

## **The Acts of the Apostles**

“A study of the application of theology to the work of the church as a group”

God Continues in Plan A

### **Chapter Twenty-two**

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September 16, 2006 → September 23, 2006

**Acts 22:1 “Brethren and fathers, hear my defense which I now offer to you.”**

**Acts 22:2 And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew dialect, they became even more quiet; and he said,”**

The crowd did become still as the commander let Paul address them and when he began talking to them in the Hebrew dialect they really became quiet. The common language was Aramaic and Paul talked to them in Hebrew as only a Jew of high standing would have known so fluently. Hearing him speak in the language of the priests really stunned them into silence making them wonder temporarily why they were after him so violently. Mobs do not think rationally so one way to quell such a group is to shock them with something that makes them think. However such a calming is very unstable and little would be required to return it to the irrational behavior of a mob. Paul now starts to give them his history to try to let them know really who he is and what is his driving motive. His conversion experience is given three times in the book of Acts. It is first given in the ninth chapter as presented historically in the words of Luke. It is then given here and finally in the 26<sup>th</sup> chapter. The conversion story is then given in Philippians 3 and finally in 1 Timothy chapter one. The version given here has three parts.

*Paul first speaks of his confidence in the flesh, which should have shown the people that they also should have confidence in his background. In this presentation I see that Satan first blinded Paul so that he persecuted the Christians; then God blinded Paul to prepare him to see the real light.*

**Acts 22:3 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, just as you all are today.**

**Acts 22:4 "And I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons,**

**Acts 22:5 as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify. From them I also received letters to the brethren, and started off for Damascus in order to bring even those who were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished.**

Paul tells them of his background that actually probably exceeded anyone present regarding his Jewish birth, training, and persecution of followers of the Way. He says that the high priest and all members of the Council can testify to all that he just said and

those people will later be called into session. He then relates to all that his final action in this role was to obtain a letter authorizing him to persecute more members of the Way.

*Paul next talks to them about his conversion experience.* I suppose he reasoned that this order of presentation should show them that even a person steeped in the background of the Jewish heritage could be changed into a person who was bound to the new truth. The story also shows us that for such a person often an extreme conversion experience is required. For a person who was dedicated to destroying the Way to suddenly become a convert to the Way was indeed a miracle and required a miracle to make such happen.

**Acts 22:6 "And it came about that as I was on my way, approaching Damascus about noontime, a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me, Acts 22:7 and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'**

**Acts 22:8 "And I answered, 'Who art Thou, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.'**

**Acts 22:9 "And those who were with me beheld the light, to be sure, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me.**

He then tells them of his encounter with the risen Jesus Christ. He was blinded by a light that appeared all about him and he then heard a voice asking him why he was persecuting the speaker. Paul then asked the identity of the speaker and was told that He was the very person whom he had been persecuting. Relating members of the Way to the Lord Jesus Christ meant that whenever a member of the family of God is persecuted Jesus is persecuted. Such an identity of each member of God's family with God is a frightening statement! It is like He said: "Those who persecute one of my children persecute me." Paul then would have realized that the members of the Way were identified directly with God and so their God is the true God whom Paul thought that he had been serving! He says that he has witnesses to the light but that the voice was not understandable to those around him.

*The final portion of Paul's defense is when he gives his commission as given to him by God.*

**Acts 22:10 "And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go on into Damascus; and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.'**

**Acts 22:11 "But since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and came into Damascus.**

**Acts 22:12 "And a certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, and well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there,**

**Acts 22:13 came to me, and standing near said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very time I looked up at him.**

**Acts 22:14 "And he said, 'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear an utterance from His mouth.**

**Acts 22:15 'For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard.**

**Acts 22:16 'And now why do you delay? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'**

**Acts 22:17 And it came about when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I fell into a trance,**

**Acts 22:18 and I saw Him saying to me, ' Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me.'**

**Acts 22:19 "And I said, 'Lord, they themselves understand that in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in Thee.**

**Acts 22:20 'And when the blood of Thy witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving, and watching out for the cloaks of those who were slaying him.'**

**Acts 22:21 "And He said to me, 'Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'"**

Paul told them that he did not hesitate to think about the situation but to immediately state his willingness to do whatever the Lord told him to do. He was told by Jesus to wait and he would be told what to do. Since he was blind he had to be helped, so he let his companions take him to Damascus. Paul did not relate the entire story about Ananias but only told them that he was an outstanding Jew. He only said that Ananias called him Brother Paul and told him that his sight was returned. We remember from our study of Acts chapter nine that Ananias was frightened to go to Paul because of his persecution of the church. The regaining of his sight was told differently in chapter nine and previously there was no mention of his needing to be baptized. There was also no mention of a second visit by God to him in a warning to leave the city. He never mentions the name of Jesus in this defense and it even seems like he was trying to make his encounter by God to be one that would appeal to his audience. Verses 19 and 20 seem to be saying that the Jews should not give him any problems because of what he had done. I do not know his plan with this means of defense but he was a very clever person and he may have been planning his talk to give him an acceptance by the crowd.

However if this was his plan it was quickly turned around when he told them what is related to us in verse 21. The mob was willing to listen to him until he related to them that God told him that he would be sent to the Gentiles. To a Jew, for someone to tell them that God was sending him to the Gentiles was a true measure of the insanity of the person or that the person was a great enemy of the Jew. Either way their patience was exhausted.

**Acts 22:22 "And they listened to him up to this statement, and then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he should not be allowed to live!"**

**Acts 22:23 And as they were crying out and throwing off their cloaks and tossing dust into the air,**

**Acts 22:24 the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, stating that he should be examined by scourging so that he might find out the reason why they were shouting against him that way.**

**Acts 22:25** And when they stretched him out with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman and uncondemned?"

**Acts 22:26** And when the centurion heard this, he went to the commander and told him, saying, "What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman."

**Acts 22:27** And the commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" And he said, "Yes."

**Acts 22:28** And the commander answered, "I acquired this citizenship with a large sum of money." And Paul said, "But I was actually born a citizen."

**Acts 22:29** Therefore those who were about to examine him immediately let go of him; and the commander also was afraid when he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had put him in chains.

The people then wildly stated for his death. The crowd, just as then, today wants to be in control. They want to do the choosing and they are enraged when we say that God does the choosing. They also now say: "away with you." But the Jews were chosen to receive the law! They wanted that to be the final act in God's salvation plan. But the Law is just a step in the process that leads one to knowing that he is not capable of achieving righteousness by that law. So when the correct way is revealed, a person should feel a great relief for he knew that he was lost without further help. Only God could obey His law. But the above is against man as the center and so is the choosing by God. The truly saved person should rejoice at this Good News! The lost will rebel just as did these Jews.

Having the attitude of "I first" will lead to being lost forever. Having the attitude of "I last" will lead to forever being glorified! What we see here and today is rebellion against authority. We must be willing to bow before the final authority of God. If we are not to so bow then we show that our pride is still ruling our behavior.

**Acts 22:30** "But on the next day, wishing to know for certain why he had been accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Council to assemble, and brought Paul down and set him before them.

The commander again shows that he is a very intelligent and thorough person as he wants to understand why the mob was so hostile toward this man who seemed to have not done anything wrong and indeed was a Roman citizen. In the next chapter we will see how Paul proceeds.

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