

## PAUL'S DEFENSE BEFORE THE ANGRY MOB

### **TEXT: ACTS 22:1-30**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

1. Acts 22 records Paul's defence before the angry mob in Jerusalem (21:40; 22:1).
2. From this point on we will see Paul making his defence several times. In Acts 23 Paul spoke to the council, i.e., the Sanhedrin (23:1).
3. In Acts 24 Paul spoke to Felix, in Acts 25 Festus, and in Acts 26 Agrippa.
4. There is no record of Paul standing before Caesar, but there are many references to it.
5. In Acts 25:12, Festus, when he had conferred with the council, said to Paul, "Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go."
6. Then in Acts 25:21, Festus said to Agrippa, "But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar."
7. Then in Acts 26:32 we read, "Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar."
8. And in Acts 27:24, an angel said to Paul, "Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar."
9. In Acts 28:19, Paul said, "But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar."
10. In II Timothy 4:16, Paul wrote to Timothy, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge."
11. The word "answer" means "a speech given in defence," and probably refers to Paul's defence before Caesar.
12. Paul's defence here in Acts 22 is basically his testimony (22:1). First Peter 3:5 says, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer ("defence," same word used in II Timothy 4:16) to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."
13. Festus used this same word in Acts 25:16, when he told Agrippa that he gave Paul "licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him."
14. I have divided Paul's testimony into three parts -- before his conversion, his conversion on the road to Damascus, and after his conversion.

### **I. BEFORE HIS CONVERSION**

1. This was "BC" -- before his conversion, or before Christ became his Lord and Saviour. It has been noted that Paul began his testimony in a friendly, tactful way. Proverbs 15:1 says, "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger."
2. Paul identified with his Jewish audience, and he spoke to them in the Hebrew tongue (22:2; 21:40). Some Bible teachers say Paul spoke in Aramaic, which was the common language in Paul's day, but Acts 21:40 and 22:2 both say he spoke in "the Hebrew tongue."
3. Before he was converted to Christ, Saul of Tarsus was a very zealous and very strict Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, and brought up in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel, a well-known and highly respected Jewish rabbi (22:3).
4. Gamaliel was a doctor of the law, and a highly renowned leader of the Pharisees. Among the Jews, he was considered the greatest teacher of that period.
5. Therefore, Paul was taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the Jewish fathers, and with misplaced zeal, he persecuted Christians ("this way") unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women (22:3, 4).
6. In Galatians 1:13 and 14, Paul wrote, "For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers."
7. In Acts 22:5, Paul said, "As also the high priest doth bear me witness." The high priest was still alive and he could verify the accuracy of Paul's speech.

## **II. PAUL'S CONVERSION**

1. After a few introductory remarks which proved to the Jews that Paul was a good Jew with a strict religious upbringing, Paul moved on to the main part of his fascinating life story -- his conversion on the road to Damascus (22:5ff).
2. Something happened on that road to Damascus that transformed Saul of Tarsus from a zealous Hebrew of the Hebrews, a fierce persecutor of the church to the greatest Gospel preacher of all time.
3. In the 1740's, George Lyttelton, also known as Lord Lyttelton, and Gilbert West studied together at Oxford University. There, they agreed to research two key points of Christianity, with the aim of proving them false. Lyttelton set out to prove that Saul of Tarsus was never really converted to

Christianity, and West intended to demonstrate that Jesus never really rose from the dead.

4. Each planned to do a painstaking job, taking a year to establish his case. But as they proceeded, they eventually concluded that Christianity was true and both men became Christians.
5. Lord Lyttelton wrote a lengthy text entitled "Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul," and he wrote to Gilbert West in 1761, "Sir, in a late conversation we had together upon the subject of the Christian religion, I told you that besides all the proofs of it which may be drawn from the prophecies of the Old Testament, from the necessary connection it has with the whole system of the Jewish religion, from the miracles of Christ, and from the evidence given of his reflection by all the other apostles, I thought the conversion and apostleship of Saint Paul alone, duly considered, was of itself a demonstration sufficient to prove Christianity a divine revelation."
6. Paul's conversion is recorded in Acts 9. He explains it here in Acts 22, and he goes over it again before King Agrippa in Acts 26.
7. In all three accounts, there is an emphasis on this great light from heaven, above even "the brightness of the sun" (26:13; cf. 22:6, 9, 11).
8. Three times Paul referred to Jesus of Nazareth as "Lord" (22:8, 10).
9. Paul did not mention that Ananias was a Christian. He referred to him as "a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there," i.e. Damascus (22:12).
10. Ananias said to Paul, "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will" (22:14). It is a wonderful thing to know God's will.
11. Saul of Tarsus was very religious but he did not understand the will of God until he met the Lord on the road to Damascus.
12. God has a perfect will for you and He has a perfect will for me.
13. Furthermore, God wants us to know His will – "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will" (22:14). Ephesians 5:17 says, "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."
14. Romans 12:2 says we can know "what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."
15. Our Lord taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).
16. James 4:14 says, "For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that."

17. I heard about a young man who had great plans but God was not part of his plans. A wise older man asked the young man, "What are you going to do with your life?"

- "Go to college."
- "And then?"
- "Graduate from college."
- "And then?"
- "Go into business."
- "And then?"
- "Make a lot of money."
- "And then?"
- "Get married and start a family."
- "And then?"
- "Make enough money so I can retire."
- "And then?"
- "Travel around the world."
- "And then?"
- "Well...I guess I will die...."
- "And then?"
- "I haven't given that any thought."

18. How sad that most people do not give the things of God any serious consideration!

19. God chose Paul to be a "witness" (22:15). A witness tells others what he has seen and heard. God told Paul to be His witness unto all men (not just Jews, but Gentiles as well) of what he had seen and heard (22:15).

20. Some people believe that Ananias was telling Paul to get baptized in order for his sins to be washed away (Acts 22:16).

21. But that was not what Ananias was saying. Before I go further, let me state some basic hermeneutical principles. Hermeneutics is the science and art of Bible interpretation.

22. An important principle: Always compare Scripture with other Scripture. In other words, Scripture is its own best commentary. All the passages touching on a particular matter (e.g., baptism or salvation) need to be studied and harmonized before truth is found.

23. There are many Scriptures which teach that salvation is by grace through faith. Ephesians 2:8, and 9 says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (cf. John 3:16; Romans 10:13).

24. If we are going to study what the Bible teaches about baptism, we should look at other Scriptures dealing with this in the book of Acts. For example, we would go to Acts 9 and see that Paul was saved before he was baptized.
25. We should go to Acts 26 where we would find that Paul does not even mention his baptism. Not because baptism is unimportant, but because baptism does not have anything to do with one's conversion to Christ. It always follows conversion.
26. In I Corinthians 1:17, Paul wrote, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." Paul was not belittling baptism; he was emphasizing the importance of preaching the Gospel.
27. In Acts 8, the Ethiopian eunuch was baptized after he was saved.
28. In Acts 9, Paul was baptized after he was saved.
29. In Acts 10, Cornelius was baptized after he was saved.
30. In Acts 16, Lydia was baptized after she was saved.
31. In Acts 16, the Philippian jailer was baptized after he was saved.
32. Therefore, the Bible teaches that baptism comes after conversion, not before. Paul was not to wash away his sins by being baptized; he was to be baptized because he had called on the name of the Lord, and his sins had been washed away.
33. Another important Biblical principle: All Scripture must be taken in its proper context. This means that the interpretation of Scripture should be looked at in the light of the verses and book in which the passage is found. This is perhaps the most violated of all the principles and is why there are so many cults and false doctrines around today. It has been rightly said, "A text without context is a pretext!"
34. The washing away of sins is not from baptism, but by "calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).
35. Paul said in Romans 10:13, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."
36. "Calling" here is an adverbial participle. Perhaps the verse would be easier to understand if the comma between "sins" and "calling" was ignored. There are no punctuation marks in the original text.
37. Baptism is a picture of the washing away of sin. But sins are not washed away by water – only the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ can wash away our sins.
38. First John 1:7 says, "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."
39. Baptism does not save anyone, but Christians are commanded to get baptized (cf. Mark 16:15, 16).

40. By getting baptized, Paul was publicly identifying with the Lord Jesus Christ and with His church. By taking this step of obedience, Paul was forever disassociating himself from the Jewish religion and their rejection of Christ (cf. Acts 2:37, 38).
41. To the Jews, baptism was a sign that the new Christian was publicly cutting his ties with Judaism. In fact, it is still that way today.
42. Here in America, where Baptists have been around for hundreds of years, many people take baptism for granted. For many people, it is not a big deal. But it is a big deal to God (cf. Matthew 28:18-20).

### **III. AFTER PAUL'S CONVERSION (22:17-30)**

1. Paul then told his Jewish audience about a vision which he received of the risen Lord while he was in the temple in Jerusalem (22:17).
2. There is no other record of this vision elsewhere in Scripture. The Lord warned Paul to "make haste" and leave Jerusalem quickly (22:18).
3. Paul neglected to mention that Ananias was a Christian, but he reminded his audience that Jews killed Stephen, who he referred to as a "martyr" (22:20). Furthermore, Paul admitted that he consented to Stephen's death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.
4. Up to this point, the Jews kept quiet, but when Paul told them that our Lord had commanded him to preach to the Gentiles, they "lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live" (22:22).
5. The proud religious Jews despised the Gentiles and considered them nothing better than dogs (22:22, 23).
6. W. Graham Scroggie said, "Is there anything more perilous than prejudice, or more foolish than fanaticism? The word 'Gentiles' (22:21) was like a match to gun powder: the magazine exploded...Stand at a safe distance and watch that crowd. What asylum could hold them all! Well, what next? Ignorance and violence generally go together" (*The Acts of the Apostles*).
7. In an attempt to placate the angry mob, the chief captain commanded Paul to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging (22:24).
8. "And as they bound him with thongs (leather straps), Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman (citizen), and uncondemned?" (22:25). This question surprised the centurion, and "he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman (citizen)" (22:26).

9. It was illegal to scourge an uncondemned Roman citizen. Paul was wise to mention this to the Roman soldiers. Philippians 3:20 says, "For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven," but there are times when we are justified in claiming our rights as citizens of earthly kingdoms.
10. Roman citizenship could be bought for a price, and this chief captain had to pay "a great sum" to obtain his citizenship (22:28). But Paul told him, "But I was free born" (22:28), i.e. born a Roman citizen, meaning his parents were Roman citizens.
11. The chief captain thought it best to put Paul before a Jewish council (the Sanhedrin), so the next day, he released Paul from his bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down and set him before them (22:30).
12. If this chief captain thought Paul would get a fair hearing, he did not comprehend the hostility the Jews had for Christians.

## **CONCLUSION:**

1. Many years ago, the great evangelist RA Torrey preached a message entitled, "What Are You Waiting For," and he used Acts 22:16a for his text.
2. Dr. Torrey said, "I am going to ask you who have not accepted Jesus Christ or have not publicly confessed Him before the world, to put to yourself the question, 'What am I waiting for before I accept Jesus Christ and publicly confess Him before the world?', and then I am going to take up your answers and answer them.
3. These are some of the answers Dr. Torrey dealt with in that message:
  - "I am waiting until I am convinced."
  - "I am waiting until I have enjoyed the world enough."
  - "I am waiting for my friends (or husband, wife, etc.)."
  - "I am waiting for a feeling."
  - "I am waiting until I am a better person."
  - "I am waiting until I am sure I can hold out."
  - "I am waiting until I have done something that I could not do (i.e., sin) if I were a Christian."
  - "I am waiting till I am ready to die."
4. From Dr. Torrey's message: "If you wait until your deathbed before you accept Jesus Christ, the overwhelming probability is that you will be lost forever. My first winter in Chicago I got home late one night after a very busy day. In the morning I had been lecturing to my students, answering letters and doing other things. In the afternoon I had been studying. At night I had been out preaching. It was after 11:00 at night when I reached

home. My wife had already retired and...had pinned a note on the droplight. 'Dear Archie, There is a man dying down at 228 North Clark Street. They think he cannot live through the night. They want you to call. Now whatever hour you get home tonight, don't go to bed until you have seen that man.'"

5. Dr. Torrey went on to say that he was tired but knew he had to go and see this dying man. He walked the four or five blocks to the man's apartment and went up to see him.
6. "I saw he was near his end and whatever was done must be done quickly. I stepped at once to his bedside and put my right hand on the outside rail of the bed and the other hand beyond him, and then bent over him so as to be sure he would hear every word I said. It was over 35 years ago, but I remember it as vividly as if it were last night. Oh, how eagerly that dying man looked up into my eyes. I began to explain to him as simply and as briefly as I could just what he must do to be saved. He drank in every word as I was explaining to him the way of life, and, oh, how eagerly he was looking up into my eyes. Suddenly there was a little gurgle in his throat; and I was looking down into the eyes of a dead man, and a dead man was looking up into my eyes, and I was trying to tell a dead man what to do to be saved. Too late!"
7. Dr. Torrey concluded his great sermon by saying, "Oh, men and women, whatever you are waiting for, put away your delay and accept Jesus Christ right now."