

Persuading a King

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[0 : 0 0] This is the evening 7pm service at Holy Trinity Anglican Church Doncaster On the 5th of September 1999 The speaker of this sermon is Gavin Ward And he is preaching on the book of Acts chapter 26 verses 1 to 32 The topic is entitled Consuinding a King Heavenly Father help us to understand your word tonight And Father we pray that we might be open to your Holy Spirit as it teaches us In Jesus name, Amen If I'm a little croaky, please forgive me I've been at the MCG this afternoon watching Essendon have a training drill The Sydney Swans Sorry Phil Well I couldn't believe it

I settled in front of the television a couple of Monday nights ago And I thought I'd sit and watch the two part series on Noah's Ark And I thought it would be a documentary and I'd learn something And this would be quite a profitable occasion for me Well it began with a bit of a fight and Noah in a camp And a fellow walked past him and Noah said Hello Lot Hello Lot I quickly scrambled for the Bible and thought Lot and Noah Now I don't think those two guys were in the same century Almost not the same millennium They certainly weren't in the same century And that was the high point of the program It got worse after that Noah began to negotiate with God over Sodom and Gomorrah And I was pretty sure Abraham did that And then I didn't even watch the second night I abandoned it But Vicki watched the second night And told me that Lot came in a boat And tried to board the ark Or in fact boarded the ark Or something like that So it just kept getting more and more bizarre The whole thing

It seemed to me as I reflect upon it That the makers of the movie didn't believe Noah's ark And didn't believe the story from the Bible And that they decided to make a movie That showed in their eyes how ludicrous the story of Noah appears And as I thought about that I thought well that's pretty much common today A lot of people think like that today Certainly amongst a lot of my friends and relatives Etc people think like that And I often hear people say You can't really believe all that stuff in the Bible can you I'm pleased to say I don't hear that comment at Ridley College Where I'm studying But in other circles I do And it seems to me a lot of people struggle with things like Adam and Eve And Noah's ark And Jesus walking on the water But I think the most contentious issue That people battle with is the resurrection of Jesus And Jesus rising from the dead How do you react when people have a go

And say you can't possibly believe that Well today in the reading that Vaughan read for us from Acts 26 Paul provides a defence before King Agrippa I And his accusers And in his defence we discover what Paul believes And why he believes it And we can be encouraged in our own faith As we look at this tonight So you might like to follow it with me This is Paul's fifth and final trial in Israel He's had previous ones If you've been following the series along To the crowd He provided a defence in Acts 22 To the Sanhedrin in Acts 23 To Felix the Governor in Acts 24 And then a couple of years apart In Acts 25 last week That Paul preached on Where he defended himself against Festus And now in Acts 26 He's against Agrippa II Who was really a petty ruler

And had no real jurisdiction But has got an interest in this Paul fellow It's interesting to note the history of the Herods This Herod Agrippa II here His father Agrippa I Had the Apostle James killed We read about that in Acts 12 His great uncle Herod Antipas Had John the Baptist killed And his great grandfather Herod the Great Had the young children killed The young boys killed When Jesus was born So this Herod Agrippa that Paul is now facing Is a representative of Herods over generations Who have opposed truth and righteousness The scene is set for us In the previous chapter Acts 25 Where we read that there was an occasion Of great pomp And pageantry and colour A bit like an English royal occasion I think A lot of colour and pageantry And Festus introduces the case By saying The Jews want this guy Paul dead I can find nothing wrong with him He's appealed to the Emperor

[5 : 04] So he's got to go off to Rome And I need some help Because I don't really understand What the charges are against him I need some help From you King Agrippa Can you help me So that we can clarify the charges As we head off Send Paul off to the Emperor So Paul then In Acts 26 Gives us his defence In the first 23 verses And I've got an overhead Which will help outline this a little bit It was typical of the defences That were offered in the first century When people offered a defence case And so the first It happened in three stages really And the first stage Was an introduction When someone had to offer defence To a court And introduce themselves And we see that in verses 1 to 3 Paul stretches out his hand And that's really a form of dignity And a sign in the first century That I'm very serious and earnest About what I'm about to say And it was sort of a signal A bit like a shooting But sort of It was a bit like that And you put out your hand

And that indicated That you were serious About what you were going to say And then of course He shows great respect for the king Which is a very smart thing to do When you're defending yourself And he says I'm fortunate to stand before you And then he tells the king That he knows King Agrippa Is familiar with Jewish customs And controversies So he's really abandoned The governor Festus And his whole address Is aimed at King Agrippa As a Jew And his defence is flavoured By a lot of Jewish talk He talks about Moses And the prophets And the twelve tribes Etc And we'll get to that So that's the introduction The second stage Is that the defendant Then narrates the events That have taken place From his perspective So we'll go down The narration of the events Well done Kylie Verses 4 to 18 And he makes Two specific points here And the first point he makes Kylie we're on a roll The first point he makes Is that he thought The same Paul thought the same

As the Jews And that's in the first Few verses Verses 4 to 11 there He thought the same As the Jews And he does this in two ways The first way He says in verses 4 to 5 I was raised I was raised like them These people who are accusing me I was raised the same as them He says From my youth I lived as a Jew In Jerusalem As a Pharisee And we know that the Pharisees Were a very strict sect of Judaism They were very righteous And religious Etc as we know And they believed In the immortality of the soul They believed in the resurrection Of the dead And in angels and spirits Though different to the Sadducees Who didn't believe In the resurrection of the body And that's why they were sad You see A few people are going Okay A few are asleep It's an old gag Sorry So The first way That Paul showed That he In his narration The events That he thought like the Jews Was that he was raised like them

The second way He did it As we work our way down He was raised like them The second way he did it It is he reacted To Jesus' claims The same way As they did I mean He was like them He didn't believe That Jesus had risen From the dead He didn't believe All this foey That the Christians Were carrying on about And so under the authority Of the chief priests He locked people up in prison He voted for them To be put to death He punished them In the synagogues Which is sort of an indication That he is whipping them And that he was whipping them In the synagogues And he tried to force The Christians To blaspheme against God And there's a sense here That it wasn't always successful Of course But that's what he tried to do And he says in verse 11 there That I was so furiously Enraged against them He was furiously He was really wound up That he pursued them To foreign cities And that's where he was On the road To Damascus So Paul's first point In his defence

Is that he thought The same as the Jews But then his second point is But I changed But I changed Verses 12 to 18 Why did Paul change?

[9 : 23] Well we read in those verses That he met the risen Lord On the road to Damascus And this meeting Forced a change In Paul's thinking Paul a Pharisee Who believed theoretically In the resurrection Met Jesus who was alive Who had risen from the dead All of a sudden For Paul It's not just a theory It actually has happened I've met Jesus who's risen From the dead Something he thought Might be possible Has now come true And what does he do with it?

Well he changes dramatically And why? Because he received A personal commission From the risen Jesus This is the third time Actually in Acts That this story Of Paul's conversion Has been told by Luke It appears in Acts 9 And it appears in Acts 22 And prior to this And this one's just Slightly different To the other two And this one emphasises That it was Jesus Who spoke to Paul And gave him the commission To do what he went on To do around Preaching the gospel So it's interesting Paul is now operating Under a commission From Jesus And not under the authority Of the chief priests As we read about In verses 9 to 11 He's changed his allegiance If you like So what's Paul's commission?

Well as we read on In verses 16 and 17 His commission is to serve And to testify About Jesus Christ In the words there In verse 17 I'm sending you A reminder Of the commission God gave to the great prophets In the Old Testament In Ezekiel chapter 2 We read He said to me O mortal Stand up on your feet And I will speak with you And when he spoke to me A spirit entered into me And set me on my feet And I heard him speaking to me And he said to me Mortal I am sending you To the people of Israel Very similar Stand up And very similar To what happened To Paul here Who was on the ground And Jesus says to him Stand up Get up And also in Jeremiah Chapter 1 We read In the commissioning Of Jeremiah But the Lord said to me Do not say I'm only a boy For you shall go To all to whom I send you And you shall speak Whatever I command you Now the Jewish listeners Including Agrippa Who was a Jew Would have

Recognized these words And would recognize These commissionings To the prophets Like Ezekiel And Jeremiah And they would have thought Well the great prophets Were commissioned by God To do his work And here's Paul Receiving a similar commission By God To do his work It would have been A real challenge for them Particularly For Agrippa Listening So Paul's commission We read in verses 17 And 18 Is to go to the Gentiles To open their eyes So that they may turn From darkness To light From the power of Satan To God To receive forgiveness And to receive a place Amongst those who are sanctified In other words To receive eternal life And so Paul explains this event To Agrippa And he says Well that's how I was And then I met Jesus And I changed And then finally In a defence case Before a king In the first century You had to prove your case And Paul does this

In verses 19 to 23 The final stage The proof of his case And he details What he's been doing As a result Of the change That's taken place He says I was obedient To the heavenly vision I was obedient To it And I've acted Consistently With it I've gone about Everywhere Calling on everyone To repent And believe In Jesus Christ Who has risen From the dead And he sums up By saying And that's why The Jews Are trying to kill me And want me killed Because I've been Consistent With the heavenly vision I've been preaching About a risen Jesus We'll get back to that But let's just Touch off Let's just conclude It by having a look At verses 24 to 32 The response of the court And it's interesting To note the verdict Of the court And there's a little bit Of an irony I think As we look at the Response of the court Festus Festus has No there's nothing else Christ Festus

[13 : 45] As a Roman soldier Doesn't understand All that's going on I mean he hasn't Understood anything All the way through And he still Doesn't understand And he thinks Paul's mad He's got no idea What Paul is talking about But Agrippa does Agrippa knows What's going on Agrippa's a Jew He understands And he doesn't Want to be drawn Into being a Christian Because of the challenges That that Well because of The confrontation The challenge That he'll be faced So he doesn't Want to be He notes that Paul Might be trying To win him over And we read that In those verses there Are you so quickly Persuading me To become a Christian And such was the power Of Paul's argument Such really was the power Of God's help In verse 22 Paul says To this day I have had help From God And so I stand here Testifying To both small And great It's in God's strength

It's in God's help That he's able to do this And it's in God's strength And help through the work Of the Holy Spirit That it's been so powerful A testimony Before this king The Roman court Felix And now Festus Has found Paul innocent He could go free The Romans Who rule the place Say he could go free But the Jews Have been adamant They want Paul killed And now the irony It's interesting King Agrippa Who is a Jew Who represents The Jewish people If you like Finds Paul innocent The Jews want him dead But Agrippa Who understands Finds him innocent In his words there This man could have been Set free Verse 32 If he had not appealed To the emperor I wonder if this is Fulfilling the words Of Paul's commission From the first story Of his conversion In Acts 9 Where it says He will bring my name Before Gentiles And kings Paul preaches Before the Jewish king

Agrippa here And now As we'll read on And find out Over the next few weeks Paul's going to Rome To preach before The Gentile king The emperor He will bring my name Before Gentiles And kings Let's have a little bit A closer look At what Paul believes And why What does he believe Well we see here That Paul firmly believes In the resurrection Of Jesus As we backtrack To verses 6 to 8 Kylie we can turn that off Now if you like If we backtrack To verses 6 and 8 Paul's argument Goes something like this You see the Pharisees Believed in resurrection And Paul ties that in With the hope Of all Israel The 12 tribes The hope The 12 tribes The Jews That's representing The Jews Israel They had a hope That God will deliver His people By raising someone up To save them A king from David's house And this hope

Gave them life And meaning In their religious life In their daily life It gave them real hope Paul's argument is The Pharisees Believing in the resurrection I'm preaching About the resurrection And they want me dead Because I'm preaching About what they believe in The resurrection There's a gap In what they believe And how they behave They believed in resurrection Do you know When one came among them Who rose from the dead They couldn't believe it Or they wouldn't Believe it And hence Paul's question In verse 8 Why is it thought Incredible by any of you That God raises The dead If Jews can't believe God raised Jesus From the dead On what basis Do they believe In resurrection At all And Paul goes on To say In verse 23 That the Messiah Must suffer And that by being

The first to rise From the dead He would proclaim Light to both The people And to the Gentiles You see Jesus' resurrection Is the cornerstone Of our faith What about you?

[18 : 06] Is there a gap For you About what you believe And the way you behave? Do you believe In resurrection? Do you believe In the resurrection Of Jesus?

Do you believe In a future resurrection Of yourself? You see Resurrection Is a key component Of Christianity Resurrection Is an indispensable Component Of Christianity Resurrection Is the great hope Of Christianity And if God Can raise Jesus From the dead As the first fruits As Paul says In 1 Corinthians 15 Then we all live In the hope That God will raise Us from the dead And into eternal Life with him And our faith Is based on the fact That God raised Jesus from the dead Paul says In 1 Corinthians 15 He goes on If there's no Resurrection of the dead Then Christ Has not been raised And if Christ Hasn't been raised Then our proclamation Has been in vain And your faith Has been in vain In other words He's saying If there is no Resurrection from the dead If Christ didn't Rise from the dead We can all go home And watch the replay Tonight Because there's no Point us being here We might as well Pack it up And go home now If there's no

Resurrection But the fact is That Christ Has been raised From the dead And the evidence Presented for us Here of this fact Is the dramatic Change that took Place in Paul's Life Because he met The risen Lord That's why Paul changed Many today Would try to deny The resurrection Of Christ And sadly There are many In the church Today Who would try To do the same And deny The resurrection Of Christ I was reading Earlier The article That's in the Melbourne Anglican Where even The Archbishop Of Canterbury Was alleged To have Questioned The resurrection Of Jesus And the media When they hear Stories like that Will try to Undermine The church Now he didn't Question the Resurrection Of Jesus He was misquoted But the media Will try to Grab onto Anything Because they Know the Resurrection Of Jesus Is the Foundational

Point of Our faith Much of the Evidence About the Bodily Resurrection Of Jesus Is in the Lives of Those who Believed It The disciples Who were Killed Because they Believed It Why did Paul Change Well as We have Seen he Changed Because he Met the Risen Lord You know Meeting the Risen Lord will Do that Meeting the Risen Lord will Cause a Change The two Disciples On the Road to Emmaus When they Met the Risen Lord Charge Back to Jerusalem To tell Everyone About it The Disciples Themselves Who behaved Like startled Rabbits When Jesus Was arrested And crucified When they Met the Risen Lord Became Powerful Proclaimers Of the Gospel Throughout The world Most of Them to The point Of death To death In fact They were Martyred Because they Refused To not Say that Jesus Rose from

The dead They Continually Proclaimed That he Rose From the Dead Because they Had met The risen Lord When we Come into Contact With Jesus The risen Lord Our lives Change too And we Have a Different Perspective Of life In my Early Working Life I was Two years Into my Working Life And I Was Wrestling With God And saying What do you Want me to Do God I'm Working in This water Business And that's Okay But you Know I Want to Get on With life And It's Got to Be More Than the Water Industry In Melbourne What can I do For you And I Was Really Wrestling With God About this And I Was Praying On the Train On the Way Into Work I Used to Work In Town As I Got off To Spencer Street Station And I Had been Wrestling With this Issue With God Really As I Stepped Onto The Platform Of Spencer Street Station And Headed Off Into Work I Heard A Voice And the Voice Said To Me I Have Great Plans For You But Not Yet In My Time Only And I

[22 : 20] Was Knocked Out At That Point I Mean I Was In Tears I Just Couldn't Believe What Had Happened To Me At Spencer Street Station A Few Years Ago My Whole Perspective On Life Changed At That Point I Had A Different View Of Work And I Had A Different View Of The Purpose In My Life And I Knew God Had Things Under Control A Bit Like Vaughan Prayed Earlier That God Does Have Things Under Control And I Knew That For A Fact Have You Met The Risen Lord Do You Know Him Personally Yourselves If You Have You Know Exactly What I'm Talking About And Isn't It Great If You Don't Know What I'm Talking About Tonight And You're A Bit Like Festus And This Sounds Like Mumbo Jumbo If You Haven't Met The Risen Lord Yet Maybe

You'd Like To Catch Up With Me Afterwards Or Phil Or Paul And Talk To Someone About It Don't Leave This Building Tonight Without Talking To Someone About It If You Don't Know What I'm Talking About So We Don't Have To Be Concerned About Movies Like Noah's Ark And Challenges About What's Written In The Bible But We Can Confidently Believe That Jesus Rose From The Dead God Because Of One Like Paul Who Was So Severely Opposed To Him And His Claims On One Hand Met The Risen Lord And Then Believed Fervently That Jesus Had Risen From The Dead And There Are Many In This Building Tonight Who Also Met The Risen Lord And Are Evidence of It let's give thanks to God for that and be encouraged in your own life because of it let's pray for a moment

Heavenly Father we thank you for Paul's defence and his testimony before King Agrippa all those years ago we thank you for the evidence that's been preserved for us on how a dramatic change occurred in his life because he met you as his risen Lord Father we pray that you might encourage us to tell others about this as well as we have met the risen Lord and help us Lord to be confirmed even more in our faith about not only the resurrection of you from the dead but the great hope that that is for us as we face our future a future as we will rise again when we die in Jesus name Amen God God us

Lord God God God us even we yes we