

Acts 21:27-22:30 – Paul’s First Defense

I. Paul is Seized in the Temple (21:27-32)

A. The Jewish Crowd Seizes Paul (27)

1. Jews from Asia stirred up the people when they saw Paul
 - a. These were probably Jews from Ephesus, where there was also a riot against Paul
 - b. They recognize Trophimus, an Ephesian in v. 29
 - c. They may be in Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost, or they may have followed Paul to cause his demise
 - d. They stirred up all the Jews in the Temple complex against Paul
2. The Crowd Laid hands on him
 - a. They seized him forcefully
 - b. This probably denoted mob violence rather than a formal arrest

B. The Accusations Against Paul (28-29)

1. Paul is Teaching Against Judaism (28a)
 - a. They accused Paul of teaching all men everywhere
 - b. They accused Paul of teaching against the Jewish people
 - c. They accused Paul of teaching against the Law
 - d. They accused Paul of teaching against the Temple “this place”
2. Paul is Defiling the Temple (28b-29)
 - a. They accused him of defiling the Temple
 - i. This was a very serious crime
 - ii. Gentiles who passed into the inner court were put to death. Signs have been uncovered warning people at the gate
 - iii. The Romans understood the importance of this to the Jews and allowed the death penalty to be enacted
 - b. They had seen Paul with a Gentile and Assumed that he had brought him into the Temple

C. The Romans Intervene in the Chaos (30-32)

1. The Jews Dragged Paul Out of the Inner Court (30)
 - a. Jews from outside the Temple and inside the outer courts ran together to mob Paul
 - b. They dragged Paul into the outer court from the inner court and shut the gate to the inner court
 - c. They had every intention of killing Paul
2. The Roman Garrison is Alerted to the Commotion (31)
 - a. The Roman garrison stationed in Antonia (a fortress overlooking the Temple complex) are alerted to the chaos ensuing.
 - b. All Jerusalem was in an uproar

3. The Jews Stopped Beating Paul as The Romans Arrived (32)
 - a. The Commander of the Garrison (chief captain) gathered soldiers and centurions to face the mob
 - i. The plural “centurions” may indicate at least 200 soldiers (a centurion oversaw 100 soldiers)
 - ii. Their job was simply to keep order
 - b. The Jews saw the Romans coming and stopped beating Paul
 - i. They were certainly afraid for their own lives
 - ii. They probably thought the Romans would take over the execution of Paul
- II. Paul is Allowed to Address the Crowd (33-39)
- A. Paul is “Rescued” By The Romans (33-36)
 1. Paul is Bound with Two Chains (33a)
 - a. The Romans simply want peace and quiet
 - b. Since Paul is the source of the disturbance, they place him in chains to find out what is going on
 2. The Roman Commander Cannot Silence the Uproar (33b-34a)
 - a. The commander demands to know the uproar is about
 - i. He wants to know who Paul is
 - ii. He wants to know what Paul has done
 - b. The Crowd again begins to shout and yell and the Roman cannot discern what is happening
 - i. Many were probably yelling in Aramaic or Hebrew which the Roman didn’t understand
 - ii. Some yelled one thing and others yelled something else
 3. Paul is Removed from the Crowd (34b)
 - a. The Roman cannot stop the commotion so he has Paul removed
 - b. Paul is taken to the “barracks” or the “castle” – which was the fortress called Antonia overlooking the Temple complex
 4. Paul is Physically Carried Because of the Mob (35-36)
 - a. As they came to the stairs to the fortress, the crowd became violent again
 - b. The Romans had to actually pick up Paul and carry him into the barracks
 - c. The seriousness of this situation can’t be overstated – Paul is now caught between a rock and a hard place.
 - B. Paul is Identified as A Diaspora Jew (37-38)
 1. Paul Asks Permission to Speak To the Roman (37)
 - a. Paul asks “may I speak to you” in the Greek language
 - b. The Roman is surprised that Paul can speak Greek, we will see that the Roman assumed Paul was an Egyptian
 2. The Roman Had Assumed Paul was An Insurrectionist (38)

- a. At some point an Egyptian led thousands in a revolt against the Romans and Jerusalem
- b. The historian Josephus speaks of this event
- c. Rome repelled the Egyptian's men with the help of the Jews in Jerusalem, although the Egyptian escaped
- d. The Captain thought Paul was this man

C. Paul Asks to Address the Mob (39)

- 1. Paul reveals that he is actually a Jew
- 2. Paul reports that he is from the city of Tarsus, which is not a backwater town.
 - a. Tarsus was granted tax exemption by Rome for staying loyal to Augustus and Marc Antony in their war against Brutus and Cassius after they killed Julius Caesar
 - b. Tarsus was a metropolitan city - Paul was letting him know that he is not just some religious bumpkin
- 3. Paul asks to speak to the crowd
 - a. The Roman probably thought he could disperse the mob
 - b. It definitely couldn't hurt. The mob was already out of control

III. Paul's Testimony To the Jewish Crowd (21:4-22:21)

A. Paul's Introduction (21:40-22:2)

- 1. Paul Begins His Defense to the Hebrews (40)
 - a. Paul stood on the stairs leading up to Antonia
 - b. Paul makes the traditional hand motion of an orator
 - c. The people became silent
 - d. Paul addresses them in the Hebrew tongue
 - i. Speaking in Hebrew would have gotten their attention
 - ii. We will see that the Romans didn't understand what was said
- 2. Paul Addresses the Crowd as Fellow Jews (22:1-2)
 - a. By calling them brethren and fathers, Paul is appealing to the crowd as his Jewish brothers and showing respect among the leaders among them
 - b. This is very instructive seeing that these are the same people who had just beaten Paul hoping to kill him

B. Paul's Jewish Background (3-5a)

- 1. Paul's Jewish Heritage (3)
 - a. Paul indeed is a Jew just like those who are in the crowd desiring his death
 - b. Paul was born in Tarsus which means he is a Hellenistic Jew just like those from the province of Asia who had initially stirred up the crowd
 - c. Paul had been raised in Jerusalem

- i. This was something not every Jewish person in the crowd could say. He was rooted in Jerusalem and the Temple
 - ii. He is drawing a parallel between himself and his zeal for the traditional faith and the crowd who thought they were zealous for that faith
- d. Paul had been trained at the feet of a famous Rabbi, Gamaliel
 - i. This would have been a source of pride for many Jews. Gamaliel was a high profile traditional teacher
 - ii. Paul was taught perfectly according to the strict adherence to the law that the Jewish fathers had handed down
 - iii. Paul was without a doubt zealous for God just as the people of the crowd was
 - Notice that Paul acknowledges the zeal of the crowd for God's holiness and for their religion
 - It is possible to be absolutely zealous for religion and one's understanding, but to be absolutely wrong
 - Notice also Paul is beginning his witness by showing the common ground he has shared with the people in the crowd. He used to be just like them – even down to the persecution. How often we forget.

2. Paul's Past Hatred of "the Way" (4-5a)

- a. Paul persecuted Christians to a much greater extent than these people in this crowd
 - i. He was a partaker and orchestrator of the murder of many Jewish believers
 - ii. He led men to bind and imprison men and women
 - iii. He spared no one, broke up families, and had no problem destroying people's lives. This was how zealous Paul was for what he thought was true religion.
- b. Paul also had access to the Highest Levels of Jewish Authority
 - i. The high priest himself could bear witness to the fact that Paul is telling the truth and was a persecutor of the Christians
 - ii. The elders of the Jews (the Sanhedrin) could also testify that Paul is who he says he is. They gave

him letters to extend the persecution to Damascus.

C. Paul's Conversion (5b-13)

1. Paul Was Headed to Damascus to Persecute the Way (5b)
2. Jesus Appears and Blinds Paul (6-9)
 - a. Paul Sees A Light From Heaven and Falls To The Ground (6-7a)
 - b. Jesus Speaks To Paul (7b-8)
 - i. Saul Saul why are you persecuting me?
 - ii. Paul is told that the one speaking is Jesus
 - iii. Paul is showing that the risen Lord Jesus himself appeared to Paul giving him a commission. The Jews in the crowd needed to hear that the resurrection was indeed true.
 - c. Paul's Companions Witness the Light (9)
 - i. Paul was not just having a dream or vision. Witnesses could verify Paul's experience
 - ii. Is there a contradiction between this verse and Acts 9:7?
 - In 9:7, Luke tells us that "And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.
 - In 22:9, Paul says the men saw the light but did not hear "the voice"
 - The word Φωνή (phoné) means "sound or voice"
 - Here in 22:9, Paul qualifies the word in context by saying the voice "of him that spake to me" – So since the word for "hearing" can also mean "understanding" (i.e. let him who has an ear, hear...) the companions heard the sound but did not understand that the sound was a voice speaking to Paul
3. Paul's Sight is Restored (10-13)
 - a. Jesus Sends Blind Paul to Damascus (10-11)
 - b. Jesus Sends Ananias To Restore Paul's Sight (12-13)
 - i. Paul stresses that Ananias was a devout Jew according to the law as well
 - ii. Ananias also had a good reputation among all the Jews that dwelt there in Damascus
 - iii. Paul is connecting the Jewish faith with the promised Messiah
 - iv. Ananias is sent to Paul by God to restore his sight and commission him to preach the gospel.

D. Paul's Commission (14-21)

1. Paul is Appointed as God's Witness (14-16)

a. Ananias Pronounces Paul's Commission (14-15)

- i. The Account of Ananias' words to Paul isn't recorded in Acts 9
- ii. Notice the Traditional Jewish Emphasis of Paul's Account
 - Ananias is a devout Jew
 - Ananias begins by telling Paul that the God of our Fathers has chosen him
 - He is emphasizing the fact that neither Paul nor Ananias thought they were part of a new religion
 - They were seeing and relating the fulfillment of the Old Covenant
 - God chose Paul to know His will – in the fulfillment of the covenant
 - God chose Paul to see the Just (righteous one) – This was a familiar Old Testament name for the Messiah who was to come – Paul is still connecting his teachings and the faith of Christ with the Old Covenant
 - God chose Paul to hear the very voice of the Messiah
 - God has chosen that Paul would testify to the truths that he has seen and heard regarding the fulfillment of God's promises in the Old Covenant

b. Paul is Publically Identified with Christ (16)

- i. Paul is told to be baptized and call upon the name of the Lord
- ii. Paul is commanded to make a public proclamation of his faith in Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Covenant

2. Paul Commissioned To the Gentiles (17-21)

a. Jesus Commands Paul to Leave Jerusalem (17-18)

- i. At some point later, Paul went into the temple in Jerusalem to pray – notice he was still devout in his devotion to God and to the Temple as a holy place
- ii. Paul sees the Lord Jesus while he is praying “in the Temple” – Paul isn't superseding the temple, he is preaching the fulfillment to which the temple pointed

- iii. Jesus tells Paul to leave Jerusalem because the Jews there will not accept his testimony about the Messiah.
 - b. Paul Reasons With Jesus That the Jews will Listen (19-20)
 - i. Paul, who is zealous for the Jews' salvation, reasons with Christ that because of his zeal in persecuting Christians, the Jews would hear his testimony
 - ii. Paul thought that seeing his transformation and hearing his story would change the Jews' minds
 - Paul beat Christians in every synagoge in which he found them
 - Paul was complicit in the murder of Stephen – even consenting to his killing
 - c. Jesus Sends Paul to The Gentiles (21)
- IV. The Crowd Rages For Paul's Death (22-23)
 - A. The mention of the Gentiles sends the crowd over the edge again
 - B. They crowd shouts for Paul's death
 - 1. Their hatred for the Gentiles is manifested
 - 2. Even the Old Testament prophesies that the Messiah would go to the nations and bring them into the covenant but the Jews rejected the thought
- V. Paul Avoids A Roman Interrogation (24-30)
 - A. Paul Reveals He is A Roman Citizen (24-28)
 - 1. Paul is Set To Be Interrogated Forcefully By The Romans (24)
 - a. The commander, who probably didn't know Hebrew, is unaware of what Paul had just said
 - b. He decides to torture Paul to get answers to his questions
 - c. The Roman scourging was a brutal technique
 - 2. Paul Invokes His Roman Citizenship (25-28)
 - a. Paul Reveals that He is a Citizen of Rome (25)
 - i. Paul asks if it is lawful to scourge a Roman citizen without a trial? He knew it was not.
 - ii. Rome took its citizenship very seriously. It was an honor and privilege and Rome refused to allow its citizens to be humiliated publically without cause
 - b. The Centurion Reports Paul's Citizenship (26)
 - c. The Commander is Shocked at Paul's Identity (27-28)
 - i. Paul tells the commander that he was born a Roman citizen (probably inherited from his family)
 - ii. The commander of the garrison was only a citizen by purchasing the right

- B. Paul Will Be Questioned By the Sanhedrin (29-30)
 - 1. Paul is Released From the Stocks (29a)
 - a. They released him from being examined by scourging
 - b. They had already broken the law by arresting a Roman citizen because a crowd of Jews was beating him
 - 2. The Roman Commander Fears For His Life (29b)
 - a. He knew that Paul was in his right to have him executed or imprisoned
 - b. He knew that Rome would always side with its citizens over any Jewish complaints
 - 3. Paul is Brought Before the Jewish Council (30)
 - a. The commander is ignorant of the circumstances and the charges against Paul
 - b. To save his own skin, or at least to get to the bottom of the issue, he must bring the Jewish Sanhedrin in to explain the issues involved.
 - c. They would have to question Paul because this was a matter of Jewish law.