

Acts 26:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

Analysis

After the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee (κατὰ τὴν ἀκριβεστάτην αἵρεσιν τῆς ἡμετέρας θρησκείας ἔζησα Φαρισαῖος)—Paul uses akribestatēn (ἀκριβεστάτην), the superlative form meaning "most exact" or "strictest," emphasizing the Pharisees were not merely religious but rigorously precise in Torah observance. This is Paul's third defense speech in Acts, delivered before King Agrippa II, and he strategically highlights his impeccable Jewish credentials.

Which knew me from the beginning (προγινώσκοντές με ἄνωθεν)—The verb proginōskō means "to know beforehand," and anōthen means "from the beginning" or "from above." Paul appeals to eyewitnesses who could verify his Pharisaic pedigree from his youth in Jerusalem under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). His transformation from persecutor to apostle is therefore not the abandonment of Judaism but its Christ-centered fulfillment—the very hope of Israel's resurrection (Acts 26:6-8).

Historical Context

Paul spoke before Herod Agrippa II (c. AD 59-60) in Caesarea while under Roman custody. The Pharisees were the strictest Jewish sect, comprising only about 6,000 members, known for oral tradition, belief in resurrection, and meticulous Torah observance. Paul's training under Gamaliel (Acts 5:34) gave him elite status among Jerusalem's religious leadership.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does Paul's past as a zealous Pharisee prepare him uniquely to articulate the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles?
2. In what ways does God use our pre-conversion background and training for kingdom purposes after we come to faith?

Interlinear Text

προγινώσκοντές	με	ἄνωθεν	ἐὰν	θέλωσιν	μαρτυρεῖν
Which knew	me	from the beginning	if	they would	testify
G4267	G3165	G509	G1437	G2309	G3140
ὅτι	κατὰ	τὴν	ἀκριβεστάτην	αἵρεσιν	τῆς ἡμετέρας
that	after		the most straitest	sect	of our
G3754	G2596	G3588	G196	G139	G3588 G2251
θρησκείας	ἔζησα	Φαρισαῖος			
religion	I lived	a Pharisee			
G2356	G2198	G5330			

Additional Cross-References

Acts 23:6 (Resurrection): But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.

Acts 22:3 (Parallel theme): I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught

according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

Acts 24:5 (Parallel theme): For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes:

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