jesus and his exaltation to the right hand of God.

So Paul sees his whole message. The thing that's so controversial, the thing that's gotten

him into trouble is just really standing by the thing that the Jews have always hoped for and that the scriptures always said would happen. Verse 21, And they said to him, We neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren who came reported or spoken any evil of you.

But we desire to hear from you what you think for concerning this sect. We know that it is spoken against everywhere. Now it's interesting they had received no letters from Jerusalem because the people of Jerusalem who are trying to convict Paul, no doubt would be interested in seeing him convicted even after he was transferred to Rome.

You would think they would have sent letters to their companions or their counterparts in Rome say, watch out for this guy. He's dangerous. Try to kill him if you can.

You know, we've tried here. We didn't, weren't able to do it. Maybe you can do what we failed to do.

There were no letters like that sent or if they were sent, they didn't get there. Maybe they were on the ship. Who knows? But they never arrived if they were ever sent.

Now, whether Jews ever did show up from Jerusalem to Rome after this point and participate in the trial of Paul when he stood before Nero, we don't know. We don't have record of that trial, but we do know that at this point, these Jews were kind of, they didn't have their guard up about Paul. They said, we're interested in hearing what you think.

Like to hear your ideas. Now he said, they said, we have heard about this act of yours, this Christian thing, this the way we've heard about it. But all we know about it is it's always spoken evil of everywhere.

Now they may be saying less than what they really know because Christianity had been in Rome for a long time. In fact, some years earlier, four years, yeah, at least maybe more like seven years earlier, the emperor Claudius had banished the Jews from Rome. These very Jews most likely had been banished from Rome just less than a decade earlier by the emperor because of Jesus, because of Christianity.

Suetonius says that it was because of riots and troubles that were stirred up by Crestus or over Crestus, which scholars take to be a reference to Christ. We know that where Paul went, Jews caused troubles with the Christians and with Paul in particular, but Paul hadn't even been to Rome and apparently the Jews and the Christians had been going at it in such a degree that Claudius just said, get all these people out of Rome, you know, send them out. And that's why Priscilla and Nicola had left Rome and gone to Corinth originally.

They were back in Rome now, by the way, but they had left when Claudius made that decree. Now these people, these Jews here, unless they were very young and they probably weren't because they were the leaders of the Jews, they're probably old men,

they probably had been banned from Rome themselves by Claudius and they knew very well that it was because of problems between the Jews and the Christian community. So they may be pretending to be more ignorant than they are.

It's possible and maybe even reasonable to suggest that the Jews learned their lesson by being banished from Rome and they weren't going to cause any more trouble. We find these Jews are not causing any trouble for Paul. They're not against him.

They're interested in hearing what he has to say. They want to know his arguments. They do know about Christianity and they don't say anything good about it.

They know it's been troublesome. It's evil spoken of everywhere, but it may be that they were calmer about it than maybe they've been forced to be more calm about it because they didn't want to be banished from Rome again. So who knows, they might be willing to take a more cool-headed approach to listening to what Paul had to say and we find that when Paul does speak, some of them believe what he says, though some don't as we shall see.

Verse 23, so when they had appointed him a day, they made an appointment for him to speak to them, many came to him at his lodging to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the law of Moses and the prophets from morning till evening. So he had one full day with them from morning to evening where he spent the whole time expounding the law and the prophets concerning Jesus and solemnly declaring to them, testifying about the kingdom of God. Now it doesn't say what he said about the kingdom of God, but of course you know, what we think he said about it would have a lot to do with what we think the kingdom of God is, because there's unfortunately a great number of views about the kingdom of God in the church.

Although it is the main subject about which Jesus preached and the apostles, the church has still confusion about the subject. A lot of people think the kingdom of God just is a reference to heaven. They think it's where we go when we die if we're Christians, we go to the kingdom, but that certainly doesn't fit the way it's talked about in the Bible.

Jesus talked about the kingdom as something that's got a little mustard seed that grows into a big tree or like some leaven that's put in a lump of dough or like a field growing wheat and tares together side by side. Certainly none of those things are a description of heaven or an afterlife. Daniel had spoken of the kingdom of God like a stone in Daniel chapter 2 that strikes the image and grows into a great mountain to fill the earth.

So Daniel had described the kingdom of God as an earthly phenomenon that fills the earth and Jesus didn't deny that at all. Certainly Jesus said my kingdom is not of this world when he spoke to Pilate in John 18 36, but to say it's not of this world is not saying it's on another planet or in another place. After all we are not of this world but we are in

the world and his kingdom was not of this world.

It was truly in the world though because he had told the Pharisees earlier the kingdom of God is in your midst. It's among you. The kingdom has overtaken you.

If I'm casting out demons by the spirit of God then the kingdom has overtaken you. The kingdom is not a heavenly phenomenon but an earthly one because Jesus said when you pray say your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

The coming of the kingdom. It's not that the kingdom isn't somewhere where we go. It's something that comes.

Where? Well it results in God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven. So clearly to identify the kingdom with heaven doesn't make much sense but of course we know from the old testament the kingdom of God was what Israel was. They were God's kingdom.

That's what he told them when he established him as a nation at Mount Sinai. If you obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant you'll be a peculiar treasure to me and a kingdom unto me of priests. So Israel the nation was God's nation.

God's kingdom. He was the king. They were the nation.

His nation. His subjects on earth. During the time of the judges there was a temptation on the part of the Israelites to appoint some of the judges as kings.

Gideon for example. They said rule over us you and your son rule over us too and your son's son. And Gideon said I will not rule over you neither will my son rule over you.

The Lord will rule over you. Israel was God's kingdom. They were his kingdom.

He was their king. They didn't need an earthly king because they had a king in heaven ruling over them as they were on earth. Later they came to Samuel and said give us a king like all the nations have.

God did not like that decision. He accommodated it. He said give them what they want.

They haven't rejected you Samuel. They've rejected me that I should not reign over them. God wanted to be their only king.

They were a nation on earth with a king in heaven. A kingdom from heaven. A kingdom not of the world but in the world.

However their status as the kingdom of God was interrupted by their rejection of him. And eventually they were sent away into Babylon and they never were a sovereign nation again. After the Babylonian exile they came back some of them and they built their temple and they had a nation but they weren't sovereign.

They were under the Persians then they were under the Greeks then they were under the Romans and then they were destroyed as a nation under the Romans. So after the Babylonian exile Israel never was a sovereign nation again under God. They were a remnant of people who worshiped God but God had promised that he was going to restore the kingdom to Israel.

This was the hope of the Jews. That's why the disciples just before Jesus ascended said will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel. That was the Jewish hope that Israel would again get to be the kingdom of God on earth.

Now as it turns out Jesus said to the Jews at the end of the parable of the vine dressers and the vineyard. He said to them in Matthew 21 I think it's verse 43. He said the kingdom of God is taken from you and given to a nation that will bring forth the fruits of it.

In other words the kingdom of God would still be a nation of God's people but it's taken from Israel. It's taken from you and given to another nation that will bear forth the fruits of the kingdom. And of course Peter tells us in 1st Peter 2 verses 9 and 10.

You, he's writing to Christians, you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. All the terms that actually were applied to the nation of Israel in the old testament Peter applies them to the church. In fact the very word church was applied to Israel in the Old Testament.

The Greek word church is ecclesia. In the Old Testament this was used frequently in the Septuagint as a reference to the congregation of Israel. They were the they were the assembly of Yahweh.

They were the called out ones. But the early Christians started calling themselves by that name. They were the new Israel.

They were the new ecclesia. And so those who are subject to God and honor him as king on earth are his kingdom. But of course Jesus was appointed king and now the kingdom is defined by those who recognize his kingship.

He is king at the right hand of God. He has sat down on his throne or his father's throne. He says that in Revelation chapter 3 in verse 21.

He says to him that overcomes I will grant sit with me on my throne even as I have overcome and I have seated myself on my father's throne. Jesus is enthroned and Paul says in 1st Corinthians 15 he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. How are his enemies put under his feet? Mostly by conversion.

Paul in 2nd Corinthians I believe it's chapter 2 if I'm not mistaken speaks about how we are the fruits of Christ's triumph. He has conquered us. We are being led forth in his

procession of triumph as prisoners.

We have been taken voluntarily of course. We have submitted voluntarily to his rule but we are now his. We were on the other side before.

Now we've come over to his side. His kingdom grows at the expense of the kingdom of darkness. There's two kingdoms in competition.

Gods and the devils. That's why Jesus said when he cast out demons and they said you're doing it by Beelzebub. He said if satan's casting out satan then his kingdom will not stand but if I'm casting out demons by the spirit of God then the kingdom of God has come.

There's a kingdom of satan which could not stand if satan was casting out satan and there's a kingdom of God that came exhibited in the casting out of demons Jesus said by the spirit of God. So what the understanding of the kingdom is in the bible that Jesus started a movement in which he is the sovereign. He is the king and just as God told Israel at Mount Sinai if you obey my voice and keep my covenant you'll be my kingdom.

Jesus in a sense says the same to his disciples. If you do you know if you keep my words you're my disciples and my disciples are my subjects. The disciples are collectively God's kingdom and this kingdom as Daniel said started small like a stone but it grows into a great mountain to fill the earth or Jesus called it a mustard seed.

Starts out small and grows big. The idea is that when Jesus was here he only had a small group of followers but it has become immense through the last 2,000 years. It spreads through evangelism.

It spreads through church planting. It spreads through making disciples of all nations and his kingdom expands that way. That's why when the disciples said will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel he kind of dodged the question a little bit but he said but listen let me tell you what to do.

When you receive power and the Holy Spirit comes upon you you'll be my witnesses to Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. Now he didn't say it in so many words but that's the way that the kingdom was going to be restored to the true Israel. The true remnant of Israel and the Gentiles that God is allowed to be grafted in among them on the olive tree.

You see the olive tree was Israel as Paul says in Romans 11 16 and following and the unbelieving Jews have been removed from the tree. They're not part of Israel anymore but the believing Jews are branches that remain on the tree. The remnant of Israel received Christ and remained the true Israel.

In a sense the remnant has always been the true Israel even the old testament times. In

the old testament there were two kinds of ways of speaking of Israel. There was the remnant who were faithful who were in fact what all the nation was supposed to be in principle or in theory and then there was the ethnic nation which was mostly worshippers of Baal and Moloch a lot of the time.

There's always a remnant seven thousand that did not bow the knee to Baal that were the true Israel and in Jesus' day they recognized the messiah and they became his followers and they became the faithful remnant. The rest as Paul says were lopped off of the tree. They're no longer part of it but Gentiles through faith have been lopped have been grafted onto the tree.

So we have an Israel that's made up of believing Jewish branches and believing Gentile branches. When you put those in one organism it's the same organism Jesus talked about when he said I'm the vine and you're the branches. If you abide in me you bear much fruit.

Remember he the kingdom was given to a nation to bear the fruits of it and so I mean this is the theme from exodus to the end of the bible of the kingdom of God. These are the things of the kingdom that Paul spoke all day to them about also pointing out that Jesus is that king showing from this law and the prophets that Jesus is the anointed king and therefore the ramifications of that are had to do with his kingdom which Paul was promoting and hoping they would become a part of. Verse 24 and some of the Jewish leaders that he'd spoken to about this some of them were persuaded by these things which were spoken and some disbelieved.

So as usual there's some in the group that think he's right some think he's not right. The ones who did believe of course they became part of that kingdom we assume we assume they got baptized became part of the movement. So when they did not agree among themselves they departed after Paul had said one word and this word was mostly directed to the unbelieving element.

There were some who believed him but some didn't and his final parting shot to them was largely to those who were disbelieving his testimony. He said the Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers saying go to this people and say hearing you will hear and shall not understand seeing you will see and not perceive for the heart of this people has grown dull and their ears are hard of hearing and their eyes they have closed lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears lest they should understand with their heart and turn so that I would heal them. There's an element of irony in this statement it's in Isaiah chapter six it's quoted fairly often actually in the new testament.

Jesus quoted it when the disciples came to him in Matthew 13 and Mark 4 and in Luke 8 parallels where they came to Jesus said why do you speak in parables and he said well because it's given to you the disciples to know the secrets of the kingdom of God but to

them it's not given and in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled and he quotes this very passage that they have eyes they but they can't see or perceive they have ears they don't hear or understand and this is so that they won't believe and be healed or converted. Now the onus is really on them it's like saying that God forbid that they would want to be healed I mean that's a sarcastic suggestion you know I mean they could be healed but that's the last thing they'd want of course so they have to close their ears and they have to hide their eyes so they don't see and hear and understand and this is the last thing that these Jewish leaders heard that day from Paul and we have a summary of Paul's well there's a little more there's a little more than just the quote he he comments on the quote he says therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles and they will hear it and when he had said these words the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves so they some agreed some didn't and even as they left they were still arguing among themselves and and apparently Luke seems to suggest that after they were out of the building they were still having a big dispute over it how that turned out we don't know then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house and received all who came to him now how he paid the rent we don't know but Paul lived by faith when he couldn't work he might have been working the Romans might have let him make some tents and make a living there and repay his own rent that's possible or it may be that he received gifts since as a prisoner he might have been restricted in his work we know Paul wrote Philippians from prison probably this imprisonment in Rome and he mentions to the Philippians that they had sent him offerings twice when he was in Thessalonica earlier and that they'd recently sent another one to him in Rome that's what the latter part of Philippians 4 is discussing he's saying thanks for the gift but that may be how he paid his rent from people like the Philippians sending him donations possibly we know he received some because he mentions it look is now during this imprisonment Paul wrote what we call the prison epistles now I'm speaking from the traditional view here it is generally believed that it was the Rome first Roman imprisonment in which Paul wrote these epistles what are they they are Ephesians Philippians Colossians and Philemon now Philemon is written to an individual who lived in Colossae so the book of Colossians and Philemon went to the same destination Ephesians some people think Ephesians was not written just to the church of Ephesus but might have been a circular epistle to the churches of Asia this is because there are manuscripts of Ephesians in which verse one of chapter one does not mention Ephesus if you look in your bible Ephesians 1:1 he says to all the saints in Ephesus but some issues don't say in Ephesus but just all the saints and so some feel that Ephesians came to be associated with Ephesus and someone later put in the words in Ephesus because that's where the epistle landed and was preserved but that it might have been a more general epistle there's no personal greetings or anything in Ephesians which is unusual so it might have been just a general epistle to all the churches in Asia in any case the idea that was written from Rome is the general view I say the general view because there are some who disagree some think the prison epistles were actually written by Paul from Caesarea when he was imprisoned there for two years these

epistles all mentioned that he was a prisoner so that's why they're called prison epistles he doesn't say exactly where he was a prisoner now the evidence in Philippians seems to point toward him being a prisoner in Rome because he says that through his imprisonment Philippians 1:13 says it has become evident to the whole palace guard which be the praetorian guard that might change during Christ and so his testimony in prison has reached the praetorian guard which normally would be associated with Rome also in chapter 4 of Philippians Paul sends greetings and he says especially in chapter 4 verse 22 he says especially those who are of Caesar's household he says all the saints greet you especially those of Caesar's household Caesar lived in Rome and his household was probably there it is pointed out that there was uh you know a praetorian guard in Caesarea and Caesar's household might simply refer to his members of his administration but the more natural way to understand it is that Paul wrote Philippians from Rome and if Philippians then probably Ephesians and Colossians too NT Wright and some others believe that Colossians may have been written from an imprisonment in Ephesus about which we do not read why would we think so well Paul in second Corinthians mentions that he was imprisoned oft frequently imprisoned he had many imprisonments not all of them are recorded in Acts since he was three years in Ephesus it is thought perhaps and by the way that's where he said he fought wild beasts and he despaired of his life he had tremendous persecution in Ephesus he may have spent some time in jail there some feel he may have written the uh the book of Colossians and Philemon from there why only because Philemon's slave Onesimus had run away from Colossae and run into Paul and it is suggested if he'd gone all the way to Rome and Paul was imprisoned there when Onesimus came the likelihood would be very slight that in such a large town you know Onesimus would happen to run into the guy who had led his master Philemon toward but providentially it could have happened but more than that Paul talks about the messenger from Colossae Epaphras coming to Ephesus and going back to Colossae and some there's quite a bit of traveling back and forth or not not to Ephesus but to wherever Paul was and the suggestion is that if there was that much travel between Colossae and Rome that'd be that'd be a lot of travel but between Colossae and Ephesus would be very natural they're both in Asia so some feel and I said N.T. Wright is among them that Paul wrote uh at least Colossians and Philemon from uh Ephesus but another point about that is that Paul tells Philemon who is in Colossae that he hopes to be released and join him says prepare a room for me I hope to visit you now when Paul was in Rome it's not likely that he ever intended to go back to Asia and visit Colossae again but when he's in Ephesus he might have so there's these are not extremely important things all I'm saying is there are different theories about where Paul was when he wrote his prison epistles was he in Caesarea in prison was he in Ephesus in prison or in Rome the long-standing tradition is that it was in Rome and that it was this imprisonment of which we read at the end of Acts and we read there Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house and received all who came to him preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concerned the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence no one forbidding him so the Romans let him preach openly no one stopped

him he was under house arrest he was a prisoner after all but he was in his own home no doubt a soldier was with him at all times but he could have any guests he wanted to he obviously had the Jewish leaders over for a whole day and he probably had many other guests over time and every time he did he was preaching the kingdom of God and the things about Jesus Christ and those two years almost certainly bring us to the point in time when Luke wrote this as I said in our introduction some people think Acts was written later but if it was if Luke wrote Acts after Paul died he certainly would have recorded the death of Paul. Paul is thought to have died in 67 AD with along with Peter in Rome.

Nero committed suicide in 68 so Paul and Peter didn't die any later than 68 because Nero killed them and he died himself that year but Paul arrived in Rome in 60 AD that can be calculated with fair amount of certainty and if he was there for two years in his own private house that was 62 AD at the end of that period now if he was if he was there any longer than two years Luke didn't know about it or he would have said so if he was there for example for three years Luke wouldn't say he was there for two years he'd say he was there for three years obviously two years is the outside of what Luke knows about if he knew about further time he would have mentioned it he wouldn't have restricted it to and yet it must not be before that two years was over else Luke wouldn't know that either he wouldn't know that it was gonna be two years it seems like this statement about the two years makes it an exact indicator of the time that Luke wrote this 62 AD that means the book of Luke was earlier because it was this was his second one so we have early records obviously 62 is pretty early on Paul was still living now Luke doesn't tell us how it turned out for Paul remember when the book of Acts closes Paul is waiting to go on trial before Nero there is a slight possibility he'll be put to death if Nero is in a bad mood or that he'll be released if Nero is just on this occasion Nero sometimes was sometimes wasn't so Paul's life and his prospects are very uncertain at the time this closes another reason to be quite sure that Luke didn't write this after Paul's trial because he would have told us the outcome he spends the last half of his book talking about Paul and the last quarter of it talking about Paul's trials and we're certainly the reader is expected to wonder what how did this turn out we've had frustration after frustration he should have been released from Felix but then Felix leaves him bound he should have been released from Festus but because of his appeal to Caesar has to go to Rome the reader is desperately wanting to know what happened in the end here to Paul and Luke doesn't tell us which can only be because Luke himself didn't know at the time that this was written but it's clear that he wrote this very optimistically he writes he says hey no one's he was preaching anyone he was free to preach no one was stopping him it's it's a very upbeat kind of an ending rather than a morose ending and this suggests also evidence that Nero had not yet begun his horrible persecution of the church in Rome which began in 64 another indicator that this was written before that time because if Nero was chasing out Christians and they're hiding and stuff like that and Luke was writing him but those circumstances and Paul's still alive

and so forth you'd think that there'd be some reflection rather than this rather cheerful ending to the book a very positive optimistic ending now there is evidence elsewhere in scripture that Paul did stand before Nero and was released from prison and traveled again that evidence largely comes from the book of second Timothy which is the the latest book that Paul wrote in his lifetime his very last book was second Timothy and he does mention to Timothy certain things from his past that Timothy was aware of but we aren't necessarily aware of there's there are places like he mentions that he went to Neapolis and he went to somewhere else he left he left Timothy in Ephesus and Titus was left in Crete we don't we don't read of Paul ever going to Crete as a missionary only as a prisoner he didn't leave Titus there certainly on his ship ride to Rome there are places mentioned in the pastoral epistles which are Timothy and Titus that mention Paul being places and doing things in places that we don't have any evidence that Paul was ever there in the book of Acts which means there must have been other travels later and he does make a statement in second Timothy 4 in verse 16 near the end of second Timothy at my first defense no one stood with me but all forsook me may it not be charged against them now he's writing from prison when he wrote second Timothy he calls himself a prisoner again he's in he's in bond so he's a prisoner but traditionally this is his second Roman imprisonment which of course Acts knows nothing about because it was written too early to know about it in Acts the book closes with Paul's first Roman imprisonment and he's in prison when he writes second Timothy but he speaks of an earlier defense that he'd he'd been on trial before probably his first hearing before Nero which is not recorded in Acts but happened after the close of the book of Acts he says at my first defense no one stood with me but all forsook me may it not be charged against them but the Lord stood with me and strengthened me so that the message might be preached fully through me and that all the Gentiles might hear and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion he says at his first trial he was delivered from the mouth of the lion certainly that suggests he was acquitted and released whether the mouth of the lion is a figure of speech for Nero as a lion who could have destroyed him and consumed him or whether he's talking about literally being thrown to the lions if Nero had condemned him he may well have been consigned to the realms of the gladiators and others had to fight the wild beasts and uh and could well have died that way in any case Paul speaks in Second Timothy of an earlier trial in which he was delivered and this is thought by most conservative scholars to mean that after the close of the book of Acts Paul did stand before Nero and he was acquitted and traveled more at that time he left Timothy in Ephesus he left Titus and Crete and what some other places that are mentioned in the pastoral epistles and then he was captured again later on when when Nero began to formally persecute the church Paul was then arrested and imprisoned and according to tradition did not get out of that one alive but rather that he was executed by being beheaded these are very strong traditions from the early church and so even though the book of Acts doesn't take us quite so far in the life of Paul it would appear that Paul after the close of the book of Acts lived perhaps another five years during which he had two trials one from which he was released to travel more and the second one which followed

his writing of Second Timothy in which he was actually killed as a martyr and so that is that we run out of time for our study of Acts which in these latter chapters is largely a study of Paul but we see that the book of Acts closes with Christ's witness in Rome preaching the kingdom of God it says you know the the historical narratives of the New Testament began with a witness John the Baptist preaching the kingdom of God and then Jesus preaching the kingdom of God then the apostles preaching the kingdom of God and now the book the historical record of the New Testament ends with Paul preaching the kingdom of God we see that the whole of the historical narrative from the beginning of John the Baptist ministry to the end of the recorded ministry of Paul they're bracketed by this one theme the kingdom of God so you know this is obviously something that is the main message of the Christian faith all right so we'll end there and congratulations on completing this set of lectures through the book of Acts