

Text: Acts 26.21-23

We are in Paul's message to King Agrippa and the leading people in Caesarea Maritima, including Porcius Festus, the governor. Our text today involves the final recorded words of Paul's message.

Read Ac 26.19-23, text 21-23

As I think about the logic of the passage, verse 21 almost deserves a sermon by itself, but I'll restrain myself!

In vv. 19-20, Paul makes the personal appeal to Agrippa we spoke of last week.

In that appeal, Paul spoke of the message he preached, "even to Gentiles."

Verse 21 says, "For this reason *some* Jews seized me in the temple and tried to put me to death."

Paul's temerity in preaching to Gentiles inflamed the antagonism of the legalistic and *racist* Jews.

Of course, the Jews were angry about the gospel message itself, but the willingness of the Christians to expand their circle to include Gentiles infuriated them the most.

Part of what their problem was their failure to grasp the OT message. In fact, their failure infected at least some of the disciples of Jesus in the early days before the Holy Spirit came.

In verses 22-23, Paul summarizes the OT message so central to Christianity.

He does this to press his appeal to Agrippa's heart.

We will come back to Agrippa next week, but today I want to think about that OT message I said is central to Christianity. Before we get into the message, I want you to hear the Lord Jesus speaking to some of his wavering and uncertain disciples:

Lk 24.25 And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!"

Compare that to vv. 22-23 of our text.

God holds his disciples accountable to the OT message about Christ.

God, through his apostles, holds all men, Jews and Gentiles, accountable to the OT message about Christ.

God holds you accountable to this message.

In our message today, then, I want to examine that OT message and show how careful we need to be in understanding the message of the Bible and believing it.

Proposition: God holds men accountable to the explicit words and the implicit meaning of the Scriptures (of both testaments).

I. The propositions of Paul's concluding remarks

A. The message has universal application ("testifying both to small and great")

B. The message reflects Moses and the Prophets accurately ("stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place")

1. The content of the message

a. "that the Christ was to suffer"

b. "that by reason of *His* resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim light"

2. There is no novelty, rather a long history, to this message

"Here the claim is that although the preaching of Christ seems new, it is in fact very old, rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures, already ancient in Paul's time. So Paul is not a religious innovator and perverter of the truth; he is merely preaching what God promised from long ago."¹

C. The character of the message is light

1. This recalls v. 16, the Lord's commission to Saul on the road to Damascus

2. The light of the gospel enables men to turn from the darkness of sin to the light of redemption

¹ Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 721.

3. This message is for both Jews and Gentiles (“both to the ... people and to the Gentiles”)
 - a. Note that the word, “*Jewish*” in the NAU is in italics
 - b. Supplied for clarity, but “the people” would be clear to his audience: “the people” = “the Jews”

It is here where Jewish reaction is so strong. They object to the message about Jesus; they object even more that the message is for Gentiles.

The rest of our message will take us through other Scriptures, showing how God expected them to get this message from the OT.

II. The OT basis for the doctrine of a resurrected messiah

- A. Remember, Jesus demanded that men believe the OT message (Lk 24.19-26)
 1. They were foolish to disbelieve
 2. The doctrine of the resurrection, esp. of Messiah, was necessary
- B. The doctrine of the resurrection
 1. Clearest reference (Dan 12.1-2)
 2. Fairly clear references
 - a. Isa 26.19
 - b. Isa 27.12-13

(Some interpreters limit this to a restoration of living Israelites, rescued by God and brought into his Kingdom.)

- c. Isa 25.7-8
- d. Ezek 37.1-14 (dry bones passage)
- e. Job 19.23-27

Walter Kaiser: “did he believe it would include a resurrection of his body? Job 19.26 is difficult: Does ‘from my flesh’ mean *apart* from his body or *from* inside his body he hoped to see God? Let verse 27 decide: ‘My eyes shall behold [him] and not another.’”²

² Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 181.

3. Interesting interpretive reference (Job 14.7, 14)

“For often around the base of a felled tree, one shoot after another will spring up as a continuation of the otherwise dead tree. So it is with man in Job 14.14 ... Job 14.14 stated in terms analogous to what happened to felled trees!”³

4. Other interpretive references

a. Ps 49.14-15

b. Eccl 3.17, 21-22

For God to judge the righteous and the wicked for *every deed*, there must be a resurrection.

Recall Paul’s question to Agrippa near the beginning of his message in Ac 26:

Ac 26.8 “Why is it considered incredible among you *people* if God does raise the dead?”

Quite clearly, the OT prophesies resurrection from the dead, though not explicitly (as far as I can tell) in the Pentateuch, which is the reason the Sadducees only held to the authority of the Pentateuch.

C. The doctrine of Messiah’s resurrection

1. This doctrine was hard for the Jews to accept

a. They saw Messiah as the conquering king

b. They longed to remove the Roman yoke from their necks

c. They were concerned with the present situation and “this life” as opposed to the life to come

³ Kaiser, 181.

2. Both Peter and Paul take Ps 16.10 to refer to Messiah's resurrection

Ps 16.10 For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.

a. Peter, on Pentecost

Ac 2.31-32 he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY. ³² "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.

b. Paul, in Antioch of Pisidia

Ac 13.35-37 "Therefore He also says in another *Psalm*, 'YOU WILL NOT ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY.' ³⁶ "For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay; ³⁷ but He whom God raised did not undergo decay.

3. Isaiah 53 clearly references Messiah's resurrection (one reason Jews avoid this chapter to this day)

a. Messiah's innocent sufferings (4-9)

b. Messiah's resurrection (10-12)

4. Messiah's ongoing kingdom and rule imply that if he died, he must rise again

a. The promise of the everlasting kingdom (2 Sa 7.12-16)

b. David's acceptance of the promise [this is how David took it] (2 Sa 7.25)

c. Moses also prophesied the eternal kingdom

1) The star from Jacob (Num 24.15-19)

2) Jacob's prophecy to Judah (Gen 49.8-12)

III. The impact of Paul's message (back to Ac 26.21-22)

- A. The message of a resurrected Messiah is a message of light to Jews and Gentiles
- B. The message of the resurrected Jesus is one God expects you to believe

Conclusion:

Proposition: God holds men accountable to the explicit words and the implicit meaning of the Scriptures (of both testaments).

Where do you stand in this faith? Do you believe? Are you living out that faith?