

## History in the Making Understanding the Book of Acts-Part Thirty-Six

**Introduction:** This section before us brings Paul's final Jerusalem visit to a close.

- ✓ Like Jesus he had set his face steadfastly toward Jerusalem despite the prophetic warnings that had been issued.
- ✓ When he arrived, the elders met him and seemed to question his authenticity.
- ✓ In the temple they seized him, drug him out, and shut the temple doors.
- ✓ Jews tried to kill him—Romans intervened to spare his life—Romans arrested him.
- ✓ As he was being carried away, he asked to have an opportunity to speak.
- ✓ Spoke not in Greek, but in Hebrew.

### I. Paul's Defense to the People of Jerusalem (22:1-21)

#### A. He spoke of his early days

*"Brethren and fathers, bear my defense before you now." 2 And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent. Then he said: 3 "I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today. 4 I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, 5 as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished. Acts 22:1-5 NKJV*

1. Speaking in their language quieted them even more.
2. His autobiography (Jew from Tarsus, educated by Gamaliel and a zealot for God)
3. So zealous I persecuted Christians (The Way)
4. Was on my way to Damascus to persecute more.

#### Reflection:

We must not make the mistake of excusing our sinful ways as just being zealous for God. (ILL)  
Judging, criticizing.

B. He describes his Damascus Road experience

*"Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me. 7 And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' 8 So I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.' 9 "And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me. 10 So I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.' 11 And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus. Acts 22:6-11 NKJV*

NOTE: Any zeal that turns people away from Jesus or the Gospel is misguided

C. He tells of his meeting with Ananias

*"Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there, 13 came to me; and he stood and said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that same hour I looked up at him. 14 Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. 15 For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. 16 And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.' Acts 22:12-16 NKJV*

1. Ananias devout, law-loving Jew
2. Announced restored eyesight
  - a. God would use a Jew to prepare Paul to preach to the Gentiles.
  - b. Used as a mouthpiece to equip Paul.
  - c. Being a devout Jew and Christian convert are not mutually exclusive.
3. Importance of baptism to one's obedience

D. He explains his vision in the temple

*"Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance 18 and saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.' 19 So I said, 'Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You. 20 And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.' 21 Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.'" Acts 22:17-21 NKJV*

NOTE: Paul is a converted Jew still used to preach

1. Call to preach to the Gentiles (similar to Isaiah 6)
2. Paul argues that Jews will listen better-they know how bad I was
3. Go to the Gentiles-(NOTE STILL: Pauline strategy-Jews first, then to the Gentiles)

QUESTION: Does this mean we should forget those who have rejected the Gospel? America? No! But momentum does always seem to be with the frontiers.

## **II. Paul's Revelation of His Roman Citizenship**

A. They listened until he mentioned the Gospel to the Gentiles.

*And they listened to him until this word, and then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!" 23 Then, as they cried out and tore off their clothes and threw dust into the air. Acts 22:22-23 NKJV*

TRUTH: Prejudice blinds our eyes and deafens our ears

B. Romans decided to interrogate Paul under torture.

*The commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, and said that he should be examined under scourging, so that he might know why they shouted so against him. 25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?" Acts 22:24-25 NKJV*

1. Order to be flogged-he would tell the truth
2. Roman citizens legally exempt
3. Is this legal he said?

C. Word to the commander of Paul's citizenship

*When the centurion heard that, he went and told the commander, saying, "Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman." 27 Then the commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" He said, "Yes." 28 The commander answered, "With a large sum I obtained this citizenship." And Paul said, "But I was born a citizen." 29 Then immediately those who were about to examine him withdrew from him; and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him. Acts 22:26-29 NKJV*

1. The commander bought his citizenship (his name was Claudius)
2. Paul was born a citizen
3. Fear of the commander-Claudius

## **III. Paul's Sanhedrin Defense (22:30-23:10)**

A. Commander needed to hear a coherent account of Jews grievance against Paul.

1. Mob could not provide it
2. So he released Paul to the Sanhedrin
3. The issue was a Jewish offense-they would have to decide

*The next day, because he wanted to know for certain why he was accused by the Jews, he released him from his bonds, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down and set him before them. Acts 22:30 NKJV*

B. Paul's exchange with the High Priest

*Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." 2 And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth. 3 Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?" 4 And those who stood by said, "Do you revile God's high priest?" 5 Then Paul said, "I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'" Acts 23:1-5 NKJV*

1. Paul's bold claim of life with a good conscience before God.

NOTE: Not a claim by Paul of perfection

*For I know of nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord. 1 Corinthians 4:4 NKJV*

2. Anger of Ananias-how dare he! Ordered him to be struck in the face

- a. Ananias-son of Nedebeaus-received office from Herod Agrippa's younger brother-held office 11/12 years
- b. Corrupt-stole tithe from threshing-floor

3. Paul's retort

*Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?" Acts 23:3 NKJV*

(Against the law before he was judged)

NOTE: Whitewashed wall-or to him-wall about to collapse-covered with fresh can of paint

*Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. Proverbs 16:18 NKJV*

Prophetic word

4. Bystander shocked and rebuked-“Talked that way to the High Priest?”
5. Paul claimed he didn’t know!-Law forbids reviling a ruler (Exodus 22:28)

### C. Paul’s shrewd move

*But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!" 7 And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. 8 For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection — and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both. 9 Then there arose a loud outcry. And the scribes of the Pharisees' party arose and protested, saying, "We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God." 10 Now when there arose a great dissension, the commander, fearing lest Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring him into the barracks. Acts 23:6-10 NKJV*

1. Noted the split council-Pharisees/Sadducees
2. I am a Pharisee-charge against me is my proclamation of resurrection (Sadducees denied resurrection)
3. Pharisees thought he couldn’t be too bad/Sadducees more angry than ever
4. All hope of peaceful resolution is gone

NOTE: Was shrewd but Paul was not just trying to create division: This was the central hope of the Christian faith-still is- must be rigorously defended. (NOT: Social progress, acceptance, or warm and fuzzy love-resurrection of Christ!

### IV. God’s Word to Paul

*But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome." Acts 23:11 NKJV*

*When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." Acts 19:21 NKJV*

NOTE: It might look like this would never happen and may delay in the next 2 years-but this word would keep him!

### V. Plot Against Paul (23:12-22)

#### A. Plot formed by Gospel opponents

*And when it was day, some of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. 13 Now there were more than forty who had formed this conspiracy. 14 They came to the chief priests and elders, and said, "We have bound ourselves under a great oath that we will eat nothing until we have killed Paul. 15 Now you, therefore, together with the council, suggest to the commander that he be brought down to you tomorrow, as though you were going to make further inquiries concerning him; but we are ready to kill him before he comes near." Acts 23:12-15 NKJV*

1. 40 plus Zealots-we will get Paul
2. Oath-"anathematizo"-cursed if not fulfilled
3. Deceptive plan

#### B. Plot revealed

*So when Paul's sister's son heard of their ambush, he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. 17 Then Paul called one of the centurions to him and said, "Take this young man to the commander, for he has something to tell him." 18 So he took him and brought him to the commander and said, "Paul the prisoner called me to him and asked me to bring this young man to you. He has something to say to you." 19 Then the commander took him by the hand, went aside, and asked privately, "What is it that you have to tell me?" 20 And he said, "The Jews have agreed to ask that you bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire more fully about him. 21 But do not yield to them, for more than forty of them lie in wait for him, men who have bound themselves by an oath that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him; and now they are ready, waiting for the promise from you." 22 So the commander let the young man depart, and commanded him, "Tell no one that you have revealed these things to me." Acts 23:16-22 NKJV*

1. Paul's nephew gets word
2. Repeats plot to Romans
3. As an un-convicted Roman prisoner-he would be protected
4. Centurion gives Paul title-"Paul the Prisoner"
5. Consistently called that now
6. Paul will take this and add-Paul, a prisoner of our Lord Jesus Christ
7. First time the night vision came to pass (you will go to Rome)

## VI. Headed to Caesarea (23:23-30)

### A. Plan to transfer Paul safely

*And he called for two centurions, saying, "Prepare two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at the third hour of the night; 24 and provide mounts to set Paul on, and bring him safely to Felix the governor." Acts 23:23-24 NKJV*

1. Jerusalem not safe
2. Transferred carefully at night-60 miles to Caesarea (9:30 p.m.)

#### B. Letter to Felix

*He wrote a letter in the following manner: 26 Claudius Lysias, To the most excellent governor Felix: Greetings. 27 This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them. Coming with the troops I rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman. 28 And when I wanted to know the reason they accused him, I brought him before their council. 29 I found out that he was accused concerning questions of their law, but had nothing charged against him deserving of death or chains. 30 And when it was told me that the Jews lay in wait for the man, I sent him immediately to you, and also commanded his accusers to state before you the charges against him. Farewell. Acts 23:25-30 NKJV*

**Conclusion:** Who is really in charge?

NOTE: The great length the Roman general goes to protect a witness to Jesus Christ!

*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? Romans 8:31-32 NKJV*

*No weapon formed against you shall prosper, And every tongue which rises against you in judgment You shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, And their righteousness is from Me," Says the Lord. Isaiah 54:17 NKJV*