

The Book of Acts

Chapter 22

Acts 22:6-8

6 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.

7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.

1. Review of Acts 21
1. Chapter 21 included a lot of travel details from Luke, the author of Acts.
2. Including details of their departure from the coastal city of Miletus (west coast of modern day Turkey) [**map: Miletus, Cos, Rhodes, Patara**], and then boarded a sea-

bound ship home to Jerusalem. **[map:
return to Jerusalem]**

3. We saw how James and the elders of the church in Jerusalem received Paul gladly, but they had also had concerns about rumors that were harming his reputation among some of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.
4. The rumor was that Paul disregarded all the writings of Moses and was encouraging other Jews to do the same.
5. To prove these rumors untrue, the elders asked Paul to go to the temple with four Jewish Christians, participate in and help pay their expenses associated with their completing a Nazarite vow.
6. But earlier in the week, someone reported seeing Paul walk through the streets of Jerusalem with a Gentile, and they assumed Paul had brought him into the temple into areas forbidden to Gentiles.

7. That started a public disturbance and Paul was grabbed and shoved out of the temple and the doors were shut behind him, and once in the street, Paul was attacked and beaten by a mob.
 8. Roman soldiers were quick to the scene and arrested Paul and took him to their captain. The chapter ended with the captain giving Paul a chance to speak in his defense to the mob.
- II. Chapter 22—Paul’s Defense Before the Jews (Verses 1-24)
- A. Paul defense of Jesus, not himself
 1. Paul asked to be able to speak on his own behalf to the mob of Jews who had assaulted him and pulled him out of the temple, and also to the Romans who now had him in legal custody for an alleged crime of which they still were not aware.
 2. We learn something about Paul’s heart from what he chose to say at that time. He

- chose not to discuss what he had been accused of, but instead focused on how his life had been totally transformed by Jesus.
3. He had known for weeks that he was going to face trouble in Jerusalem, so perhaps he had already spent those weeks thinking about this very moment and his testimony.
 4. Paul was now their captive, but at that moment, Paul had a captive audience of Jews and Gentiles and saw it as an opportunity to give his testimony.
 5. And what we read in Paul's testimony here in Acts 22 you will find very closely resembles Acts 9 that recorded when these events first occurred.
 6. And he had to repeat this testimony in Acts 26 before the court of King Herod Agrippa.
 7. We learn something very important in this. When people want to argue religion with you, they will have trouble arguing with your personal story how Jesus changed your

life. Agrippa said: *“almost thou persuadest me.”*

B. Paul’s education

1. Paul began with his back story focusing on his Jewish education:

Acts 22:1-3

1 Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you.

2 (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them

[Aramaic dialect, the common language of the Jews of this time, including Jesus and disciples. The Romans would have spoken either Latin or Greek],

they kept the more silence: and he saith,)

3 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.

2. Addressing angry Jews, Paul wisely told of his strong connection to them.
3. The Jewish crowd likely would have understood Paul if he had spoken to them in Greek because most were either bilingual. Greek was the common business language. And many would have been trilingual, because Latin was the language of the Romans.
4. But by speaking to the Jews in their own language was likely deliberate to identify himself more closely with them.
5. He was born in the important city of Tarsus, but brought up and educated in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel, a most distinguished Jewish teacher of the Law of Moses of that day.
6. You couldn't get more Jewish than Gamaliel. He was well thought of and highly respected of among Jews for his high standard of ritual purity.

7. Gamaliel was the grandson of the famous rabbi Hillel that Jews of this era looked up to.
 8. Gamaliel was an elder who was also the first to hold the respected title, Rabban, which related to his role as president of the Sanhedrin.¹
 9. And, having been taught by this great teacher, he not only had been taught the letter of the Law, *“according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers,”* but Gamaliel had also instilled in him a holy zeal for the Law of Moses.
- c. Paul’s persecution of the church
1. Paul reminded the people that this zeal had driven him to persecute the disciples of Jesus.

Acts 22:4-5

4 And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both

¹ The Archeology Study Bible, p. 1604.

men and women.

5 As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.

2. It is likely that the people Paul identified were well known and were either in this crowd or were back at the temple.
3. Look back to Acts 9 that recorded what Paul was just referring to:

Acts 9:1-2

1 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

4. The priests would have recalled this event from 24 years earlier.

D. Paul meets Jesus in Damascus

1. And his mention of this incident led naturally into the testimony of his miraculous conversion on the road to Damascus on that same occasion.

Acts 22:6-7

6 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.

7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

2. If Paul had thought only of justifying himself before the Jews who had accused him of bringing a Gentile into the temple, he would have avoided all this history.
3. But his personal testimony had changed the whole course of his life.
4. But ironically, it was this very salvation story that was the root of all his troubles with the Jews, but Paul still had to share it.

5. The people listened with focused attention as they heard about the brilliant light that blinded him and the mysterious voice that spoke to him, but he risked a lot by identifying who it was that spoke to him:
Acts 22:8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.
6. Paul was asking, “God, who are you?” The answer came back, “I am Jesus of Nazareth.”
7. That would have come across either with convincing authority, because the people of Jerusalem certainly knew of Jesus of Nazareth and how the Jews condemned him to death.
8. His crucifixion had been a big news story in the city just two decades earlier.
9. Or, by mentioning Jesus, it could have put Paul in greater danger, aligning himself with the crucified One.

10. And of course, in this very city the Apostles, Peter and John had been arrested and whipped for preaching the name of Jesus.
11. And there was James, John's brother, who had been beheaded in this city for preaching Jesus.
12. But Paul continued with his spell-binding story.

Acts 22:9-11

9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

11 And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.

- E. Paul healed and baptized by Ananias the Jew
- 1. And in this bewildered condition, Paul was led to another Jew of high reputation, who miraculously prayed that he receive back his sight:

Acts 22:12-13

*12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there,
13 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.*

- 2. Paul's testimony so far was keeping his strong connection with the Jews in the crowd, talking about this good Jew helping him, giving him his sight.
- 3. But Ananias also was the one who told Paul about Jesus the Messiah:

Acts 22:14-16

14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his

will, and see that Just One [the people would have known Ananias was speaking of the Messiah], and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

4. Paul told of his calling, revealed by this good Jewish man, was to be a witness for the Just One, telling what he had seen and heard—just like he was doing at that moment.
5. Notice Paul's mentioned how he received forgiveness of sins: by being baptized in the name of the Lord.
- F. Paul meets Jesus in Jerusalem
1. He then spoke of when he had returned to Jerusalem after his conversion, but was forced to leave suddenly because of a plot

of the Jews to kill him (Acts 9:26-30).

Acts 22:17-20

17 And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance;

*18 And saw him saying unto me, **Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.***

19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee:

20 And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.

2. As Paul reminded the crowd of how he had persecuted the church unto death, it should have caused them to see that was exactly what they were doing to him on that day—persecuting followers of Jesus.

- G. Paul's mission to Gentiles enrages the crowd
- 1. The crowd was with him until this point, but what Jesus told him to do, rekindled their anger:

Acts 22:21-22

*21 And he said unto me, **Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.***

22 And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.

- 2. Right after Paul recalled his participation in Stephen's death, the crowd now turned to killing Paul for the same reason.

H. The Jews' Hostility Toward Gentiles

- 1. The mention of his ministering to the Gentiles sent them into a wild and angry demonstration.

2. The Jew's dislike of Gentiles was primarily a bias against them based on national origin, similar to their hatred of Samaritans.
3. The mob lost their self-control and, tearing off their outer garments, threw dust into the air, by which act they indicated their hatred of Paul, and their desire to tear him to pieces.

Acts 22:23 And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air,

4. The chief captain then put a stop to their disorder and commanded that Paul be brought into the castle—for their own safety, but also to have Paul whipped to get him to confess.
5. This was a legal Roman practice for accused criminals who were not Roman citizens—torture to extract a confession of their crime.
6. Recall that Jesus experienced this same torture at the hands of the Romans:

Acts 22:24-25

24 The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle [headquarters], and bade that he should be examined [interrogated] by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him.

25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?

7. Roman citizenship provided some protection for the accused, similar to protections US citizens have against cruel and unusual punishment, and a right to a fair trial.
 8. Paul questioned their authority to scourge him as a citizen before he was condemned. That put a stop to their plans.
- III. Conclusion – the importance of citizenship (Verses 26 - 30)
1. The centurion was immediately concerned and advised the chief captain to reconsider

his command to beat this man, for he was a Roman citizen.

Acts 22:25-26

25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?

26 When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman.

2. They would become liable to the Roman government for unlawfully beating a Roman citizen.
3. You may recall in Acts 16 at Philippi, that Paul had been unlawfully beaten and jailed, so he mentioned his Roman citizenship to the city magistrate. But only after baptizing the jailer and his household. He was then permitted to freely leave.
4. But now, back in Jerusalem, after the chief captain heard of Paul's citizenship, he came

personally to Paul to inquire about his Roman citizenship.

Acts 22:27-28

27 Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea.

28 And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born.

5. Paul told him he was a free-born Roman citizen, referring to his birthplace in the city of Tarsus. History tells of a special grant by Augustus Caesar, gave all of Tarsus' born residents became Roman citizens.
6. It was the captain's responsibility to learn for what crime he was accused and to give him a fair trial, but he also determined to protect him from the wrath of the angry mob of Jews who were ready to kill him on the spot.
7. It is interesting how that in the gospels, we learned that the Jews had used the Romans

to beat and crucify Jesus. To them, Jesus was just a Galilean from Nazareth. If they had only known, they would have not crucified the Lord of Glory.

1 Cor 2:8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

8. But now, the Romans protected Paul from being beaten and killed by the Jews.
9. So on the following day he arranged a meeting with the council of the Jews (Sanhedrin) and brought Paul down to appear before them.

Acts 22:29-30

29 Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

30 On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from his

bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.

10. His trial continues in chapter 23 as Paul appeared before the Jewish council. Remember, this council condemned Jesus to die. This council had forbid Peter and John from preaching Jesus and had them whipped.
11. Then, it was actually Gamaliel, Paul's former teacher, who had advised the council against killing Peter and John back at that time.
12. So what will Paul's fate be as he faces the same council?
13. And this was the same council that he formerly worked for to persecute and kill other Christians.