



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Acts of the Apostles

Chapter 26

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Introduction

In This Chapter We will Examine:

- St. Paul's defense before King Agrippa
- St. Paul's question on belief of the prophets to Agrippa
- King Agrippa, Festus, and others in deliberation on St. Paul

St. Paul's Early Life (26:1-11)



St. Paul as a Jew – Before His Conversion (1-11)

- King Agrippa gave St. Paul permission to speak for himself
- Agrippa had been brought up in the Jewish religion, professed to be a steadfast guardian of the temple, and hence was well versed in all the Jewish customs
- He was therefore competent to be a judge of an accusation of treason to the religion and law of their forefathers
- St. Paul began by acknowledging that Agrippa was "expert" in the Jewish customs and questions about the Jews

St. Paul's Early Life (26:1-11)



- St. Paul felt it a privilege to defend himself before one who was prepared to decide whether his preaching was contrary to Moses and the prophets, or, on the other hand, a fulfillment of them
- This great occasion (Ac 25:23) gave St. Paul a great opportunity
- Instead of using it to defend himself, he preached the gospel to that great audience
- His address (Ac 26:2-23) is a masterpiece
- St. Paul humbled himself and said, "please listen patiently" to my defense

St. Paul's Early Life (26:1-11)



- St. Paul told of his former life as a Jew/Pharisee
- St. Paul had spent his early life in Jerusalem - all Jews knew this
- How would "all the Jews" know his "manner of life from ... youth"?
- St. Paul is referring to the Jews in the Sanhedrin who accused him
- They knew St. Paul from his youth because he was "brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), one of the most respected members of the Sanhedrin and "a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people" (Acts 5:34)
- He was a member of the strictest sect, the Pharisees

St. Paul's Early Life (26:1-11)



- Remember that Agrippa knew the difference between a Pharisee and a Sadducee
- The new Roman Governor Festus probably didn't know the difference yet
- This simple statement just shows that the speech is personally geared toward Agrippa and not the Roman Governor
- St. Paul focuses most of his time on trying to persuade Agrippa to Christianity
- St. Paul noted that he was being judged for the "hope of the promise made by God to our fathers"
- St. Paul reiterated that this was the accusation - this "hope"

St. Paul's Early Life (26:1-11)



- This promise was the hope of Israel
- The twelve tribes, in their constant, never-ending service of God, hoped that they would enjoy the fulfillment of the promise
- St. Paul asked Agrippa, "Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?"
- This hope of Israel involved the resurrection of Christ
- This, Moses and the prophets taught
- His countrymen accepted Moses and the prophets, but denied the resurrection as a thing incredible
- It was for this hope's sake, of a risen Redeemer, that he was called in question

St. Paul's Early Life (26:1-11)



- In order to show his zeal for Judaism, he describes his course as a persecutor
- He acknowledged, that while he continued a Pharisee, he was a bitter enemy to Christianity
- He was thoroughly conscientious then in opposing Christ
- St. Paul originally thought he should act contrary to Jesus
- St. Paul cast Christians in prison, voted for their deaths, punished them, terrified them into denying Jesus
- He even persecuted them to foreign cities; of these Damascus was one (Ac 9:2)
- "I cast my vote against them", he may have been a member of the Jewish High Council (Sanhedrin) at one time

St. Paul's Early Life (26:1-11)



- Those who have been most strict in their conduct before conversion, will afterwards see abundant reason for humbling themselves, even on account of things which they then thought ought to have been done

St. Paul Recounts His Conversion (26:12-18)



St. Paul Told of the Lord's Appearance on the Damascus Road (12-18)

- While St. Paul was engaged in persecuting Christians, he journeyed on the road to Damascus
- At midday a bright light shone on him and his companions
- They all fell to the ground
- The Lord then spoke to St. Paul in the Hebrew language
- A "goad" is a spike object, often on the end of stick
- It was used to get mules to move, the same way a cowboy has spurs
- On chariots, they had goads behind the horses to prevent them from back-kicking the passenger

St. Paul Recounts His Conversion (26:12-18)



- "To kick against the goads" is a painful thing for an animal
- If the horse or mule is stubborn, and doesn't want to cooperate, the animal back kicks and "gets the goad"
- The Lord identified Himself as Jesus
- The Lord told St. Paul of the purpose of appearing: to make him a minister and witness of the things he had seen and of the things that would be revealed to him
- St. Paul was sent by the Lord to the Gentiles, to open their eyes that they may receive forgiveness of sins
- To open their eyes - To be the instrument of informing their understanding in the things of God
- To turn them from darkness to light - From heathenism and superstition to the knowledge and worship of the true God

St. Paul Recounts His Conversion (26:12-18)



- The blessed Gospel of Christ is the means of bringing the soul from this state of spiritual darkness and wretchedness to the light and liberty of the children of God; and thus they are brought from under the power and authority of Satan, to be under the power and authority of God
- The mission of St. Paul to the Gentiles is described as being a part of the Lord's communication
- In order that he might be a minister and a witness
- It was needful that the apostle of the Gentiles should see Christ
- He must be a witness that the Lord had risen

St. Paul Recounts His Conversion (26:12-18)



- He was chosen for this work before conversion, because he was honest, deeply conscientious, and possessed the great qualities that were needful to fit him for the most important work ever assigned to a man
- This is the third account of St. Paul's conversion
- The first being in Ac 9:3-18
- The second in Ac 22:4-16
- There are a few new details given here:
 - (1) The over-powering glory of the Lord is specially dwelt upon here;
 - (2) the voice heard was in the Hebrew language

St. Paul's Post-Conversion Life (26:19-23)



St. Paul Proclaimed the Light to Those in Darkness (19-23)

- St. Paul told Agrippa that he had to be obedient to the heavenly Vision
- He could still have disobeyed
- His will was free, but he could only act in good conscience by obeying Christ
- He did not disbelieve what Christ said, nor was he disobedient to the orders he gave, but immediately set about the work he called him to, without consulting flesh and blood; see Galatians 1:16
- He declared the Gospel in Damascus, Jerusalem, Judea, and then to the Gentiles



St. Paul's Post-Conversion Life (26:19-23)

- St. Paul told the Gentiles to "repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance"
- He preached a new life
- He asked them to be deeply humbled for their past iniquities, and turn to God as their Judge and Savior, avoiding all idolatry and all sin; and thus do works that reflect true repentance
- There are millions of people who "say" they are Christians, but the question becomes "Have they ever acted upon their faith?"
- St. Paul said for these things the Jews seized him at the temple and tried to kill him



St. Paul's Post-Conversion Life (26:19-23)

- St. Paul recognized that God had helped him both to preach the Gospel, and to escape danger; for he had delivered him many times both from Jews and Gentiles, according to his promise, Acts 26:17
- By the divine help that had protected him, because he was doing God's work, and he was enabled to witness to all ranks
- His life was so marvelously preserved, in spite of all the plots against it, is upheld for the Gospel's sake; therefore he "witnessed"
- St. Paul only preached those things which the prophets and Moses had said would come to pass
- That Christ would suffer



St. Paul's Post-Conversion Life (26:19-23)

- That Christ would not be such a king as the Jews dreamed of, but one appointed to bear our miseries, and the punishment of our sins
- In these things he had the support of Moses and the prophets, and for these things he was accused
- He was not at variance with Moses and the law, but preached their meaning
- That Christ would be the first to rise from the dead
- That Christ would proclaim light to the Jews and Gentiles

Agrippa Parries Paul's Challenge (26:24-32)



- Festus interjected at St. Paul's defense with a loud voice
- He said, "Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!"
- Agrippa knew the Old Testament Scriptures
- Festus was a Roman Governor, and only familiar with Roman laws
- This was all new to him
- The earnestness and fervor of St. Paul were so strange to Festus, his doctrine of the resurrection so novel, his manner so sincere, and his testimony so startling, that the Roman could only explain it by a mental delusion

Agrippa Parries Paul's Challenge (26:24-32)



- St. Paul's "defense" (Acts 26:24) so disturbed Festus' sin nature that he couldn't take it anymore and/or he was being used by Satan to try to shut St. Paul up
- St. Paul's courteous answer shows the mistake of Festus, a mistake due to his ignorance of the subject
- How does St. Paul react?
- He doesn't relent - "I am not mad ... but speak the words of truth and reason." (Acts 26-25) - and further presses Agrippa
- St. Paul pointed out that Agrippa knew of these things
- St. Paul wants Agrippa to nod his head that all the things about a suffering Messiah were written in the Prophets
- St. Paul further noted that none of these things had been "done in a corner"

Agrippa Parries Paul's Challenge (26:24-32)



St. Paul Asked Agrippa If He Believed the Prophet (27-29)

- St. Paul addressed Agrippa
- He is asking if Agrippa believes in what the Old Testament prophets said about the Messiah, or more precisely if he believes that Jesus is the "Christ" (Acts 26:23) prophesied by those prophets
- Agrippa replied, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian."
- His reply is courteous, but of intense earnestness, a last effort to save souls that were deeply stirred

Agrippa Parries Paul's Challenge (26:24-32)



- He would that king and governor, all, Jew and Gentile, shared his hope of a glorious inheritance, and were, like himself, at peace with God;--such as he, Of course, St. Paul did not desire for any to be in bonds, as he was
- St. Paul understood his purpose for living
- It wasn't about the chains
- It wasn't about the perils he suffered
- It was to convince any and all who would listen about the truth of Jesus
- He wants all to "become what I am", a follower of Jesus

Agrippa Parries Paul's Challenge (26:24-32)



No Charges Were Found Against St. Paul (30-32)

- Agrippa, Festus and the others went aside to deliberate
- They said, "This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains."
- Their decision was that St. Paul had done nothing justifying his imprisonment
- The accusations of the Jews were groundless
- His innocence was clear, but after the appeal to Caesar, the case belonged to the higher courts, and Festus had no more power to clear than to condemn
- It was God's will that Paul should be carried to Rome
- There was work for him to do in the capital of the world



Conclusion

- What do you feel were the similarities and differences between how St. Paul treated Festus and Agrippa
- Was Agrippa an "expert in all customs and questions which have to do with the Jews"?
- For what "hope of the promise made by God" is St. Paul being "judged"?
- List some of the things that St. Paul did "contrary to the name of Jesus."
- If not defense, what might be St. Paul's motive for the testimony?
- Whose "power" is St. Paul telling his audience that they are under?



Conclusion

- What does it mean to "repent"?
- How are those who truly repent distinguished from those who don't?
- What 3 things did Paul say in accordance with the prophets and Moses?
- Why is the resurrection of Christ from the dead so vital to the gospel
- What could have happened if Paul hadn't appealed to Caesar?