

Acts Chapter 22

Verses 1-22: Paul's first of 6 defenses (22:30 – 23:10; 24:10-21; 25:1-12; 26:1-29; 28:17-29).

Acts 22:1 "Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defense [which I make] now unto you."

Paul speaking Hebrew, which surprises them, now addresses these men who had beaten him.

He calls some of them brethren, which is true, because they are his Jewish brothers.

Remember, several thousand of these Jews had even professed Christianity.

Acts 22:2 "(And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,)"

"Hebrew tongue":

Aramaic, the language commonly spoken in Palestine (2 Kings 18:26; Isaiah 36:11; also see the note on 21:37).

We see again here, that they will listen to Paul, because he speaks their language.

Instead of a frightened begging man, Paul seems to have every confidence as he brings his defense to the people.

Acts 22:3 "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."

"I am verily a man which am a Jew":

A response to the false charges raised by the Asian Jews (see note on 21:21).

"Born in Tarsus":

See note on 21:39.

"Cilicia":

See note on 6:9.

Tarsus was the chief city of Cilicia.

"Brought up in this city":

Paul was born among the Hellenistic Jews of the Diaspora, although he himself had been brought up in Jerusalem.

“Gamaliel”:

See note on 5:34.

That Paul had studied under the most celebrated rabbi of that day was further evidence that the charges against him were absurd.

“Law of the fathers”:

As a student of Gamaliel, Paul received extensive training both in the Old Testament law, and in the rabbinic traditions.

Also, though he did not mention it to the crowd, he also had been a Pharisee.

In light of all that, the charge that Paul opposed the law (see note on 21:21), was ridiculous.

He starts out by telling them that he is one of them.

He is a Jew, and had even been trained from early youth right here in Jerusalem under their greatly respected teacher, Gamaliel.

He says here, that he perfectly understands their religious zeal in trying to stop him by the destruction of him.

He tells them that he had done the very same thing.

He knew their law, probably even better than they did, and that’s because of his lifetime study of the law.

Acts 22:4 "And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women."

“I persecuted this way”:

See note on 9:2.

As the leading persecutor of the Christian church after Stephen’s martyrdom (Gal. 1:13), Paul’s zeal for this Jewish heritage far outstripped that of his hearers.

We see that Paul's argument was one they could surely relate to.

He says I was like you.

I persecuted the Christians, because I too thought I must protect the law.

He says that he not only persecuted men, but women as well.

He had even stood and seen Stephen stoned to death.

Acts 22:5 "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."

“Estate of the elders”:

The Sanhedrin (see notes on 4:15; Matt. 26:59).

He is saying here, ask your high priest, I went and persecuted Christians.

Paul, you remember, had been a Pharisee of the Pharisees.

He had been greatly opposed to Christians and Christianity.

Paul had gotten his papers from the leaders of the church to go, and capture the Christians, and bring them back to be punished.

I am sure by this time; some eyes were beginning to open and see what they are doing.

Verses 6-16

The second of 3 New Testament accounts of Paul’s conversion (9:1-19; 26:12-18).

Verses 6-11: For an explanation of the conversion events (see the note on 9:7).

Acts 22:6 "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."

“About noon”:

Paul’s reference to the time of day emphasizes how bright the light from heaven really was.

It outshone the sun at its peak.

Paul has come to the important part, the encounter with Jesus Christ (the Light of the world).

I am sure they were all ears by now.

This great Light that shone more than the noon day sun would get anyone's attention.

Verses 7-8

See 9:4-5.

Acts 22:7 "And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

Paul is giving a true account of what happened to him, but people, who have never had an experience like the one Paul is describing, will not believe.

Acts 22:8 "And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest."

These Jews have already made up their minds (many of them), against Jesus of Nazareth.

In fact, they were part of the group who crucified Him.

If they side with Paul now, they will have to admit they made a mistake about Jesus.

They are not about to admit that they made a mistake.

Acts 22:9 "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."

"Heard not the voice":

This is no contradiction with (9:7).

Since Jesus spoke only to Paul, only he understood the Lord's words.

His companions heard the sound, but could not make out the words (John 12:29).

It is strange that they all saw the light, but only Paul was blinded by it.

Notice, the Lord was speaking only to Paul, so he was the only one who heard.

The message was not for the world, but for Paul.

Acts 22:10 "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."

We discussed it a few verses back, but people will not believe a statement like this unless it happens to them.

Paul is relating in detail what happened, but it will not be accepted.

Acts 22:11 "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."

“Glory of that light”:

Paul’s companions saw the light, but only he saw the Lord Jesus Christ (verse 14; 9:7, 17, 27; 26:16; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8).

This message from Paul, about the Light shining so brightly that it blinded him, should be a warning to all these people listening.

Paul is trying to tell them that he was blind physically and spiritually, until God opened his eyes.

He really is saying to these people, open your eyes and see.

Acts 22:12-13 "And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt [there], "Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him."

“Ananias”:

See note on 9:10.

His testimony as a respected member of Damascus’ Jewish community would carry weight with Paul’s hostile audience.

Paul tells them that Ananias was a Jew, although he does not tell them that he had been converted to Christianity.

These men, that Paul was speaking to here, would not have appreciated the fact that he had become a Christian.

Acts 22:14 "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."

“That Just One”:

A title given to the Messiah (3:14; 7:52; Isa. 53:11).

This Scripture above (if you believe it to be true), separates Paul into a class of a very few men in all of history, such as Moses.

For God to totally reveal Himself to a man or woman, means that He has set them aside to do a great job for the kingdom.

These people, Paul is speaking to, who accept this as truth would be sold out as his followers.

The big catch is, they will not believe that this is truth, because it hasn't happened to them.

Acts 22:15 "For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard."

“His witness”:

Paul never wavered in his claim to have seen the risen, glorified Christ on the Damascus road (see note on verse 11).

Just the fact that Paul has used the statement all men, will turn these people off.

They do not believe that God is interested in all men.

They believe that God is the God of just the Jews.

Acts 22:16 "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

“Wash away thy sins”:

Grammatically the phrase, “calling on His name,” precedes “Get up and be baptized.”

Salvation comes from calling on the name of the Lord (Rom. 10:9-10, 13), not from being baptized (see note on 2:38).

Some believe that this statement teaches baptismal regeneration, that baptism is required for salvation.

Several factors must be considered.

(1) The historical narrative of Paul’s conversion in chapter 9 shows that he was saved and filled with the Holy Spirit before his baptism.

(2) The same is true of Cornelius’s conversion in chapter 10. He was clearly saved and baptized with the Spirit before he was “baptized” in water (10:47).

(3) More importantly, one must listen to Paul’s teaching on this subject. Regeneration, not water baptism, washes away our “sins” (Titus 3:5). In fact, Paul helps us to see more properly the relation of baptism to regeneration by minimizing baptism (1 Cor. 1:14-17).

(4) The other apostles agree with these teachings. The redeeming blood of Christ washes away our sins (1 Pet. 3:21; 1 John 1:7; Rev. 1:5).

(5) The means by which sins are washed away is indicated by the participle “calling on.” The verse may then be rendered, “Be baptized, and wash away thy sins by calling on the name of the Lord.”

Water baptism is an outward action symbolizing what regeneration has already accomplished in the Christian’s life.

Paul again here, mentions the baptism of repentance, and that’s because the Jews understand that type of baptism.

They will not fuss at the name of the Lord, because all through Moses' writings God is spoken of as Lord.

Verses 17-18

Paul provides an inside look at his first post-conversion trip to “Jerusalem.”

In the historical narrative (9:26-30), Luke gives the concerned urging of his brethren as the reason for Paul’s departure from Jerusalem.

Here Paul informs us that the reason also involved God’s command.

Paul in a “trance,” was told by God to; “get ... out” of Jerusalem quickly.

An important aspect of biblical interpretation is illustrated here: compare Scripture with other Scripture, especially with parallel accounts.

Acts 22:17 "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;"

“When I was come again to Jerusalem”:

After a brief ministry in Damascus (9:20-25) and 3 years in Nabatean Arabia (Gal. 1:17-18).

“A trance”:

Paul was carried beyond his senses into the supernatural realm so that he could receive revelation from Jesus Christ.

The experience was unique to the apostles, since only Peter (10:10; 11:5), and John (Rev. 1:10), had similar revelations.

This was the fourth of 6 visions that was received by Paul in Acts (9:3-6; 16:9-10; 18:9-10; 23:11; 27:23-24).

We see, that when Paul was a new Christian, God had warned him that these Jews would not accept him or his new found relationship with God.

Had Paul not had this vision in the Temple, he would have stayed and with the boldness of a new Christian, they would have killed him.

Acts 22:18 "And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me."

God warned him to leave Jerusalem.

These Jews in the temple in Jerusalem (on the whole part), were too convinced that their way was the only way.

They would not, at this time, accept Christianity.

These Jews, Paul is telling this to now, are not going to like hearing this.

Acts 22:19 "And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee:"

Paul is desperately trying to tell these people that he was just like them before his eyes were opened to the truth.

He had been cruel to Christians everywhere before he was saved, and that is what he is now saying here.

He says, I learned better.

Acts 22:20 "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."

“Martyr Stephen”:

See notes on 6:5; 7:54-60.

“Consenting”:

See verse 8:1.

They all probably knew about Stephen.

Probably, some of them were involved in the stoning.

He is saying here, that he actually okayed the killing of Stephen.

Acts Chapter 22 Questions

1. Who did Paul address in his speech?
2. What did the word brethren reveal?
3. What is so unusual about these Jews?
4. Why does it say they kept silent and heard Paul?
5. What did Paul say he was?
6. Where was he born?
7. Where was he raised?
8. Who was his teacher?
9. How and what was Paul taught in his youth?
10. What one word did he use to describe his standing toward God?
11. In verse 4 we find that Paul had persecuted whom?
12. How severely had Paul persecuted them?
13. Who did he say could bear witness of Paul getting letters to go and bring in the Christians?
14. Where was Paul headed to capture Christians and bring them to Jerusalem, when he saw the Light?
15. What sect of the Jews was Paul?
16. What time of day was it when this bright Light shone from heaven?
17. What did the voice from heaven say?
18. Who did the voice say He was?
19. How did those with Paul know something happened?
20. What did Paul call this voice?
21. What happened to Paul physically from the Light?

22. Who was to pray for Paul, so that he might see?
23. Why will what Paul said in verse 14 anger this mob?
24. Who was Paul to be a witness to?
25. Why did Paul speak of the baptism of repentance?
26. What did Paul mean about a trance?
27. Why did God tell Paul to leave Jerusalem?
28. What did Paul tell the Lord that all in Jerusalem knew about him?
29. What specific martyr had Paul consented to his death?
30. The Lord told Paul to depart and he would send him far to whom?
31. Why would this make the Jews even angrier?