

Acts 13:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.

Analysis

Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand (ἀναστὰς δὲ Παῦλος καὶ κατασείσας τῇ χειρί, anastas de Paulos kai kataseisas tē cheiri)—the participle κατασείσας (kataseisas, 'having motioned, gestured') describes the rhetorical gesture signaling a speaker's intention to address the assembly. Standing to speak follows synagogue protocol. Paul's hand gesture commands attention, a common oratorical technique in Greco-Roman culture. This introduces Paul's longest recorded sermon in Acts (vv. 16-41), his 'Romans in miniature.'

Men of Israel, and ye that fear God (Ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλῖται καὶ οἱ φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν, Andres Israēlitai kai hoi phouboumenoi ton theon)—Paul addresses two distinct groups: ethnic Jews (Ἰσραηλῖται, Israēlitai) and God-fearers (φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν, phouboumenoi ton theon)—Gentiles attracted to Judaism's monotheism and ethics but not full proselytes. God-fearers attended synagogue, observed some Torah, but avoided circumcision. They became Christianity's first major Gentile converts, forming the bridge between Jewish and Gentile missions.

Historical Context

Paul's sermon follows classical rhetorical structure (exordium, narratio, probatio, peroratio) while remaining thoroughly Jewish in content. The address to 'men of Israel and God-fearers' reflects typical diaspora synagogue composition. God-fearers (like Cornelius, Acts 10:2) represented Gentiles dissatisfied with paganism but hesitant about full Jewish conversion.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does Paul's two-part address—Jews and God-fearers—demonstrate cultural awareness and strategic audience analysis?
2. What role did God-fearers play in early Christianity's rapid expansion among Gentiles, and what contemporary parallels exist?

Interlinear Text

ἀναστὰς δὲ Παῦλος καὶ κατασείσας τῇ χειρὶ
stood up **Then** **Paul** **and** **beckoning** ^{G3588} **with his hand**
G450 G1161 G3972 G2532 G2678 G5495

εἶπεν· Ἄνδρες Ἰσραηλῖται καὶ οἱ φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν
said **Men** **of Israel** **and** ^{G3588} **ye that fear** ^{G3588} **God**
G2036 G435 G2475 G2532 G5399 G2316

ἀκούσατε
give audience
G191

Additional Cross-References

Acts 12:17 (Parallel theme): But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.

Acts 10:2 (References God): A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.

Acts 13:26 (References God): Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

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