



# **WELCOME TO BIBLE HOUSE OF GRACE**

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## **Acts 28**

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

## Acts 28.

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### Topics.

- A viper fastens itself to Paul's hand.
- Contradictions in life.
- Paul miraculously heals the sick on the island of Malta.
- Paul speaks to the leaders of the Jews in Rome.
- The Lord Jesus Christ the Hope of Israel.
- This salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles.
- Jews and Gentiles become one new nation in Christ.
- Paul lived two years in Rome proclaiming the Kingdom of God.
- The Kingdom of God, past, present and future.

**The previous chapter:** in the previous chapter King Agrippa, Festus (the governor of Judea) and the dignitaries who listened to Paul's defence (Acts 26) decide it is time Paul with some other prisoners set sail for Italy. Under the guard of Julius a Roman centurion Paul boards a ship (there was a total of 276 people on the boat). The entire chapter covers this journey and ended with the ship being wrecked on some rocks and all 276 men swimming safely to the shore of an Island they did not recognise.

**NOTE:** for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

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### ACTS 28:1-6

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#### A Viper fastens itself to Paul's Hand.

- **Acts 28:1-6:** After we were brought safely through, we then learned that the island was called Malta. <sup>2</sup>The native people showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold. <sup>3</sup>When Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and put them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand. <sup>4</sup>When the native people saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "No doubt this man is a murderer. Though he has escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live." <sup>5</sup>He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. <sup>6</sup>They were waiting for him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But when they had waited a long time and saw no misfortune come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.

The previous chapter ended with Paul and two-hundred and seventy-six people on being shipwrecked on an Island called Malta. The people showed great kindness, it was cold and raining so they made a fire. Consider; this is not just a little camp fire there are two-hundred and seventy-six men to keep warm, that's a lot of wood.

**NOTICE:** Paul one of the greatest leaders of the New Testament is gathering wood as is everyone else he does not esteem himself above those he is with.

**Viper:** ('eph`eh,) refers to an asp, scorpion or some other poisonous serpent, whatever it was in the context of this story the people of the island knew it was a deadly venomous creature that could kill a person very quickly.

**A viper fastened on Paul's hand:** a venomous viper/scorpion bit into Paul's hand and wouldn't let go, the islanders seeing this immediately assumed Paul must be guilty of murder and God is bringing justice on him by using a poisonous viper to strike him dead (v4). Believing Paul to be a murderer simply because a poisonous creature had bitten him shows that these islanders were very superstitious (meaning they were illogical, irrational and naïve regarding God and His ways). We know they were superstitious because one moment they were judging Paul as a murderer and the next as a god.

**Judging people and God by outward circumstances:** to judge a person and the ways of God simply by the outward circumstances of a person's life (good or bad) is very naïve and limits the eternal God to our mortal and imperfect mind with its limited reasoning and flawed thinking, though in certain circumstances there maybe some truth in this kind of thinking it shows a very naïve understanding of God and His ways when the principal is applied to every person standing on planet earth. This type of naïve reasoning produces the underlying thought that if a person's life is charmed God is favouring and blessing them, but if their life runs into trouble God's judgment is upon them, but this is not what the Bible teaches (if it was God was judging Paul many times since he suffered many hardships while faithfully serving the Lord). Jesus said:

- God makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt 5:45).

This shows that God blesses both the righteous and the wicked and in this way has designed the world with far too many contradictions for anyone to be able to apply a simple formula to God that will guarantee a positive outcome or result for everyone who applies the formula or a fixed set of rules to their lives. Neither God Himself, or His ways and His works can be determined simply by the good or bad outward circumstances of a person's life.

**A Psalm of Asaph:** even Asaph a righteous man writes in one of his many Psalms, that he felt there was no value in keeping God's ways, he says he was jealous of those who take no thought toward God and envious of the arrogant and the wicked and those who oppressed others for their own gain when he saw their prosperity and the increase in their riches, their health and that they were not troubled as he was, until he thought about their eternal end and how they will be destroyed in a moment, but he will be received to eternal glory and everlasting life (Psalm 73).

**Contradictions in life:** the preacher in the book of Ecclesiastes says all his searching for wisdom to find and understand God, brought him to the following conclusion, no-one can find out the work of God and His ways that is done on the earth no matter how much a person may study in seeking, they will not find it out. Even though a wise person claims to know, they cannot find it out because there are too many contradictions and exceptions to the general rules and laws of any given event or thing. The LORD has designed the universe this way so that no human whether righteous or wicked can find out their future or know what will happen to them tomorrow. The preacher concludes that without God all is vanity (brief, passing or meaningless) because the righteous and the wicked both end up in the grave and are forgotten and determines that the conclusion of the matter is to live with reverence and respect toward God and do no harm to another human, this the writer of Ecclesiastes says, is the whole duty of every human, God will take every open or secret deed into judgment whether good or evil (Ecclesiastes 12). Death comes to all and the days of darkness will be many Without eternal life all that comes is meaningless. For further information see:

- Ecclesiastes in, Commentary Old Testament (ON WESITE MENU).

**The great commission and the promise of the Lord:** Jesus, when he appeared to the eleven after his resurrection and gave them the Great Commission saying:

- Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

He also gave the eleven the following great promise:

- These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover."

Immediately after giving the eleven this promise Jesus, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God (Mark 16:15-19) Christ has also granted this promise to Paul since he also was able to perform many majestic and amazing miracles healing people of all kinds of sicknesses and diseases.

**The apostle's generation was unique:** though God never changes the way His Spirit moves on earth to achieve His eternal plan does. In the Old Testament God moved mightily through Moses and in a different way through David and Solomon then in a unique manner God's Spirit moved through the prophets. During the era of the apostles God's Spirit was moving on earth through the apostle's faith in Christ in a miraculous fashion an in a manner that God has not done with any previous or future generation. This was a unique time on earth as was the era of Moses, David, Solomon and the prophets. Christ was the sower of the Gospel seed, now God through the apostles is multiplying the seed Christ has sown in them. This generation did not have a full collection of New Testament Scriptures so God to authenticate the apostles teaching confirmed their ministry with stunning miracles that only men with God's Spirit flowing through them could possibly do. The people of this era were living in a time when God's Spirit was flowing through the apostles in such a majestic fashion that they were able to miraculously heal every kind of mental illness, physical disability, disease and sickness as Jesus did, simply by speaking the word. They did not need mood music to prepare people to receive something from God as some ministers in churches today do. It did not matter what the environment was or even what faith or the lack of it those the apostles healed had, they simply spoke and the sick person was stunningly and instantly healed. Added to this wonder there are instances when the faith of those who the apostles healed was not even involved and many never even asked to be healed but were healed simply because the apostles saw the sick person's plight and out of their compassion spoke the word and healed them.

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## **ACTS 28:6-10**

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### **Paul Miraculously Heals the Sick on the Island of Malta.**

- **Acts 28:7-10:** Now in the neighbourhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man of the island, named Publius, who received us and entertained us hospitably for three days. <sup>8</sup>It happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery. And Paul visited him and prayed, and putting his hands on him healed him. <sup>9</sup>And when this had taken place, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured. <sup>10</sup>They also honoured us greatly, and when we were about to sail, they put on board whatever we needed.

Imagine the tremendous joy and excitement on this island, Paul miraculously heals Publius father of dysentery and immediately the word of it spreads throughout the region and whoever was sick of any disease or illness came to Paul and he healed them regardless of their faith or what god they believed in, Paul no-doubt because of the extreme kindness and hospitality the islanders had shown him and the men with him was moved with compassion and simply laid hands on the people and spoke the word and they were healed such was the phenomenal power of God's Spirit flowing through Paul at this time.

**Paul leaves Malta and arrives in Rome.**

- **Acts 28:11-16:** After three months we set sail in a ship that had wintered in the island (Malta) a ship of Alexandria, with the twin gods as a figurehead. <sup>12</sup>Putting in at Syracuse, we stayed there for three days. <sup>13</sup>And from there we made a circuit and arrived at Rhegium. And after one day a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli. <sup>14</sup>There we found brothers and were invited to stay with them for seven days. And so we came to Rome. <sup>15</sup>And the brothers there, when they heard about us came as far as the Forum of Appius (a Roman) and Three Taverns to meet us. On seeing them, Paul thanked God and took courage. <sup>16</sup>And when we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier that guarded him.

**Forum:** usually refers to a place for public discussion which could be a courtyard, a patio, a square or an enclosure of some type.

**Puteoli:** was an important port of Rome west of Naples where Paul landed and stayed for seven days before proceeding 145 miles by road to Rome (v13). At the end of three months Paul and those with him aboard a ship going to Rome they eventually arrive in Rome and dock at the port of Puteoli. After staying with some brothers there for seven days Paul, Luke and those with him begin to travel on foot to the city of Rome while other brothers from Rome who had heard that Paul had arrived travel toward them. They meet at the Forum of Appius (a Roman) and Paul no-doubt filled with joy on seeing them thanked God and was encouraged. When they all arrived in Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier that guarded him.

**NOTICE:** the words, "On seeing them, Paul thanked God and took courage (v15)" These Jewish brothers from Rome accepted Paul contrasted to the Jewish brothers at Jerusalem who had plotted and determined to murder him. It is certain Paul was somewhat fearful that the brothers in Jerusalem had written letters to their Jewish counterparts in Rome (v21) and therefore was not be sure whether he would be received with kindness or aggression, obviously he was pleasantly surprised thus the words he thanked God and took courage.

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**ACTS 28:17-21**

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**Paul speaks to the Leaders of the Jews in Rome.**

- **Acts 28:17-21:** After three days he called together the local leaders of the Jews, and when they had gathered, he said to them, "Brothers, though I had 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. <sup>18</sup>When they had examined me, they wished to set me at liberty, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. <sup>19</sup>But because the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar—though I had no charge to bring against my nation. <sup>20</sup>For this reason, therefore, I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is because of the hope of Israel that I am wearing this chain." <sup>21</sup>And they said to him, "We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brothers coming here has reported or spoken any evil about you."

Though Paul is under Roman guard he is granted a great amount of freedom. He gathers the local Roman Jewish leaders together and suspecting they may have received letters from Jerusalem or heard rumours about him (v21) and knowing they would be wondering why he is a Roman prisoner he begins by telling them he is innocent of any charge that has been made against him regarding their nation and the customs of Moses and the prophets and even when the Jews at Jerusalem handed him over to Felix and Festus (Roman governors of Judea) and King Agrippa to be judged. After hearing his testimony, they could find nothing

Paul had done deserving of prison or death in fact if he had he not previously appealed to Caesar they would have set him free (this story is recorded in Acts 26). The Jewish rulers tell Paul that they have received no letters from Jerusalem, Judea or even heard anyone speaking badly of him.

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## The Hope of Israel

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**NOTICE:** Paul's words, "It is because of the hope of Israel that I am wearing this chain" (v20), this statement takes us back to a Jewish council meeting at Jerusalem in which Paul was being judged by Ananias the high priest and the Sadducees and Pharisees (Sadducees don't believe in the resurrection, but Pharisees did). During this trial Paul cried out, "Brothers it is with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial" and a riot broke out between the Sadducees and Pharisees so great that had the Roman tribune and his soldiers not rescued Paul he may have been beaten to death, the very next night the Lord told Paul, "Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me (the hope of Israel) in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome" (Acts 23:6-11) and later Paul appealed to Caesar rather than stand trial before the Jews at Jerusalem.

**The Lord Jesus Christ the hope of Israel:** the hope of Israel refers to the Lord Jesus Christ, the LORD promised Abraham he would make of him a great nation and that he would be the father of a multitude of nations. God swore He would make Abrahams name great, bless him, nations, and kings would come from him and He would give to him and to his offspring after him all the land of Canaan/Israel for an everlasting possession. The LORD promised Abraham that his offspring would be as the dust of the earth and the stars of heaven so that they cannot be numbered and God will be their God. The LORD confirmed this promise to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their offspring after them throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant promising Abraham that in his offspring all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

(Gen. 12:1-3) (Gen. 13:14-17) (Gen. 15:4-7) (Gen. 17:1-8)  
(Gen. 22:15-18) (Deut. 9:5).

Now the majestic wonder and beauty of God's promise is revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul writes that the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. that is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all Abrahams offspring—not only to the adherents of the law (referring to the Jews) but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham (referring to the Gentiles), who is the father of us all (Jews and Gentiles), as it is written:

- I have made you (Abraham) the father of many nations"—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist" (creation and the resurrection).

In hope Abraham believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations, as he had been told:

- So shall your offspring be.

Paul tells us that:

- The twelve tribes of Israel earnestly worshipped night and day hoping to attain to this promise (Acts 26:7).

And then gloriously points out that the Scripture does not say:

- And to offsprings, referring to many, but referring to one, and to your offspring, who is Christ.

Some may think the promises made to Abraham was for the Jews only, but Paul magnificently explains in the book of Galatians that the promises of God have been extended to all nations through being baptised into the Lord Jesus Christ and clearly shows that the promises made to Abraham and to his offspring the Lord Jesus Christ are not limited to the Jews only but embraces whoever will come to God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom 4:13) (Rom 4:16-18) (Gal 3:16) (Gal 3:27) thus the hope of Israel is the Lord Jesus Christ.

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### **ACTS 28:22-23**

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#### **The Local Leaders of the Jews in Rome desire to hear Paul Speak.**

- **Acts 28:22-23:** But we desire to hear from you what your views are, for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against." <sup>23</sup>When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.

The local Jewish leaders in Rome desire to hear Paul's views regarding the sect called Christians because they are spoken against by the Romans and the Jews. Paul holds meetings in his hired home (v30) and people in great numbers come to him. The Jewish authorities had meticulously kept the writings of Moses and the Prophets on Scrolls and read them every Sabbath in the synagogues so Paul spends his days and his evenings trying to persuade the Jews from the Old Testament writings that Jesus is their Messiah the Christ that Moses and the Prophets spoke of.

#### **The following is selection of some of the verses Paul may have used in his attempt to convince the Jews Jesus is the Christ:**

Moses wrote the following amazing verse:

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- God would put enmity between the serpent and the woman, and between the serpent's seed and the woman's Seed and that the seed of the serpent would bruise the heel of the woman's Seed, but the Seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent's seed. (Gen 3:15) (The woman's Seed in this verse refers to Christ).

For greater detail of this incredible and fantastic prophetic verse see:

- Genesis 3:15 in, Commentary Old Testament (ON WEBSITE MENU).

Moses also wrote:

- The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—And I the LORD will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak all that I command him, it is to him you shall listen." (Deut. 18:15-19) (the prophet like Moses is Christ).

Then in the New Testament Philip said to Nathanael:

- We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." (John 1:45) and Paul said, "He testifies both to the small and the great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass." (Acts 26:22)

#### **The following is also a few verses showing the prophets wrote of Jesus. Isaiah prophesied, saying:**

- There will come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge with equity for the meek of the earth" (Isaiah 11:1-4) (the shoot that came forth from Jesse refers to Christ).

Isaiah also prophesied that:



- A virgin will conceive and bear a son, and call his name Immanuel, (Isaiah 7:14) he will grow up before God like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground and have no form or majesty that we should look at him or beauty that we should desire him. (Isaiah 53:2) but the Spirit of the LORD GOD will be upon him because the LORD will anoint him to bring Good News to the poor; and to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;(Isaiah 61:1). At the end of his ministry he will give his back to those who strike, and his cheeks to those who pull out the beard; he will not hide his face from disgrace and spitting (Isaiah 50:6) (Isaiah is of course speaking of Christ).

Jeremiah said:

- The days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness' (Jeremiah 23:5-6) (the righteous Branch is Christ).

Daniel wrote:

- I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came One like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. To him was given dominion and glory and a Kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his Kingdom one that shall not be destroyed" (Dan 7:13-14) (the came one like a Son of man refers to Christ).

Hosea prophesied of Christ calling Israel to:

- Return to the LORD their God that He may heal them"; Hosea proclaims in his prophetic message, "After two days the LORD will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. Let us press on to know the LORD; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth. (Hosea 6:1-3) (His going out is echoing Christ's death and as the dawn he will come is echoing his return).

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Micah prophesied:

- Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days" (Micah 5:2) (the one to come forth is Christ).

Zechariah writes:

- If one asks him, 'What are these wounds on your back?' he will say, 'The wounds I received in the house of my friends.' (Zech. 13:6) and writes that "A man whose name is the Branch will extend out from his place, and build the temple of the LORD (Zech. 6:12).

Zechariah also tells Jerusalem:

- To rejoice greatly because their King is coming to them; righteous and having salvation, he is humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey (Zech. 9:9). Later in his letter he pens the beautiful words, "The LORD will pour out on Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn." (Zech. 12:9-10) (Zechariah clearly writes of Christ).

Malachi prophesied:

- The Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his Temple; behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts, but who can endure the day of his coming, he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and refine the sons of Levi like gold" (Malachi 3:1-3) (It is Christ who will suddenly come to his temple).

Paul when speaking of Jesus says:

- The religious rulers of Israel did not recognize him (Christ) nor understand the utterances of the prophets, which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled them by condemning him (Acts 13:27).



- See also (Psalm 22) and (Isaiah 53)

Naturally there is many more Jesus himself said:

- I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book (Heb. 10:7) (the scroll of the book refers to the Old Testament writings).

And he said to the Jews:

- They search the Scriptures (Old Testament) because they think that in them they have eternal life; but it is they that bear witness about him (John 5:39).

It is very clear that the religious rulers of Israel should have recognised their Messiah when he came especially since he was performing supernatural miracles that could only be done by a man who God's power was flowing through in such a majestic and awesome manner.

**NOTE:** these most celebrated and famous prophecies that the faithful prophets of old spoke thousands of years before Christ appeared stunningly show that the Bible is the inspired word of God for the following three reasons:

1. Who from their own mind could ever imagine that God's own Son the promised Messiah, the Christ and Saviour of the world would ever have to suffer such a humiliating brutal, bloody and cruel death?
2. Who could imagine from their own mind that a man born of a woman would be raised from the dead to eternal life and everlasting glory? Certainly, generations of old believed in life after death, but it was in the form of a conscious spirit being, not a human raised from the grave to immortality and eternal life.
3. Many Old Testament Scriptures give exact details of Christ's birth, his life and his suffering long before he appeared.

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## ACTS 28:24-29

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### **This Salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles.**

- **Acts 28:24-29:** And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved. <sup>25</sup>And disagreeing among themselves, they departed after Paul had made one statement: "The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet: <sup>26</sup>"Go to this people, and say, You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. <sup>27</sup>For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.' <sup>28</sup>Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen." <sup>29</sup>when he said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.

Paul told the disbelieving Jews that the Holy Spirit was right in saying to their fathers through Isaiah the prophet:

- Go to this people, and say, you will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them" (v26-27) (cited from Isaiah 6:8-10).

The unbelieving Jews were driven by pride, ego and legalism and so steeped in their laws, customs and traditions they could not perceive that the message of salvation Paul was expounding to them was exactly what Moses and the prophets spoke of, had they humbled themselves and believed God would have saved them.

**The salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles:** the stricter sect of Jews viewed themselves as the holy race with God and the Gentiles as the unclean race without God they believed this so strongly they wouldn't even mixed with Gentiles for fear of becoming defiled and certainly would not believe that God would defile Himself by dealing with the Gentile nations thus the reason they departed when Paul said, "Let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles" (v28).

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## The Jewish people and Jesus today

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In (2011) I attended a public meeting in which an Israeli lecturer who travelled the world speaking for the Jews today and about Israel's land and their history as recorded in the Bible. At the end of her lecture the meeting was opened up to the audience for questions. One lady asked: -

- "How do the Jews view Jesus today?"

The Jewish speakers' answerer was:

- "Our Messiah has not yet come."

There was a sudden silence over the meeting at this moment, then the same lady obviously a Christian quoted a few Scriptures to show that Israel's Messiah did come, the lecturer was kindly patient, but after a short while turned and picked up a Jewish Bible, held it in the air and said:

- "This is our Bible and there is no New Testament in it."

A man stood up and asked:

- "How do the Jewish people view a Jew who converts to Christianity?"

The speakers replied:

- "We would consider that they have left the faith."

As she spoke it was clear that the Jewish people love God and love their Messiah the promised seed of Abraham and David they just haven't recognised him yet (and even this is in God's eternal plan) but it reminded me of the following fabulous and prophetic words of Zechariah:

- The LORD will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be great, the land and the priests shall mourn, and all the families that are left each by itself shall mourn (Zech. 12:9-14).

When this momentous and beautiful moment takes place the entire world will change as we know it today, and a glorious New Age will begin, one of righteousness, justice, joy and peace because the King of peace will be the Head and Shepherd of all nations.

**This salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles** (v28). The promised Seed of Abraham and David is Christ, all the promises to Israel are now fulfilled in Christ therefore they are not limited to Israel only but extend and embrace all those who belong to Christ because God is now creating one New Nation in Christ made up of both Jews and Gentiles. (Gentiles are everyone who is not a Hebrew or Jew)

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## THE COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL

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**Jews and Gentiles become One New Nation in Christ:** the apostle Paul said:

- **Ephesians 2:11-22:** Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision (Jews), which is made in the flesh by hands— <sup>12</sup>remember that you (Gentiles) were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the COMMONWEALTH of ISRAEL and STRANGERS to the COVENANTS of PROMISE, having no hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup>But now in Christ Jesus you (Gentiles) who once were far off (from God) have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup>For he himself is our (Jews and Gentiles) peace, who has made us both ONE and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility <sup>15</sup>by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he (Jesus) might create in himself ONE NEW MAN (or Nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles), so making peace, <sup>16</sup>and might reconcile us (Jews and Gentiles) both to God in ONE BODY through the cross, thereby killing the hostility (between the Jews and Gentiles). <sup>17</sup>And he (Jesus) came and preached peace to you (Gentiles) who were far off (from God) and peace to those who were near (Jews). <sup>18</sup>For through him (Jesus) we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access in ONE SPIRIT to the Father. <sup>19</sup>So then you (Gentiles) are NO LONGER strangers and aliens, but you are FELLOW CITIZENS with the SAINTS (the Jews) and members of the HOUSEHOLD of God, <sup>20</sup>built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone <sup>21</sup>in whom the WHOLE STRUCTURE being joined together (Jews and Gentiles) grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup>In him you (Jews and Gentiles) also are being built together into a DWELLING PLACE for GOD by the Spirit.

Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the, Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (Nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles).

In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Christ is the head of this new nation and its Jewish and Gentile citizens are now equal in status before God since in Christ we are all brothers and sisters in the same eternal family that God is now establishing in the Lord Jesus Christ throughout all nations of the world.

**The practical application of what this means to you:** if you belong to Christ, all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel also apply to YOU. The book of Revelation states:

- When Christ returns in glory every eye will see him, even those who pierced him and all the tribes of the earth (Rev. 1:7).

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that:

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation (i.e., Jews and Gentiles) and he has made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Rev. 5:9-10).

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## ACTS 28:30-31

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### Paul lived two years in Rome Proclaiming the Kingdom of God.

- **Acts 28:30-31:** He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, <sup>31</sup>proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

**NOTICE:** Paul spoke to everyone who came to him at his own expense meaning Paul worked to support himself. In verse twenty-three we are told the Jews came to Paul in greater numbers so it is most likely he was lodging in a place that had a large room attached to it, perhaps much like the upper room that the one hundred and twenty were gathered in on the day of Pentecost.

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## The Global and Worldwide Church of God

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There is in the secular global world today a mindset that the church is a Sunday meeting in a religious building but the church should never be limited to the established religious institutions, denominations or church buildings though they may form a part of the body of Christ they are not the only part. There are many individual Christians in all countries of the world who meet in coffee bars, social outings and mostly their own homes (as the early church did) to give thanks to Christ and share their discoveries of God's word and their spiritual experiences with Him. Many of these people are helping others and simply manifesting the reality of their faith to the people that come into their lives. God is not limited to any one pattern or organisation; He is far too creative for that. Jesus church is global and is manifested in a vast variety of ways across the face of the earth.

In many third world countries church is held outside under a tree (for shade) with its members sitting on the dusty ground often with dogs, chooks and other animals roaming around. It is also important to be aware that the word church does not embrace everyone simply because they confess to be Christians (Matt 7:21-23). When the Bible uses the term church it primarily refers to those who belong to Christ and those who do the will of his Father. The will of God in this context is summed up in Jesus words:

- Love your neighbour as yourself (Matt 22:37-39) (Mark 12:29-31).

In the New Testament this is called the, Royal Law (James 2:8) and means do-good to others. Those (especially those who belong to Christ) who deliberately harm people physically, financially, sexually, verbally, emotionally or spiritually and those who use others for their own selfish gain and greed are referred to by Christ himself as workers of iniquity. The Bible teaches that some will be cast out of God's Kingdom which means not everyone who confesses to know Christ is part of his church there are those in his present Kingdom who he calls wicked servants. They use God's grace, Jesus good name and his Gospel for their own selfish gain and line their own greedy pockets with the wealth and riches of this world by making merchandise of those who do belong to Christ. Nevertheless, Jesus knows those who are his and those who are not and will not only reject anyone who uses his message of grace, mercy, compassion and love for their own selfish gain, but when he returns will deny them entry into his eternal Kingdom. (Matt 8:12) (Matt 22:13) (Matt 25:30).

- Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. (John 10:14) (John 10:26-27).

For further information concerning the church, see the title:

- The Definition of a Church
- In Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

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## The School of Tyrannus

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Ever since Constantine declared Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire and began to use the techniques of Roman paganism (temples, priests, pagan holidays etc.) to institutionalize Christianity most people have completely ignored one of the methods that Paul used when he went about church planting. Today recent movements have begun to try and recapture the ancient way of doing church, believing the Constantinian transition was not an improvement, but that it was

ultimately destructive to church life and practice. Many involved in church restoration today see Paul's methods as extremely simple and essentially free of structure; just encourage people to meet in homes, release gifts and live life in community. Each of these elements has been very helpful, but they've neglected a necessary piece of Paul's strategy.

**The missing component:** today there exists two different methods of planting a church, first is the traditional method of establishing a weekly worship service in a church building and the second is to ignore buildings and have weekly meetings in homes, but in both these formats there is a third component that is missing which Paul used with tremendous success. The clearest glimpse of this missing component that Paul used when he wanted to plant churches in a city is found in Acts 19. Luke records that after Paul abandoned his original method of working through the local Synagogue, he rented space in the public School of Tyrannus and held daily discussions there for about a two-year period. This is most likely what he was doing in Synagogues before this time. Here in Rome Paul is using this same method of teaching during his house arrest in Rome using the space in his hired home as a daily discipleship center which had constant activity flowing through. It is certain he complimented these public gatherings by having training and fellowship meetings in individual house churches (Acts 20:20). In our modern society saturated with information readily available at the press of a key discussion-based training needs to replace sermonizing as a means to a long-lasting faith-building group discovery experience. There needs to be a transition of each lesson from lecture format to discussion-based sharing, not only will people learn the word of the Lord this way but they are also fellowshiping with one another while doing it and as a result will grow together since they are learning not only the Scriptures, but also about each other. A second great benefit that results from this type of meeting is that people's needs are often revealed while discussing the Scriptures so those within the meeting can then respond accordingly.

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### **The Kingdom of God, past, present and future**

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Paul proclaimed, the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ (v31). There are two aspects to the Kingdom of God:

1. The spiritual and present Kingdom
2. The literal and future Kingdom that is to come.

**The following shows that God's Kingdom has existed in various shapes:** The Kingdom of God has existed throughout history in different shapes and different forms. In the Old Testament it existed under Moses and the Judges in one form and under David and Solomon in another. Prior to Christ's death and resurrection, the Jews focus was the promised literal and physical Kingdom of Israel to be restored on earth rather than the resurrection of Jesus and all those (Jews and Gentiles) who trust in his name being resurrected to eternal life. After Christ's resurrection the focus of the writers changed from the literal Kingdom to salvation in Jesus name and resurrection to everlasting life and eternal glory.

Christ's resurrection ushered in a spiritual Kingdom that exists in the heart, mind and conscience of all who confess to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. At the end of this age when Christ returns as King of kings and Lord of lords he will separate out of this existing spiritual Kingdom, the foolish and wicked servants from the faithful and wise servants and with the faithful and the resurrected who died in Christ majestically establish God's literal Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth, then the righteous will shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father (Matt 13:36-43) thus the Kingdom will take on another form. Nevertheless, this is not the final shape of the Kingdom since at the end of this age God Himself will descend to earth and be all in all then the Kingdom will take on it final and eternal form.

**NOTE:** it is the context that determines which Kingdom the writer is referring too. In the New Testament the Kingdom of God in Paul's mind is often the invisible spiritual Kingdom existing in the heart and mind of those who belong to Christ which is manifested in righteousness, peace and joy (Rom 14:17). For further information see the title:

- Kingdom of God (ON WEBSITE MENU).

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### The writer of the book of Acts

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The book of Acts begins with the words, "In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach" (Acts 1:1). The first book refers to the book of Luke we know this because it begins with the words, "It seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus" (Luke 1:3) showing us that the author of Luke is also the author of the book of Acts which of course is Luke himself. Yet throughout the book of Acts the name of Luke is not mentioned, rather the author uses the words "we" and "us" but contained in these two words are of course Luke himself and whoever is with him at that time. It is a common Bible principal for the author of the Scriptures to hide themselves in their letter. The writers very rarely use the word "I" they will often say, "That disciple with them" or "Him" when they are referring to themselves. It is a style of writing that avoids boasting. The spirit of the world is driven by pride, ego and the desire to feel important, if someone of the world has contact with a famous person, they want to boast about it to their friends, biblical writers often avoid this by hiding themselves in their writings.

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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*