

January 14, 2025

Session #3: Acts and the Heart of Paul

1. Paul is a central figure in the Book of Acts, and we want to do our best to understand his heart, motivation and actions.
2. Acts 26, the record of Paul while in prison thirty years following his conversion and subsequent ministry, details Paul relaying his story to Agrippa.
3. Acts 26:9-11 recalls Paul's persecution of the early believers.
4. To grasp the meaning of these few verses requires a return to the actual events as recorded in Acts 6-8.
5. Acts 6 indicates that Stephen was one of the seven selected for a specific ministry, and chapter 7 contains the 50-verse dissertation of Stephen speaking to the Sanhedrin, of which Paul would be a witness to.
6. Acts 7:51-60 we read of Stephen's confrontation with the Sanhedrin, exposing their hypocrisy, pride and subsequent involvement in the murder of Christ the Messiah.
7. As a result, the Sanhedrin executes Stephen by stoning him to death, and Paul is present. This begins a great persecution against the church, of which Paul is a major player.
8. These events, and what Paul has witnessed in the life and words of Stephen, are very much alive in his heart as he heads out on the road to Damascus to accomplish more and greater persecution of the early Christian church.
9. The ABC method is on display here in the life of Stephen in numerous ways. (We see it in Acts in Stephen, go Back to the life of Christ to see him modeling that behavior, and can understand the how with the light the epistles shed.)
10. The principles for clearer understanding of the Word are on full display in these records. When individuals or events are noted in a passage, we need to return to the actual events and scriptural passages in order to gain a clearer understanding of what is being communicated. (Example: Romans 4 mentions Abraham repeatedly, which necessitates a return to Genesis 12-24 to understand the fuller meaning of what is being taught in Romans 4.)
11. Paul is sharing the Gospel with King Agrippa by sharing 'his story', and we wonder how many times in 30 years Paul has done the same. People share 'their story' all the time, but our story must lead to 'His story' if we are to have life indeed.
12. Acts 26:16-18 relays Paul's ministry and mission as assigned on day one. This is what he has been doing for the past thirty years as we listen in on his recounting the conversion experience with Agrippa.

Next Week: More on Paul from Acts 9,22,26.