

**the man that
teacheth all
men everywhere against
the people**

Acts 21:26 – 22:30

~ We return to Jerusalem with Paul the apostle in this leg of our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God, and Paul received a royal reception from the church. The problem is: the reception from the rest of the Jews isn't going to be quite so warm and accepting. In our previous report, Paul made his own report to the church upon his arrival. Of course, Paul's custom was to report to the church in Antioch because they are the ones who had commissioned him. Well, Paul has come back to this church in Jerusalem to bring them the gifts he had collected for them on his missionary journey. The church listened intently to his report about how he had reached the Gentiles; but they were much more interested in the thousands of Jews in their own midst who were now professing and trusting Christ as their Savior. Most of these had turned to the Lord Jesus as a result of Paul's missionary efforts. Naturally, the church didn't want a division between Jews and Gentiles – they desired all to be one – so, they ask Paul to go to the temple with the four men who had made a vow. Remember, to the Jews, Paul became as a Jew; and to the Gentile, Paul became a Gentile. See, Paul wasn't doing any of this from a command – Paul did these things from a heart filled with the Spirit of God because he wanted to win people for Christ – and not just push them away....

XXI

26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.

27 And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him,

28 Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.

29 (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)

~ As always, the mob totally misrepresents the facts, and intentionally mixes them into confusion. The mob erroneously asserts Paul had brought Trophimus into the temple. It is critical here to make a very fine distinction: See, Paul was a Jew and a Pharisee, and he was brought up in the tradition of the Old Testament Mosaic System of Levitical Law – he knew the Mosaic Law better than anyone else there. So, when he came to Jerusalem, he went into the temple. Trophimus, of course, was an Ephesian, and was obviously one of the converts of Paul. Trophimus was in Jerusalem, but he wasn't going to enter the temple. Trophimus had no reason to go through the rituals. He wasn't aware of the Mosaic Law and I'm sure he had no desire whatsoever to be a part of it. Friends, you must remember, a daily blood sacrifice of bulls and goats is one offensive undertaking. We're not talking about keeping a Sabbath or not eating meat. That sacrifice was even offensive to the Jews; to the point they didn't really observe it properly, correctly and completely. It was a HORRIBLE affair.

Moreover, as a Pharisee, Paul had taken vows of fasting; and vows to eat certain things but abstain from eating other things. Paul was accustomed to observing the law, friends. Today, we have a whole lot of Christians who are faddists in diet. As we know, meat does not commend us to God. We are under grace. We can either eat or not eat – it doesn't matter. You might want to consider your health or your physical condition, sure - but your relationship to God and your salvation are not inclusive of any legalistic equation. If God's people could only make that distinction today it would make all the difference in the world. If the mob in Paul's day could have made that distinction, they wouldn't have sought to kill him. It would have also ended the bitterness and hatred in their hearts! Paul was teaching that one didn't have to perform the rituals of the Mosaic System to be saved.

Well, his teaching didn't quite accomplish the purpose he had in mind; but it did accomplish a God-given purpose....

30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.

31 And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.

32 Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.

33 Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done.

~ If this secular, lost, pagan and heathen Roman captain had not intervened, this would have been the end of the apostle Paul, friends. Of course, this captain didn't know Paul as some great apostle. The captain obviously thought Paul had committed some heinous crime because he put Paul in chains. Naturally, in the mob, some were saying one thing, and some were saying another – because that's a mob mentality! So, when the captain can't understand the charge against Paul, he takes him into custody to calm everyone down. The captain suspects Paul is a criminal caught in the act; and is amazed when Paul speaks fluent Greek. As a foreign emissary, the captain quickly realizes he has a total misconception of who he has arrested. In fact, the captain apparently had originally believed Paul was a maniacal Egyptian killer....

34 And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle.

35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people.

36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him.

37 And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek?

38 Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?

39 But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people.

40 And when he had given him license, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying,

~ So, we know Paul is a Greek speaking Jew. The captain is relieved to have Paul attempting to calm the crowd down. That brings us to his message before the mob. Of course, Paul is going to recount his own encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus; and the subsequent experience that has brought him to this place at this time. We also see in the next chapter Paul declares his Roman citizenship in an effort to deliver himself from the terrible beating he was about to receive. So, Paul is speaking Greek to the captain, but Hebrew to the mob. The Jews loved the Hebrew language and they understood it. So, the minute Paul started talking, they realized he was one of them. The way the mob quiets down is the same as when Jesus commanded the raging waves on the ocean to be still, too, by the way....

XXII

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, 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.

~ This episode marks the beginning of bitter persecution by the religious rulers. Paul had been one of them – he was a Pharisee. The main reason Paul was so sympathetic and loving towards these religious rulers is because he had been one of them prior to his conversion. He knew exactly how they felt about this Jesus business. Paul had persecuted Christians himself. Well, Paul wants to win them for Christ, so he begins with a background that identified with them. Tarsus was the absolute center of learning in that day, and Paul had attended the finest Greek university there – as we have already seen. The universities in Athens and Corinth were community college satellite campuses compared to the Ivey League of Tarsus.

Well, Paul had an impressive and impeccable background, but he had also spent a whole lot of time in Jerusalem studying under Gamaliel. That was no small accomplishment, either. Paul was highly educated and experienced, friends. You could say Paul obtained his doctorate degree under the most outstanding scholar of the day. So, being informed of that, they're apt to listen to him now. Well, Paul doesn't call the believers "Christians" - and he doesn't use the term "church," either – he uses "that way" because it's something Jews could understand. Actually, I think it's still a good term to use, by the way. "This way" is The Way, The Truth and The Light, by the way! We're talking about the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ now. At this point, you could have heard a pin drop in the streets....

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

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.

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.

~ You will recall when we examined the account of Paul's conversion - in chapter nine verse seven, to be exact – the record says the men who were with Paul “heard a voice,” but I said they didn't hear the voice – what they really heard was a noise. They heard something – but they didn't understand it. This is no contradiction – although it does appear to be one at first glance. I call this out because I think it's important. See this is where the critic likes to pounce. The truth is: there's nothing of interest here for a critic – because they cannot understand Scriptural truths and realities – because they cannot hear the voice of God. The preaching of the cross is foolishness to them who perish. The natural man cannot receive the truth and wisdom of Christ, for they are spiritually discerned....

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.

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.

14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, 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.

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 synagoge 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.

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.

~ Verse fifteen reveals a private interview Christ conducted with the apostle Paul; and I'm sure this happened when he was out on the backside of the Arabian Desert. Well, Paul never forgot he had had charge over the stoning of Steven, as we see in verse twenty, and he confesses it more than

once. That murder left an indelible stamp in Paul's mind, and I believe that's the human factor that led to his conversion. Well, verse twenty-one is where Paul mentions the Gentiles – and this crowd knows Paul had been converting them. Unfortunately, the moment Paul mentions it, the fuse was lit on a great big pile of dynamite. This is where they aren't going to listen any longer....

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

24 The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined 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?

~ The captain of the guard doesn't speak Hebrew, so he has no idea what Paul was saying. All the captain knows is that he has a lawful prisoner; so, he might as well beat him half to death. The crowd is thoroughly confused and totally misunderstood Paul. They thought he was an Egyptian killer – but he isn't. They thought he had brought Trophimus into the temple, but he didn't do that, either. The fact that he is a Greek speaking Hebrew only adds chaos and confusion to their turmoil. The clincher is that Paul is also a Roman citizen....

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.

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.

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.

~ Well, it turns out that the old captain was an ex-slave who had either saved up some cash or someone had bought him out of slavery. One way or another, he had secured his lawful freedom and had advanced high into the ranks of the Roman army. He is, obviously, shocked that he has a fellow Roman citizen in chains. That mistake could have sent him right back to slavery in an instant. That is the only reason Paul will get a fair hearing. If not for the fact of Roman citizenship and a mistake by the Roman authorities against that, Paul's course ends here; and it wouldn't have finished well.

From here on, he is going to have to defend himself against serious charges. He will appear before several government officials; but the religious rulers are planning to kill him before that can happen. They want Paul dead, to be sure – with or without a trial. See, friends, justice and fairness aren't important to a religious ruler. It's still that way today. We're going to see Paul make a defense before the Sanhedrin, and then we'll find him in prison for about two years in Caesarea before he makes yet another appeal and is shipped off to Rome! The Lord will assure Paul he is going safely to Rome, and God assures Paul that His providence is the one conducting him along. We'll see all of these things as we continue on in this safari. I hope you can continue with us ~
