

4. The Preaching of Paul

4.1 Introduction

Luke has recorded direct speech in seven of Paul's Gospel addresses, plus some sort of description in many others. Of the speeches, one of these is in a Synagogue at Antioch Pisidia (Acts 13:16-41), and closely parallels Peter's address at Caesarea. Two of them are open-air sermons to pagan Gentiles: Acts 14:8-20 at Lystra, and Acts 17:22-34 at Athens. Two of them are personal autobiography: Acts 22:1-29 before the Jerusalem mob, and Acts 26:1-32 before king Agrippa. The remaining two are brief addresses to individual Gentiles in authority over him: Acts 16:25-34 to the Philippian Jailer, and Acts 24:10-25 to Felix.

It has been pointed out how Luke often presents pairs of events in order to provide two witnesses, and these seem to be examples of such a scheme. In some cases there is a contrast as well as a strong similarity between the pairs, as will be seen. For example, the same message leads Gentiles at Caesarea to salvation and Jews at Antioch to rejection.

With regard to the programmatic statement of Acts 9:15-16, "But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is a chosen vessel of mine to bear my name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel'", three of the seven speeches are to ordinary Gentiles, two are to 'kings' (Roman rulers), and two to Jews. It can therefore be seen that Luke has taken care to illustrate the way in which the Apostle served as a witness to the name of Christ, in each of these contexts.

The messages will be considered in pairs, following as closely as possible chronological order.

4.2 Synagogue Addresses

There are eleven times where Luke records that Paul preached in a synagogue, plus the occasion at Rome which actually took place at Paul's lodging, but served the same purpose of taking the Gospel first to the Jew. For most occasions there is very little recorded of the message itself. The table below lists these events:

Journey	Acts	Place	Message
	9:20	Damascus	"he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God"
1st	13:5	Salamis	"preached the word of God"
	13:14-41	Antioch in Pisidia	Fuller message recorded
	13:44-48	Antioch in Pisidia (next Sabbath)	"everlasting life"
	14:1	Iconium	
2nd	17:1-4	Thessalonica	"reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, 'This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.'"
	17:10-12	Berea	result: the Bereans, "received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures"
	17:17	Athens	
	18:4	Corinth	
	18:19	Ephesus	
3rd	18:26-	Achaia (<i>Apollos</i>)	"he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the

	28	<i>preaching rather than Paul but included for completeness.)</i>	Christ.”
	19:8	Ephesus	“reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God”, also referenced in Acts 20:20-21 “how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”
4th	28:17-29	Rome	“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.”

The only occasions where a sermon is recorded is at Antioch in Pisidia. The simplest explanation for this is that Paul’s method of discourse in the synagogue usually followed the same pattern, so Luke only needed to give us one address in detail. This suggestion is supported by Luke’s own words in Acts 17:4 where he records that “Paul, *as his custom was*, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures.” Paul followed a predictable pattern—when he arrived at a town he first presented his message in the Synagogue. In Acts 19:8, Luke reports that Paul was “reasoning and persuading concerning *the things of the kingdom of God*.” This phrase is a shorthand that assumes that the reader already knows what ‘the things’ are.

For these reasons, I am assuming that Luke has chosen the message given at Antioch to be a good representative of Paul’s usual style of synagogue discourse. The brief descriptions given on other occasions support this assumption. He preached “from the Scriptures”, the death and resurrection of Christ, and that “Jesus is the Christ”. The table above includes a reference to Apollos’s ministry because his message was derived from Paul through Aquila and Priscilla. It is not surprising, therefore, that what he taught falls closely into line with Paul’s own teaching.

Paul at Antioch in Pisidia

The following tables compare the sermon of Paul in Antioch to the previously considered message given by Peter to the household of Cornelius at Caesarea. The overall outline is the same as that given earlier for Peter’s speeches, but the structural similarity between these two sermons is even closer, and this will be noted section by section.

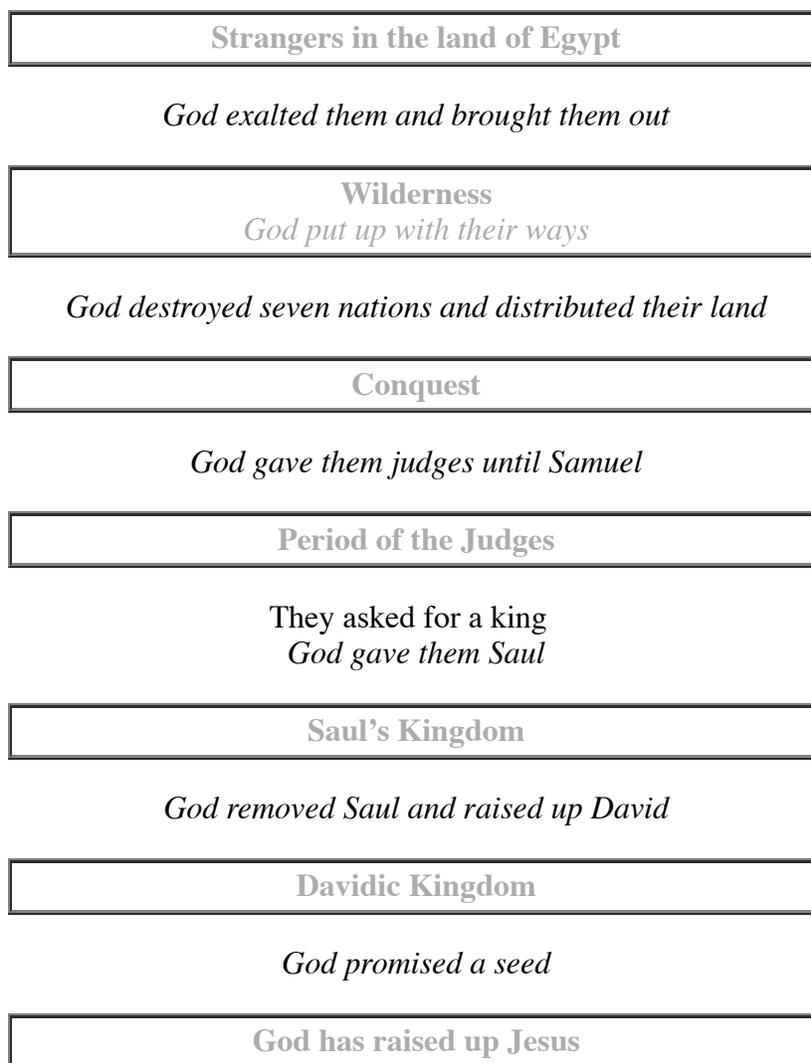
A. Sermon Introduction

Acts 10:34-43 Peter at Caesarea	Acts 13:16-41 Paul at Antioch in Pisidia
<i>Invited to speak by devout Gentiles</i>	<i>Invited to speak by Jews</i>
34 Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. 35 "But in every nation whoever fears him and works righteousness is accepted by him.	16 Then Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen: 17 "The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm he brought them out of it. 18 "Now for a time of about forty years he put up with their ways in the wilderness. 19 "And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he distributed their land to them by allotment. 20 "After that he gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. 21 "And afterward they asked for a king; so God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. 22 "And when he had removed him, he raised up for them David as king, to whom also he gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, who will do all my will.'
36 "The word which God sent to the children of Israel , preaching peace through Jesus Christ ; He is Lord of all;	23 "From this man's seed, according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Saviour; Jesus ;

[38a God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.]	
37 "that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached :	24 "after John had first preached , before his coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. 25 "And as John was finishing his course, he said, 'Who do you think I am? I am not he. But behold, there comes one after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to loose.'
[36a " The word which God sent to the children of Israel]	26 "Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent.

The introduction has four parts: 1) a historical preamble; 2) a proclamation that Jesus has been sent by God as a Saviour for Israel; 3) a reference to the preaching of John the Baptist; and 4) at Antioch there was an intensified repetition of (2)—this word has been sent to *them*. The order of these elements is not precisely the same in each account, and in two places I have changed the sequence in the Caesarea account in order to better show the correspondence of ideas. This has been indicated by square brackets. This slight change in order does not significantly diminish the close parallel between the two messages.

The historical preamble is appropriate to the audience, and is very different in content between the two messages. In the address to Jews, Paul surveys their history from the Exodus, through to the raising up of David. Several phases are described:



The point of the message is that God has faithfully brought them through to each new phase of their covenant history, in spite of their rebellion. Paul ends the historical preamble with God's promise to David of a seed. He

will take them into the next phase of their covenant relationship.

Both accounts stress that Jesus was sent to Israel. Both of them refer to the baptism of repentance that John preached, and the implication is that the audience knew about him. In Paul's speech he adds v.25 which heightens the expectation of the promised seed. Paul ends the introduction by repeating that they themselves are the heirs to this long-awaited promise. He includes, 'and to those among you who fear God', which is very similar to Peter's 'in every nation whoever fears him'.

B. "they Crucified Jesus"

Acts 10:34-43 Peter at Caesarea	Acts 13:16-41 Paul at Antioch in Pisidia
39 "And <u>we are witnesses</u> of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem , whom they killed by hanging on a tree .	27 "For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers , because they did not know him, nor even <u>the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath</u> , have fulfilled them in condemning him. 28 "And though they found no cause for death in him, they asked Pilate that he should be put to death . 29 "Now when they had <u>fulfilled all that was written concerning him</u> , they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb.

Both accounts specify precisely that it was the Jerusalem Jews who committed the crime, and that Jesus was hung on a tree, as one accursed by God. Peter was a witness to these events, but Paul was not. Instead, Paul substitutes the witness of the Prophets whose words have been fulfilled. It is important for Paul to tie the crucifixion into his historical prologue and show that it was no mistake, but was in fact exactly what the prophets had foretold.

C. "but God raised him up again"

Acts 10:34-43 Peter at Caesarea	Acts 13:16-41 Paul at Antioch in Pisidia
40 " Him God raised up on the third day, and showed him openly , 41 "not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God , even to us who ate and drank with him after he arose from the dead.	30 "But God raised him from the dead . 31 " He was seen for many days by those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses to the people .

The parallel between the two sermons is very close here. Both state that it was God who raised Jesus up, and that this event was witnessed. Both make the point that not everyone was a witness of the risen Lord, but only his disciples. They are the ones who were selected to be his witnesses to the people.

D. "and exalted him to the throne"

Acts 10:34-43 Peter at Caesarea	Acts 13:16-41 Paul at Antioch in Pisidia
42 "And he commanded us to preach to the people , and to testify	32 "And we declare to you glad tidings ; that promise which was made to the fathers.
that it is he who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead.	33 " God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that he has raised up Jesus.
43 " To him all the prophets witness that,	As it is also written in the second Psalm: 'You are my Son, Today I have begotten you.' 34 "And that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken thus: 'I will give you the sure mercies of David.' 35 "Therefore he also says in another Psalm: 'You will not allow your Holy One to see corruption.' 36 "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell

asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption; 37 "but he whom God raised up saw no corruption.
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In both cases there is an announcement at this point that it is this message of the resurrected Christ, that is to be *declared*. Both speakers emphasize that it is God who has fulfilled this. There is a slight difference in emphasis — Peter testifies that Jesus is ordained to be judge, whereas Paul declares that the resurrection is the fulfilment of his promise to the fathers. But these amount to the same thing, since the promise was for a ruler to sit on David's throne.

Both preachers invoke the testimony of the Scriptures at this point, but Paul is much more detailed in his explanation. Effectively he continues the historical narrative, broken off after v.22. Just as God had raised up (ἤρῳ) Israel out of Egypt, and raised up (ἐγείρω) David, so he had raised up (ἐγείρω) Christ in exact accordance with the promises in Psalm 2, Isaiah 55:3 and Psalm 16:10. Peter quoted from Psalm 16 in his first sermon and Paul follows exactly the same line of argument—that David lies in the grave, so the promise must refer not to himself but to his seed. The idea of being 'raised up' also includes a vindication motif. Jesus was "justified in the Spirit" (1 Tim 3:16) even though the Jews had condemned him.

The context of the quotation from Isaiah 55 fits perfectly with the final section of the sermon as it appeals for repentance, "Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." (Isa 55:6-7)

E. "so repent so that your sins will be forgiven."

Acts 10:34-43 Peter at Caesarea	Acts 13:16-41 Paul at Antioch in Pisidia
43b through his name, whoever believes in him will receive remission of sins."	38 "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; 39 "and by him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. 40 "Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you: 41 "Behold, you despisers, Marvel and perish! For I work a work in your days, A work which you will by no means believe, Though one were to declare it to you."
<i>Gentiles believed</i>	<i>Jews rejected (but Gentiles believed)</i>

Both Peter and Paul close with an appeal to believe so that their sins will be forgiven. Peter says, "through his name", and Paul, "through this Man", but they are equivalent statements. The difference is that Paul adds some theological explanation, and ends with a curse.

The statement "by him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses" (v.38-39), explains that Christ is a source of justification which is superior to that of Moses. Paul is once again working with the theme of a new phase in covenant history, and here he comes to the climax—the law of Moses was not ultimately able to justify, but pointed forward to Jesus Christ! Now he has come, the law has ceased from its function. Such a conclusion must have been startling to the Jews, to say the least, especially when one considers that the man whom Paul proclaims as replacing the law, died as an outcast from the covenant.

In Habakkuk 1:2 the prophet cries out to God in complaint that he allows such wickedness in Israel and does not intervene. God answers that he will intervene in a horrific judgment on his own people for their apostasy, by removing them from his land. Paul has shown a progression through history which culminates in Jesus Christ. The stream that flows through Abraham and David runs directly to Christ. The Jews view Jesus as being outside of this stream, cut off from the covenant, but Paul tells them the opposite is true, it is *they* who risk being sidelined. What Paul is saying to the Jews amounts to an ultimatum—unless they embrace Christ, they will cease to be the people of God, they will be outside of the next phase of covenant history.

Paul's synagogue dialogue

Many of the references to Paul's preaching in the synagogue indicate that he followed a method of dialogue or discussion (*διαλέγομαι*). In doing this he was following the synagogue model of debate. We have an example of this style in the book of Romans, which is patterned in the format of questions and answers.^[40] Examples can be found in Acts 17:2, "Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures", and also in Acts 18:4 and 18:19.

That he continued using the same style *outside* the synagogue can be seen from Acts 17:17: "Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there", and also in Acts 19:8-9, "And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus."

Discussion

To summarize, the two sermons are very close in structure and in content, but Paul has a much more highly developed argument from redemptive history. It could be argued that since his preaching was not supported (here at least) by the miracle-working testimony of the Spirit, and he could not claim to be giving an eye-witness account of the events, it was necessary for him to give more attention to the testimony of the Old Testament than Peter needed to give.

Another explanation is that Peter and Paul were men of different backgrounds and with different gifts. Peter was a fisherman, and Paul had received a rabbinic training which gave him a massive knowledge of the Old Testament. Now that his understanding had been unlocked by Jesus Christ, he was able to develop persuasive arguments from redemptive history.

Both sermons are received joyously by Gentiles, but at Antioch, the Jews are split in their response, and eventually drive Paul from the region.

One further comment is that it is interesting to ask why Luke should place a sermon of Paul in parallel with one of Peter? Peter and Paul are the two great Apostolic figures of Acts, and by pairing their sermons Luke is showing the unity of the Gospel message, as it spread from Judea to the rest of the world. These two figures, one standing over the first part of the book and the other standing over the last, preached essentially the *same* message.

4.3 Preaching to Pagan Gentiles

Only twice do we have a record of Paul's preaching to Gentiles who have little or no contact with the Old Testament. Bruce comments: "If the address at Pisidian Antioch in Ch. 13:16 ff. is intended to be a sample of Paul's proclamation of the gospel to Jewish and God-fearing audiences, the present address may well be intended as a sample of his approach to pagans."^[41] The message he gives is very different to his synagogue address, but there are also some similarities.

We should not expect such preaching to insist on the fulfilment of OT prophecy, as preaching to Jews and God-fearers did; instead, an appeal to the natural revelation of God the Creator is put in the forefront. Yet this appeal is couched in language largely drawn from the OT. Martin Dibelius points out that the speech at Lystra shows dependence on the LXX—even more (he thinks) than the later speech at Athens does.^[42]

Audience and Context

Acts 14:8-20 Lystra	Acts 17:16-34 Athens
8 And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked. 9 This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, 10 said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And he leaped and walked. 11 Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!" 12 And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. 13 Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice with the multitudes.	16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. 17 Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there. Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, "What does this babbling want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods," because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection. 19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak? 20 "For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean." 21 For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.

Both contexts describe an idolatry that is excessive to the point of being ridiculous, and which shocked Paul. The Lystrans were so superstitious that they were prepared to identify Paul with Hermes and Barnabas with Zeus, and even to sacrifice to them on the spot. Horrified, they “tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude” (14:14). The Athenians displayed a level of idolatry that caused such a reaction in Paul that “his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols” (17:16).

Acts 14:8-20 Lystra	Acts 17:18-34 Athens
14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out 15 and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you,	22 Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; 23 "for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: To The Unknown God.

Both the Lystrans and the Athenians interpreted Paul’s religion in the framework of their own. To the Lystrans, the miracle showed that he was one of their gods. To the Athenians, he was merely the proclaimer of another god, whom they happened not to have heard of yet. One of Paul’s main concerns is to distinguish himself radically from this conception, and to show that the God he proclaims is utterly outside their own framework. In both cases it was the idolatry that provided a point of contact for Paul.

Acts 14:8-20 Lystra	Acts 17:18-34 Athens
15b and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God ,	23b Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, him I proclaim to you :

Paul points out the rational failings in their systems, and sets the living God against their idols. The Lystrans have failed to observe that Paul and Barnabas are ordinary men of flesh and blood and the Athenians’ own system exposes their ignorance. Although Paul uses persuasive reasoning in both cases, the style is one of proclamation. He announces the true God and demands that they turn to him.

Acts 14:8-20 Lystra	Acts 17:18-34 Athens
15c who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them ,	24 "God, who made the world and everything in it , since He is Lord of heaven and earth , does not dwell in temples made with hands. 25 "Nor is He worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things .

The arguments here are almost identical. The creation itself bears witness to a God who is, by definition, greater than his creation. In 17:25 Paul uses language similar to that of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple: “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!”(1 Kings 8:27). It is also reminiscent of Isaiah 66:1-2, “Where is the house

that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things My hand has made, And all those things exist”

There is not a pantheon of gods, each responsible for one aspect of the universe, but *one* God who created everything, and provides directly for his creation.

Acts 14:8-20 Lystra	Acts 17:18-34 Athens
17 "Nevertheless he did not leave himself without witness , in that he did good , gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. "	26 "And he has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings , 27 " so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for him and find him , though he is not far from each one of us; 28 "for in him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also his offspring.' 29 "Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.

If the first witness provided by Paul is the *creative* work of God, the second is his *providential* care. In 14:17 Paul uses the word *witness*, and in 17:27 tells them that God’s providence is intended to direct them to himself. In Athens he refers to their preappointed times (προσπεταγμένους καιρῶς) “—by which, following the analogy of the Lystran speech in Ch. 14:17, [καιρῶς καρποφόρους] we are probably to understand the seasons of the year by whose sequence annual provision is made for supplying men with food.”^[43]

It has been pointed out^[44] that Paul’s words are chosen to directly contradict the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers. The Stoics believed in cosmic determination and natural law, whereas Paul says that a personal God controls all events. The Stoics taught that deity was impersonal and distant, but Paul says that “he is not far from each one of us” (17:27). The Epicureans said that the soul perishes with the body, and the general Greek view of history was of an endlessly repeating cycle, but Paul announces that “he has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness” (17:31).

Paul’s use of quotations from pagan philosophers has caused some problems. These quotations, from Epimenides and Aratus, when seen in their original pagan contexts, do not teach the one true God. However, by quoting from them, Paul is not validating their belief systems but demonstrating that their paganism was self contradictory. They claimed to be the offspring of God, and yet worshipped gods of stone and metal, inferior even to themselves.

Yet even so, he does cite their philosophers as being truthful. As N. B. Stonehouse has put it, these writers,

as creatures of God confronted with the divine revelation were capable of responses which were valid so long as and to the extent that they stood in isolation from their pagan systems. Thus, thought which in their pagan contexts were quite un-Christian and anti-Christian, could be acknowledged as up to a point involving an actual apprehension of revealed truth.^[45]

Acts 14:8-20 Lystra	Acts 17:18-34 Athens
[16 "who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways.]	30 "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked ,

These verses could be taken to mean that God was not concerned about their sins up to this point, and they were not guilty, but the statements that God had not left them ‘without witness’, and had provided some means for them to ‘grope for him’, indicate that they were still culpable, and repentance from their idolatry was demanded. “His ‘overlooking’ their errors betokened not indifference but patience”.^[46] If before they had some excuse for their errors, now they had none.

Just as for the Jews, the coming of Christ brought in a new phase of covenant history, so did it also for the Gentiles. The difference is that Jew and Gentile were entering the new covenant from different directions, and so the historical preamble had to be different, but at this point the messages converge. The proclamation that *now* is the time to repent and be forgiven runs through both kinds of messages.

Acts 14:8-20 Lystra	Acts 17:18-34 Athens
[turn from these useless things to the living God v.15]	but now commands all men everywhere to repent ,
	31 "because he has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom he has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising him from the dead."

The call to repentance is present in both sermons, albeit in a slightly different place. The repentance is *from idolatry*, in contrast to the repentance demanded from the Jerusalem Jews which was from rejecting Christ, although, as we can see from Stephen's speech, the Jews themselves were guilty of idolatry. In Athens, Paul adds a reference to the judgement at this point, and uses it as a bridge to proclaim the risen Christ. Although the reference to Christ was minimal here, one must remember that these two speeches are Paul's first ground-breaking addresses to these audiences, and those such as Dionysius who 'believed' (17:34) must have received further instruction.

The popular idea that his determination, when he arrived in Corinth, to know nothing there "save Jesus Christ, and him crucified," was the result of disillusionment with the line of approach he had attempted at Athens, has little to commend it.^[47]

Acts 14:8-20 Lystra	Acts 17:18-34 Athens
18 And with these sayings they could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them. 19 Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. 20 However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.	32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, "We will hear you again on this matter." 33 So Paul departed from among them. 34 However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

It seems that neither message received an overwhelming response, but there is no hint given by Luke that Paul regretted the sermons. The fact that Luke gives us this pair of very similar addresses indicates that this was a representative message to such an audience. Maybe it was also a representative response.

Discussion

It is clear that Paul accurately understood the beliefs of those he was addressing, and was not just blasting them for being pagans. On the one hand, he used reason and attempted to persuade them, but on the other, he never appealed to them to make a choice based on whichever sounded most rational to them. The truth was *proclaimed*, as it was to the Jews, and their responsibility was to accept it.

Paul made no reference whatever to the Scriptures for two reasons. First, they would have carried little weight with his audience, who would have viewed Judaism as just another religion, with its own set of religious literature. Secondly, Paul's Old Testament arguments presupposed a fairly good understanding of salvation history. In order for his audience even to *understand* his reasoning, Paul would have had to have spent a long time training them in Old Testament concepts.

Nevertheless, the ideas he presented are firmly rooted in the Old Testament, and the call to turn from idolatry is an echo of the prophets' call to Israel to turn away from the foolishness of worshipping images of wood and stone (e.g. Isa 44:9-20). What is more, there is a parallel between the call to Israel to believe on the basis of

God's gracious dealings with them in the past, and the call to the Gentiles to believe because of the blessings that he has given them. There is an echo, not only of God's goodness as a Creator, but also of the Noahic covenant:

While the earth remains,
seedtime and harvest,
cold and heat,
Winter and summer,
And day and night
Shall not cease. (Gen 8:22)

The reference to a judgement to come parallels that of the Caesarean address in Acts 10:42, the curse on unbelieving Jews at Antioch (13:40-41), and the reasoning with Felix (24:25).

In summary, perhaps the most important thing to be learned from Lystra and Athens is that Paul adapts the message to his hearers, and is sensitive to where they are in their understanding and what they will accept as an authoritative argument. He is also careful not to be misunderstood as 'just another religion', but takes pains to distinguish his Gospel from their current beliefs, as Van Til has pointed out:

Then we must surely do what Paul did, tear our garment when men would weave our message into the systems of thought which men have themselves devised. We must set the message of the cross into the framework into which Paul set it... the doctrines of creation, providence and the consummation of history in the final judgement... the only method that will suffice is that of challenge of the wisdom of the world by the wisdom of God.^[48]

4.4 Paul's Autobiographical Speeches

Paul implores the Roman commander for an opportunity to address the Jerusalem mob (21:39) and permission is given to him. One might have expected him to have used this occasion to present some of his finely honed arguments from the Old Testament, or at least refer to the cross and the resurrection, but Paul chooses not to do so.

At first sight it seems strange that Luke should have included three separate and fairly full accounts of Paul's conversion and commissioning. It would be useful to compare all three narratives so as to understand the distinctive emphasis of each one. The similarities and differences are noted by Bruce:

This speech is closely parallel to the speech delivered before the younger Agrippa (Ch. 26:2-29), but along with the virtual identity of the subject-matter there are subtle divergences of style and presentation between the two speeches, each of which is specially adapted to its audience. Here he emphasizes his education in that very city of Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel the Elder, his zeal for God such as his hearers were showing that same day, a zeal which he had expressed by harrying the infant Christian community in Jerusalem and elsewhere. He speaks here as a Jew to Jews; "the brethren" at Damascus to whom he went with letters from the high priest and Sanhedrin (v.5) are Jews, not Christians; he emphasizes the part played in his conversion at Damascus by "Ananias, a devout man according to the law" (v.12).^[49]

Acts 9:1-18 Luke's account	Acts 21:40-22:1-24 Jerusalem	Acts 26:1-32 Before Agrippa
	21:40 So when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great silence, he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, saying,	1 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for yourself." So Paul stretched out his hand and answered for himself:
	22:1 "Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now." 2 And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent. Then he said:	2 "I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because today I shall answer for myself before you concerning all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, 3 "especially because you are expert in all customs and questions which have to do with the Jews. Therefore I beg you to hear me patiently.

In both cases, Paul presents his conversion and commissioning as a *defense*. Before Agrippa it really was a legal defense, but before the Jews he voluntarily uses the law court metaphor as he presents the evidence. There is a similarity between the two accounts, down to the detail of Paul motioning with his hand and asking for a proper hearing.

Acts 9:1-18 Luke's account	Acts 21:40-22:24 Jerusalem	Acts 26:1-32 Before Agrippa
	3 "I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law , and was zealous toward God as you all are today.	4 "My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know. 5 "They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

The wording here is very similar to that which Paul uses in Galatians 1:11 ff. Longenecker argues that in Galatians 1:14, “**ζηλωτής** here should be taken only as ‘an ardent observer of Torah’ — as it appears also in Acts 22:3”.^[50] He goes on to say, “What Paul is insisting on is that as far as his standing in Judaism is concerned, his credentials are impeccable”.^[51] However, Dunn points out that the term ‘zeal’ had a special meaning to the Jews: “In Jewish circles the classic examples of such zeal were well known: Simeon and Levi (Gen. 34;...). It is notable that in each case this zeal led to taking the sword to maintain Israel’s distinctiveness as God’s covenant people.”^[52] That Dunn’s interpretation is correct will be seen from Paul’s next words, found in 22:4-5 and 26:9-11. The main example of zeal in the Old Testament is found in Numbers 25:11-13:

Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with my zeal among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in my zeal. Therefore say, ‘Behold, I give to him my covenant of peace; and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel.’

Acts 9:1-18 Luke's account	Acts 21:40-22:24 Jerusalem	Acts 26:1-32 Before Agrippa
		6 "And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers. 7 "To this promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain. For this hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews. 8 "Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?

This interjection is found only in the third account, and is a plea to Agrippa to see how irrational is the accusation against him.

That a faithful Pharisee believed in the resurrection of the dead, and saw no fulfilment of Israel’s ancient hope apart from the resurrection, went without saying. But the amazing and indeed absurd feature of the present dispute was that he was being prosecuted for his proclamation of this very hope—and prosecuted by Jews of all people!^[53]

Acts 9:1-18 Luke's account	Acts 21:40-22:24 Jerusalem	Acts 26:1-32 Before Agrippa
1 Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord,	4 "I persecuted this Way to the death , binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, 5 "as also the high priest bears me witness , and all the council of the elders,	9 "Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 "This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison , having received authority from the chief priests ; and when they were put to death , I cast my vote against them. 11 "And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and

		being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.
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Paul can even call upon the high priest to testify of his zeal—to purify Israel from the apostates. In both cases he emphasizes that he was guilty of their deaths, following the model of Phinehas. He believed that to serve God was to be *contrary* to Jesus of Nazareth (26:8).

Acts 9:1-18 Luke's account	Acts 21:40-22:24 Jerusalem	Acts 26:1-32 Before Agrippa
1b went to the high priest 2 and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus , so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.	5b from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished.	12 "While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests ,

Paul was addressing the mob in Jerusalem who considered themselves zealous for the law, but Paul had exceeded them in his zeal, by even going to foreign cities to root out apostasy. Once again he mentions that this was done with the official blessing of the highest religious authority.

Acts 9:1-18 Luke's account	Acts 21:40-22:24 Jerusalem	Acts 26:1-32 Before Agrippa
3 As he journeyed he came near Damascus , and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven .	6 "Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon , suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me .	13 "at midday , O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me.

In both addresses, Paul mentions that the light was *from heaven*, that it was *great, brighter than the sun*, and that this happened at noon, when the sun was at its brightest, and so the special light would have had to have been that much brighter. Paul may have been alluding to Isaiah 9:1-2, "In Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined." cited by Matthew (4:14-16, cf. Luke 1:79). He also is almost certainly alluding to God's creative work, since when he makes a connection between light and salvation in 2 Corinthians 4:6, "For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ", there is a strong parallel drawn between the old creation and the new.

It is also likely that Paul had in mind Isaiah 64:1, "Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down!" which continues: "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind" (Isa 65:17). So the vision that Paul receives is associated with God's new creative work, as foretold in the prophets.

Acts 9:1-18 Luke's account	Acts 21:40-22:24 Jerusalem	Acts 26:1-32 Before Agrippa
4 Then he fell to the ground ,	7 "And I fell to the ground	14 "And when we all had fallen to the ground ,
and heard a voice saying to him, " Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? "	and heard a voice saying to me, ' Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? '	I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, ' Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'
5 And he said, " Who are you, Lord? "	8 "So I answered, ' Who are you, Lord? '	15 "So I said, ' Who are you, Lord? '

Hedrick, in his detailed comparison of these three accounts, says:

Up to this point the similarity among the three accounts is striking—they are virtually the same! The dissimilarity in the verses that follow, however, is as great as is the similarity in the verses compared above. It is the latter "half" of the

narratives that gives each its own distinctive formal character.^[54]

Jesus identifies persecution of Christians as being persecutions of himself, and so identifies Paul as an enemy of the covenant, rather than its defender.

Acts 9:1-18 Luke's account	Acts 21:40-22:24 Jerusalem	Acts 26:1-32 Before Agrippa
5b Then the Lord said , "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting . It is hard for you to kick against the goads."	8b And He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting .' 9 "And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of him who spoke to me.	15b And He said , 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting .'
6 So he, trembling and astonished, said, " Lord, what do you want me to do? "	10 "So I said, ' What shall I do, Lord? '"	

There is a slight variation in the order of words here, which should warn us that Luke does not intend to give us the exact chronology of the conversation. That does not mean that he is in error, just that we must not impose on him our own standards of word-for-word reporting.

There is a repetition in all three accounts of the statement that Paul is persecuting Jesus. The word 'kick' is interesting. In only two places in the Old Testament does the verb **כָּעַר** (*kaa-at* =kick) occur, and in both places it is associated with the apostasy of Israel: "But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked; You grew fat, you grew thick, you are obese! Then he forsook God who made him, And scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation" (Deut 32:15); and "Why do you kick at my sacrifice and my offering which I have commanded in my dwelling place, and honour your sons more than me, to make yourselves fat with the best of all the offerings of Israel my people?" (1 Sam 2:29). This identifies those who persecute Christ as those who kick against the covenant of God and even Christ, the "Rock of his salvation". By implication, the Jews who continued to persecute Christians out of supposed zeal for the law, were in fact, kicking at the very covenant they claimed to be defending, just as Israel had done long ago.

Acts 9:1-18 Luke's account	Acts 21:40-22:24 Jerusalem	Acts 26:1-32 Before Agrippa
6b Then the Lord said to him, " Arise and go into the city , and you will be told what you must do."	10b And the Lord said to me, ' Arise and go into Damascus , and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.'	16 'But rise and stand on your feet ;

Here the accounts differ: before Agrippa, Paul condenses the commissioning from Christ into the Damascus road experience. Bruce points out that this difference can be explained by Paul's sensitivity to what would be important to each audience:

It was important to emphasize on the present occasion that the commission which Paul received from the risen Christ was to a large extent communicated by the lips of this pious and believing Jew, Ananias of Damascus. In the later speech before Agrippa there was no call for this particular emphasis, and so the substance of what Ananias said to him in the name of the Lord is there included in the words spoken by the heavenly voice on the Damascus road (Ch.26:16-18)."

Acts 9:1-18 Luke's account	Acts 21:40-22:24 Jerusalem	Acts 26:1-32 Before Agrippa
7 And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one. 8 Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus .	11 "And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus .	
9 And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank. "		
10 Now there was a certain disciple at	12 "Then a certain Ananias, a devout	

Damascus named Ananias;	man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there,	
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At this point, where the accounts diverge, the distinct emphasis of each version can be observed. Whereas in Acts 9, Ananias was a ‘disciple’, in Acts 22 it is pointed out that he was devout *according to the law*, and that this fact is witnessed by other Jews. At every step, Paul is repudiating the charge that *he* is the lawless one—it is the Jerusalem Jews who are the covenant violators. Detail is removed from the Acts 22 account, such as Paul’s fasting, where it does not serve the purpose of his message.

Acts 9:1-18 Luke’s account	Acts 21:40-22:24 Jerusalem	Acts 26:1-32 Before Agrippa
10b and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." 11 So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. 12 "And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight." 13 Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. 14 "And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name."		

This section was important in the Acts 9 setting, where there is interest in the impact of the conversion of Paul on the believers, but Paul omits it from his later testimony.

Acts 9:1-18 Luke’s account	Acts 21:40-22:24 Jerusalem	Acts 26:1-32 Before Agrippa
17 And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, " Brother Saul , the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18 Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once;	13 "came to me; and he stood and said to me, ' Brother Saul, receive your sight. ' And at that same hour I looked up at him.	

At the hands of a devout Jew, Paul received an immediate (i.e. miraculous) healing.

Acts 9:1-18 Luke’s account	Acts 21:40-22:24 Jerusalem	Acts 26:1-32 Before Agrippa
[15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of mine to bear my name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. 16 "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake.]	14 "Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know his will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of his mouth. 15 ' For you will be his witness to all men of what you have seen and heard.	16b for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. 17 'I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, 18 'to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

Here we have a significant difference between the three accounts. The commissioning in Acts 9, is told to Ananias; in Acts 22, Ananias tells Paul; and in Acts 26, the event occurs later in the temple. There is no necessary contradiction here—all three events could have occurred, but what is interesting is that a different one is brought to the fore in each case. In Acts 22, “The Jewish matrix of Paul’s commission is highlighted by the description of Ananias as a ‘devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there’ (v.12); and the Jewish flavor of the episode is strengthened by the expression ‘The God of our fathers’ and the messianic title ‘the Righteous One’ (v.14; cf. 3:14).”^[55]

When speaking in Jerusalem, Paul deliberately delays mentioning the Gentiles at this stage, probably because he is aware that it will be the last thing he says! In both addresses Paul is called to be a *witness* of the things which he has seen and heard. As mentioned earlier, this motif runs through the book of Acts from beginning to end.

The quotation from Isaiah 42:6-7 (a servant song) is most significant because Luke applies the same words to Christ in Luke 2:32. Here in 26:18, Christ applies them to Paul as he *continues to do* the work of Christ (cf. Acts 1:1). In Isaiah 49:6 they are applied to the prophet, and in Acts 13:47 Paul applies them to himself. Christ is the true Israel—the perfect suffering servant of God, but as he lives and works in his servants, the prophecies apply to them, as Paul says, “I... fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ” (Col 1:24).

Traditionally, the climax of Paul’s testimony has been assumed to be his *conversion*, but the emphasis given in these two addresses is on his *commissioning*.

Paul’s own testimony, that his commissioning to preach Christ to the Gentiles was given him in his encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus, ought to be accorded greater importance in discussions of Paul’s conversion and of the origin of his characteristic and distinctive theological emphases. Paul’s conclusion, ‘therefore to the Gentiles’, seems to lie closer to the root of his theology than has generally been recognized.^[56]

This commissioning is patterned after the Old Testament prophet. Indeed, the Isaiah 42 passage which he quotes is one of commissioning the Servant of the Lord. Paul uses “terms which recall those in which the prophets Jeremiah [fn. Jer 1:7 f.] and Ezekiel [fn. Ezek 2:1,3] received their commissions in earlier days.”^[57]

Acts 9:1-18 Luke’s account	Acts 21:40-22:24 Jerusalem	Acts 26:1-32 Before Agrippa
18b and he arose and was baptized .	16 'And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized , and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'	
	17 "Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance 18 "and saw him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning me.' 19 "So I said, 'Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You. 20 'And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.' 21 "Then he said to me, ' Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles. '"	19 "Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, 20 "but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles , that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance. 21 "For these reasons the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. 22 "Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come; 23 "that the Christ would suffer, that he would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles."

The accounts totally diverge at this point. In the Jerusalem address, Paul pictures himself as the faithful Jew, returned to Jerusalem and praying in the temple. He reminds his hearers that his zeal had been so great, that he had beaten and killed believers—surely “people who knew his former record would be more readily convinced

that his change of attitude must be based on the strongest grounds.”^[58] And with the description of his previous zeal still ringing in their ears, Paul tells of his commission to the Gentiles, but they will hear him no further.

Before Agrippa, Paul uses the conclusion of his speech briefly to explain the Gospel message that he preached to both Jews and Gentiles. It was “that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance” (26:20). The basis on which they should do this is that the eschatological time of fulfilment has arrived in which “the Christ would suffer, that he would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles” (26:23). For the first time in Acts there is a hint of a more developed view of salvation, in terms of it being a union with the resurrected Christ (cf. Rom 6:4-5; 1 Cor 15:20-23).

Acts 9:1-18 Luke’s account	Acts 21:40-22:24 Jerusalem	Acts 26:1-32 Before Agrippa
	22 And they listened to him until this word, and then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!" 23 Then, as they cried out and tore off their clothes and threw dust into the air, 24 the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks	24 Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!" 25 But he said, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason. 26 "For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner. 27 "King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe." 28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian." 29 And Paul said, "I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains."
		30 When he had said these things, the king stood up, as well as the governor and Bernice and those who sat with them; 31 and when they had gone aside, they talked among themselves, saying, "This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains." 32 Then Agrippa said to Festus, "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

The mob is not enraged against Jesus as long as he is a Messiah to the Jews alone, but what angers them is Paul’s doctrine that Jesus Christ has replaced the boundary markers of the old people of God. This can be seen in the expostulation of Acts 21:28, “Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.” What drove them to a murderous fury was Paul’s teaching concerning the Torah, the Land and Temple, and the election of Israel, three of the “four pillars of Second Temple Judaism”.^[59]

Their response to Paul, as he stands before them under Roman guard, is almost identical to their response to Jesus in very similar circumstances: “And they all cried out at once, saying, ‘Away with this Man, and release to us Barabbas’” (Luke 23:18). Before Agrippa, Paul is declared innocent by the Roman ruler in the same way that Pilate found no fault in Christ. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to do more than note that these are two of many^[60] parallels between Luke and Acts which serve to identify Christ with his followers.

Bruce suggests that the arguments were beyond Festus: “things to which a sensible Roman could attach no meaning”^[61] but Agrippa better understood the issues. We have an example of Paul’s dialogue style, as he

challenges the king to believe the message, but he brushes Paul off.

Discussion

Here were two golden opportunities for Paul to present his Gospel message, but at first sight it looks as if he has passed them over in order to give his testimony. But on closer examination, what he says can be seen to be a Gospel message that is perfectly adapted for each particular audience.

The issue in Jerusalem was focused on Paul's dealings with the Gentiles. One might ask why Paul had to be so firm on that point—after all, surely the main goal was to evangelize these Jews, and then when they were converted they could be brought round to a friendlier relationship with the Gentile converts. To argue thus is to totally misunderstand the heart of the Gospel. The Jews wanted the Torah plus the Messiah, because they idolized their Law and boasted in their distinctiveness as a nation. The Law was intended to be a temporary system, pointing forward to Christ, but they had made it their boast, and were so zealous for the law that they had killed the Law-Giver. It was designed to promote love, but they had turned it into an instrument of hatred (Gal 5:14-15). Their zeal for the law had been turned on its head and shown to be *against* the Lord. Like an Old Testament prophet, Paul calls Israel to come back into covenant relationship with their God, and stop kicking at his goads.

Superficially it seems that the choice that Paul puts before them has to do with whether they would accept the Gentiles into the covenant or not, but in reality he is facing them with the question: "Is your trust in your own status as God's chosen people, guardians of the law, or are you willing to consider them worthless and trust only Christ?" As Paul says in Philippians 3:5-8,

...circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.

The issue of the Gentiles was at the heart of their refusal to accept the salvation that Christ brought, and Paul was faithful in not glossing over the issue, but drawing attention to it.

The speech to Agrippa ends with two separate statements concerning Paul's Gospel: verse 20 is an appeal for repentance, and verses 22 and 23 are a proclamation concerning the person of Christ. If we compare these with his other recorded messages, we see that the proclamation of Christ usually comes first and is the basis for the appeal, but irrespective of the order, the usual elements are present.

4.5 Preaching to Individual Gentiles

There are two further evangelistic occasions where Paul's direct speech is reported—the Philippian jailer and Felix. Both of these are individual Gentiles who it seems have no Old Testament background, and in both cases Paul was their prisoner. There is no parallel in the structure of the addresses, so they will be dealt with separately.

The Philippian Jailer

Acts 16:25-34 But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. 27 And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. 28 But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here." 29 Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their

stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. 34 Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and **he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.**

A remarkable difference between the sermons of Peter and of Paul is that even though miracles accompanied Paul, he did not link them into his Gospel message. In fact, the only occasions where this was ever done was at Pentecost, or soon after. We do read that miracles continued to bear witness to the Apostles, as in Acts 14:3, "...the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands", but on occasions, such as here and at Lystra, when Paul could have linked the miracle into his message, he did not do so. When Peter did interpret miracles, they were a sign of Christ's exaltation, and his subsequent outpouring of blessings at Pentecost, i.e. a sign to the Jews of the inauguration of the new age, spoken of by the prophets. This finding contradicts those who claim that miracles were an integral part of New Testament preaching.

The actual message had two parts to it, a proclamation and an appeal, as with all the messages examined up till now (except Acts 22 where the appeal is implicit). Although the appeal to believe comes first here, Paul immediately follows it with "the word of the Lord". In Acts 26:23 he claims that the message he always preaches is "that the Christ would suffer, that he would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles." So we can assume that this is what he explained to the jailer and his household. It is wrong, therefore, to claim that all that needs to be preached is "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved", without a proper explanation of who Christ is, and what he has accomplished.

Felix

Acts 24:10-21 Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered: "Inasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge of this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself, 11 "because you may ascertain that it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship. 12 "And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city. 13 "Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me. 14 "But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so **I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.** 15 "I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. 16 "This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men. 17 "Now after many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation, 18 "in the midst of which some Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with a mob nor with tumult. 19 "They ought to have been here before you to object if they had anything against me. 20 "Or else let those who are here themselves say if they found any wrongdoing in me while I stood before the council, 21 "unless it is for this one statement which I cried out, standing among them, '**Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day.**'"

Acts 24:24-25 And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. 25 Now as **he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come**, Felix was afraid and answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you."

This speech presents some difficulties in that there is no mention of Christ. It could be answered that it is primarily a legal defense, yet in Acts 24:25 when Paul is speaking to Felix on a personal level, he continues to use exactly the same kind of language. The issue of righteousness appears in both verse 16 and 25, and the judgment to come is mentioned in verses 15 and 25. Christ is mentioned in verse 24, and in the context of Paul's use of the term righteousness elsewhere, we must assume that he explained the righteousness that is 'in Christ'.

To understand properly verse 25 it is necessary to know that Drusilla was Felix's third wife, and that he had lured her away from her original husband.

But he made it clear that the Christian faith had ethical implications, and as he talked about these, Felix and Drusilla felt that the interview had taken an uncomfortably personal turn... Paul's distinguished hearers had probably never listened to such pointed and practical teaching in their lives as when he talked to them about "righteousness and self-control and the judgement to come" — three subjects which that couple specially needed to learn about. No wonder that Felix began to feel afraid, and decided that he had heard enough of this for the time being.^[62]

Felix already had a knowledge of the Christian faith (24:22), but refuses to believe because of the demands it would make on his life.

[40] Hengel, p.134, note 238

[41] Bruce, *Commentary*, p.354,355

[42] Bruce, *Commentary*, p. 293. Reference to Martin Dibelius' essay "Paulus auf Areopag" (pp. 29ff.) Heidelberg: 1939.

[43] Bruce, *Commentary*, p.358

[44] Brian Allison, lectures in Apologetics, Toronto Baptist Seminary and Bible College, March 1993

[45] N. B. Stonehouse, *The Areopagus Address*, (London: 1951) p.37, quoted in Bruce, *Commentary*, p.360.

[46] Bruce, *Commentary*, p.294

[47] Bruce, *Commentary*, p.365

[48] Van Til, *Paul at Athens*, "The Frame of Reference", p.15,16

[49] Bruce, *Commentary*, p.440

[50] Longenecker, *Galatians*, p.30

[51] Longenecker, *Galatians*, p.30

[52] Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, p.68

[53] Bruce, *Commentary*, p.489

[54] Hedrick, p.417-418

[55] Longenecker, p. 526

[56] Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law*, p.100

[57] Bruce, *Commentary*, p.491

[58] Bruce, *Commentary*, p.443

[59] Dunn, *Partings*, p.18 ff.

[60] Talbert lists 32 parallels on p.16-18

[61] Bruce, *Commentary*, p.443

[62] Bruce, *Commentary*, p.473

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