

Study 34: Acts 22

Introduction

Paul arrived back in Jerusalem, and the prophecies came to pass just as the prophets had told him. He was mobbed and would have been killed except for the intervention of the Romans. He was given the opportunity to make a defence to his accusers.

He addressed them – most likely from one of the towers of the fortress Antonia, but the commander was still confused as to what Paul had done, and his status as a Roman citizen.

Timing: When did these events occur?

Content: What are the major events?

Cast: Who are the major players?

Body of the Study

Paul's defence to the Jewish people - preliminaries

Outline of Paul's speech

How did the Jews react?

What did the Romans do?

Paul was “bound with thongs” (KJV & NKJV) What does this mean?

How does Paul's Roman citizenship protect him?

Homework:

Read the notes as a review of the study.

- *What is the main thrust and irrefutable point of Paul's defence?*
- *What was the turning point in Paul's speech?*

Read chapter 23 in preparation for next week

Notes for study 34: Acts chapter 22

Introduction

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He addressed them – most likely from one of the towers of the fortress Antonia, but the commander was still confused as to what Paul had done, and his status as a Roman citizen.

Timing: *When did these events occur?*

The period of the chapter covers only a few hours, still in AD 58.

Content: *What are the major events?*

Paul's defence to the Jews, his background as a Roman born Greek educated Jew, his study under Gamaliel, an account of his conversion. Appeals to his Roman rights

Cast: *Who are the major players?*

Paul, the Chief Captain.

Body of the Study

Paul's defence to the Jewish people - preliminaries

Paul began by trying to establish some rapport with the people. The first step in that direction was by speaking in Hebrew. We need to remember that even the Jewish christians had some misgivings about Paul's dealing with the Gentiles (21:21), and that the reason that he had just been mobbed – and would have been stoned to death – was for (supposedly) bringing a Gentile into the Temple (21:28-29).

The mob's response to Paul speaking in the Hebrew language was positive, "...they became very quiet..." (22:2 NIV). Paul then built further rapport, by introducing his background:

- I am a Jew
- I was born in Tarsus of Cilicia
- But I was brought up (educated) here in Jerusalem
- My education was under Gamaliel
- I was taught (and implies he observed) the full strictness of the Jewish Law
- I was zealous towards God, just as you (the mob) are

In the past, Tarsus had been a formidable city. It was under Roman rule, which ultimately resulted in Paul being born as a Roman citizen. (Paul's father or grandfather must have done something for the Romans which resulted in them granting citizenship, or alternately his parents may have been born in a Roman Colony and then later moved to Tarsus – refer study 12, p.78). A cluster of Jews had been established in Tarsus, but the city was not known as a "Jewish outpost". Paul's parents were Jews, since he was circumcised the eighth day according to the Law of Moses, and he was a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee.

Gamaliel was one of **the** most respected Jewish scholars, and was a member of the Sanhedrin (5:34). He had died about 6 years before the events of chapter 22¹, but would be well remembered. Paul was saying a bit like *that he was a personal student under Einstein*.

His belief in and practice of the Jewish religion was so strong that:

- He even persecuted the christians
- Even further, he followed and pursued them to cities beyond the region

¹ Reese, p. 808

- He put many of the christians to death
- The High Priest and Council gave him letters of authority (many of the Councillors were apparently there hearing what he was saying)

Paul appealed to the High Priest to confirm his appointment to apprehend the christians “*...as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren...*” (22:5 NKJV). The *brethren* under consideration in this verse is Paul’s fellow Jews, (to whom he was speaking at the time), and those Jews to whom the letters from the Sanhedrin had been sent. At the time of his commission, Joseph Caiaphas was the High Priest. However at this time, he had been replaced by Ananias (23:2). Paul uses a tense that suggests that Caiaphas must have still been alive, and could be called as a witness to support what Paul was saying. Caiaphas was High Priest for 18 years, from AD 18 to AD 36. Ananias the son of Nedebaeus was appointed by Herod, and was High Priest from AD 47 to AD 58. He was killed by Zealots in AD 66 because of his pro-Roman sympathies.²

Paul’s *defence* (22:1) was not against the accusation of bringing a Gentile into the Temple, but was a defence of the gospel. The word used (*apologia*) is a defence of his efforts in preaching the gospel, and especially of preaching to the Gentiles. He did not just want to have the hearers believe that their accusations were wrong, he wanted to bring salvation to them through Christ.

Outline of Paul’s speech

- My credentials as a Jew – birth – heritage – education
- Commissioned by the High Priest & Sanhedrin to persecute christians
- Zealously pursued them even to cities outside the region
- The miraculous event on the road to Damascus
- Others who were with me were also witnesses of this
- Jesus whose disciples I was persecuting spoke to me
- I was blinded by the great light, and unable to see
- Jesus told me to go to Damascus, and I would be told what to do
- A devout Jew named Ananias came and spoke and said *receive your sight*
- The very same hour I was able to see again
- He commanded me to be baptised so that my sins would be washed away
- (Three years after his conversion) Whilst in the Temple in Jerusalem, I was praying, and Jesus again appeared to me in a vision, telling me to leave Jerusalem, because my testimony would be rejected
- I responded that my past record was well known, and the people would listen to me
- Jesus said to leave, and that He was sending me far away to the Gentiles

How did the Jews react?

Until he spoke about the Gentiles, the Jews were listening to what Paul had to say. However, their hate for Gentiles was so strong that the thought of Paul being commissioned to go to the Gentiles was anathema to them. The Jews then rose up, tore their clothes and threw dust into the air. Essentially, they went back into riot mode again. Their cry was “*...Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!...*” (22:22 NKJV) – ie that he should be put to death – the very same action that they were undertaking when the Romans intervened.

The rest of Paul’s speech would no doubt have followed many of his other sermons, and would have been aimed at bringing the hearers to faith in Jesus as the Messiah, and obedience to His commands.

What did the Romans do?

Paul was not in the mob, but was standing on the stairway, probably at one of the towers of Antonia, and was safe from physical molestation. The Roman commander ordered Paul to be

² The Illustrated Bible Dictionary; and Lockyer, H: All the Men of the Bible; Josephus, Antiq 20:5:2
Study of Acts (Revised 2007) by Graeme Offer

removed, and taken into the barracks. Initially, this was for his physical protection, however the commander was still confused by the circumstances. He initially asked the mob why they were beating Paul (21:33). Their answers were confused, and he got many different ones (21:34). In the process of taking Paul away from the mob, he firstly thought that he was an Egyptian revolutionary who was trying to cause trouble again (21:38). Next he found that Paul could speak Greek, and that he was a Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia (21:39). (At this stage he did not know that he was also a Roman citizen).

When Paul asked to address the mob, he thought it would be a good idea and would help to calm them down and resolve whatever the cause of the conflict was. However, when Paul spoke to them, he did it in the Hebrew language, so that the Roman commander was still none the wiser as to what Paul was saying, and what the problem was.

Things seemed to settle down for a while, and Paul had the attention of the mob, however they revolted again, and were ready to tear him apart. The commander thought that he needed to go and inquire of Paul what the problem was, and that there must have been something that he had done that had caused all of this to happen. So he decided to have him scourged until he confessed to whatever it was that he had done “*...the commander ordered that he be brought to the barracks, and said that he should be examined under scourging, so that he might know why they shouted so against him...*” (22:24 NKJV).

Scourging was carried out by tying bits of metal or bone onto the ends of several leather strands on a stick (whip). Tacitus says that seven out of ten people who were scourged died from their wounds, and the other three were carried out on stretchers and most remained crippled for life³. Jesus was scourged on the night of his trials, and now Paul was looking at facing the same punishment.

Paul was “bound with thongs” (KJV & NKJV) What does this mean?

“*...And as they bound him with thongs...*” (22:25 NKJV), Paul was being bound up and made ready to face the scourging. The word translated *thongs* (*himas*) is also translated as *shoelatchet*. So the idea is that the (probably leather) straps or laces that were used to tie shoes, were used to tie Paul up. The NIV has a slightly different rendering “*...As they stretched him out to flog him...*” (22:25 NIV). Probably both of these ideas are correct, and Paul was bound with the leather straps that were used to stretch him out in preparation for being flogged (scourged).

The centurion who was to oversee the administration of the punishment was standing by, and there is no doubt that the punishment was about to begin. At this time, Paul plays his trump card, and ensured that his Roman citizenship was known and asked “*...Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman...*” (22:25 NKJV).

How does Paul’s Roman citizenship protect him?

Up until this time, the Romans were still confused as to who Paul was, and what he had done. He had obviously done and said things that had caused the Jews to riot, when most of them had come from all over the world to worship – what would seem to the Romans to be a *quiet* activity.

Immediately the centurion heard that Paul was a Roman, “*...he went and told the commander, saying “Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman.” ...*” (22:26 NKJV). By breaking the Roman laws, the soldiers would make themselves subject to the same punishment that they were about to give (unlawfully) to the prisoner.

Under Roman law, it was expressly forbidden for Roman citizens to be beaten. Whenever on trial, the Roman citizen could claim his legal rights by proclaiming “I am a Roman citizen”. To claim citizenship falsely was punishable by death.

That the centurion had already bound Paul, was already cause for concern, and could have resulted in discipline against him.

³ Tacitus, *History*, 4:27

The commander showed his reaction by asking Paul about his citizenship. *Paul was a man who was a Jew, who came from Cilicia, who spoke both Hebrew and Greek, and was also a Roman citizen?* He certainly would not have *looked the part* after suffering the beating from the Jews. There were four ways that a person could become a Roman citizen:

- Born in a Roman colony
- Born of Roman parents
- Purchase the right
- Be granted it for outstanding service to Rome

“...Then the commander came and said to him, “Tell me are you a Roman?” He said “Yes.” ...” (22:27 NKJV).

The commander became a Roman citizen by purchasing the right, *“...With a large sum I obtained this citizenship...”* (22:28 NKJV). It had cost him a huge sum of money. *“...And Paul said, “But I was born a citizen”...”* (22:28 NKJV).

Coming from Tarsus in Cilicia, he was not born in a colony. If Tarsus had been a colony, then the commander would have immediately recognised that Paul was a Roman citizen (21:39). So the only option for him to have been *born a citizen* was that his parents must have been Roman citizens. Citizenship by birth was held in higher esteem than to have purchased the right.

Paul was held in the fortress for the night – most likely in the same part of the prison where Peter had been held many years earlier (chapter 12). The next day, the commander brought Paul out to inquire for certain why the Jews had revolted against him (22:30). The commander then called for a meeting of the Sanhedrin and the chief priests to hear the case of Paul’s charge – whatever it might be (the commander was still confused and had not been able to find an answer to this point).

Paul was brought down to the Sanhedrin, and appeared before them just as Jesus had (Lk 22:66-71), just as Peter and John had (Acts 4:5 – 23), and just as the twelve together had (Acts 5:18 – 41).

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