

Do you remember some of the joyous discoveries of childhood? Do you remember that first puppy, that first smell of the country fields or the hot bread shop on the city corner? We did not question whether those things existed because we experienced them with our own senses.

Childhood was a joyous discovery of new things and we grew in understanding because we accepted the new and different things around us as being part of the wider world in which we lived.

The Word of God is full of different things but sadly the denominational systems, for the most part, have suppressed these differences and we have been deprived of many of its rich depths. In this series we are showing some of the wonderful differences in Paul and I pray you make them your own by careful review and application of this rule; [2Ti 2:15](#) Study earnestly to present yourself approved to God, a workman that does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.

We are showing that Paul's ministry can be clearly divided by his own statements which harmonize with the subject content of his epistles. This division pivots around the climax event of the Acts which was the placing aside of Israel nationally, at Acts 28. Israel was let go when, after constant rejection of their Messiah, the judgmental prophecy of Isaiah 6 was pronounced against them;

[Act 28:25-26](#) And disagreeing with one another, they were let go, Paul saying one word: Well did the Holy Spirit speak through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, saying, "Go to this people and say: Hearing you shall hear and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see and not perceive.

We shall show from Paul's own words, that his prison ministry prior to Acts 28 differs greatly to his prison ministry after Acts 28.

Paul was taken prisoner in Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 21:30-33. Let us trace Paul's imprisonment from Acts 21 to Acts 28 and see why in his opinion, he was imprisoned at the hands of the Romans.

When Paul gave his defense before the Sanhedrin in Acts 22:1-21 he recounted his conversion. We note carefully that it was the God of Israel's fathers who had called Paul. Israel and God were still "together" at this point in the Acts period; [Act 22:14](#) ..The God of our fathers has chosen you to know His will and to see the Just One, and to hear a voice out of His mouth.

Turning to chapter 24 we find Paul defending himself before Governor Felix during which defense Paul says this;

[Act 24:11](#) You can know that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship.

[Act 24:14](#) But I confess this to you, that after the Way which they call heresy, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things that are written in the Law and in the Prophets.

[Act 24:15](#) And I have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of *the* dead, both of the just and unjust.

Here we find Paul telling us that Jerusalem and the Temple were still an important part of his worship to the God of his fathers, this is not the case after Acts 28. Jerusalem (and the New) will be the city of the great King on the earth and we shall see that the Lord ruling out of Zion was the hope held by Paul during Acts;

[Psa 48:2](#) Beautiful on high, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.

Please notice Paul confessed that after the "way" so he worshipped the God of Israel's fathers. He believed all things written in the law and in the Prophets. During the Acts period the dispensational setting was all Old Testament purpose and promise but our calling today, after Acts 28, is not Old Testament purpose and promise. It is the same God today but He is not in covenant relationship with Israel after Acts 28. Here is one Psalm that was dear to Paul during the Acts period and this Psalm is Old Testament purpose and promise. Note also righteousness received from God;

[Psa 24:1](#) A Psalm of David. The earth is Jehovah's, and the fullness of it; the world, and those who dwell in it.

[Psa 24:2](#) For He has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers.

[Psa 24:3](#) Who shall go up into the hill of Jehovah? Or who shall stand in His holy place?

[Psa 24:4](#) He who has clean hands and a pure heart; who has not lifted up his soul to vanity, and has not sworn deceitfully.

[Psa 24:5](#) He shall receive the blessing from Jehovah, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

You will find this Psalm quoted by Paul in 1Cor.10:26 & 28 and in mind when he wrote Hebs.12:22. The joyous hope Paul held during the Acts period was the Lord of Glory entering His inheritance upon the earth and roaring out of Zion.

During Paul's imprisonment as recorded in Acts 21 to Acts 28, he continues to declare this earthly hope and Old Testament promise and purpose as his ministry and the basis of his suffering. Before King Agrippa, Paul said this;
[Act 26:6](#) And now I stand and am judged for *the* hope of the promise made to our fathers by God,
[Act 26:7](#) to which *promise* our twelve tribes hope to attain, serving God fervently night and day. For the sake of this hope, king Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews.

The hope Paul held, as a prisoner during the Acts, was the same hope the 12 tribes of Israel were expecting. In other words, Paul's hope as a believer was the same hope of the unbelieving Israelites. They wanted the Kingdom of Heaven on the earth and Paul waited for the same. This is not the hope Paul reveals for us after Acts 28. Our hope today is certainly not the same as the one Paul and the 12 tribes hoped to attain during the Acts period.

This hope of Israel was the expectation of the promises made to Israel's fathers by their God. Our hope today is not based upon any promise made to Israel's fathers. Later in Acts 26 Paul challenges King Agrippa;

[Act 26:27](#) King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you believe.
[Act 26:28](#) And Agrippa said to Paul, Do you persuade me to be a Christian in *but* a little?

The Prophets were the Word of the Gospel during the Acts period, read and count the OT quotes in Acts 2:14-36 & 13:32-41. Look again at Paul's statements as a prisoner in the latter stages of Acts;

[Act 28:17](#) And after three days it happened that Paul called together those being chief of the Jews. And they coming together, he said to them, Men, brothers, I did nothing against the people or customs of our fathers. I was delivered a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans

[Act 28:20](#) For this cause, then, I called for you, to see and to speak with you. For I have this chain around me for the hope of Israel.
[Act 28:23](#) And they having appointed him a day, many came to him in his lodging; to whom he expounded, testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them the things concerning Jesus, both out of the Law of Moses and out of the Prophets, from morning until evening.

Paul had been accused of "speaking against the people (Israel) and the Law and this place" in Acts 21:28. But from the first day Paul denied them replying that all such charges were false. Defending himself before Festus, Paul said this;

[Act 25:8](#)Neither against the Law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything.

Let me assure you that had Paul been proclaiming the truths revealed to him after Acts 28 he would certainly have offended the people, the customs of (Israel's) fathers, the Law and the Temple of Israel.

Paul plainly says that up until the very last chapter of this book of Acts he was a prisoner for the hope of Israel and was proclaiming Christ from the Old Testament dispensational settings. Paul does not proclaim the Lord in the dispensational settings of the Old Testament and he certainly was not a prisoner for the hope of Israel after Acts 28.

We read in Acts 28:25-28 that the nation of Israel was put to one side, they were let go until a future day when the Lord resumes His purposes with them. After this setting aside of Israel, then the Lord revealed to Paul the dispensational truth for today.

Now let us look closely at the statements by Paul after Acts 28.

In the opening of Ephesians and Colossians, letters proclaiming the present dispensation of the grace of God, Paul refers to our God like this;

[Eph 1:3](#) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

[Col 1:2](#) ...Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and from *the* Lord Jesus Christ.

[Col 1:3](#) We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

Notice the differences; the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, God OUR (Gentiles) Father? Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are not mentioned in Paul's seven post Acts letters; in fact we search in vain for the phrase "the God of Israel's fathers". It is the same God but He is not in any covenant relationship with Israel after Acts 28; He will be in the future.

What about the hope differences after Acts 28. We search in vain in the post Acts letters of Paul to find any reference to the promises made to Israel's fathers as the basis of the new hope revealed. The hope of Ephesians cannot be found in any passage of the Old Testament, the Gospels or Paul's Acts period letters. Here is the hope of the church which is His Body as found in Ephesians;

[Eph 2:1](#) And He *has made you alive*, who were once dead in trespasses and sins,

[Eph 2:4](#) But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love *with* which He loved us

[Eph 2:5](#) (even when we were dead in sins) has made us alive together with Christ (by grace you are saved),

[Eph 2:6](#) and has raised *us* up together and made *us* sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus,

Why can't we find this hope in any other Bible writer? Look at Paul's words here to find our answer;

Eph 3:7 Of this *gospel* I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effectual working of His power.

Eph 3:8 This grace is given to me (*who am* less than the least of all saints) to preach the gospel of the unsearchable riches of Christ among the nations,

Eph 3:9 and to bring to light what *is* the fellowship of the mystery which from eternity has been hidden in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ;

Our hope today is part of a dispensation of unsearchable riches, unsearchable because it was hidden in God and away from ages and generations (Col.1:26). Praise God my friends you are seeing these wonderful differences in Paul.

Next lesson we will focus on Paul's statements regarding the change of basis of his prison ministry.