

LAST week we covered chapter 21 where Paul's agreement to take 4 Christian Jewish Men into the temple to fulfill their Nazirite vows led to a near riot and a severe beating for Paul. Before we concluded, I read the first 5 verses of Chapter 22:

(Acts 22:1) "Brethren and fathers, hear 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.

Paul begins by telling them that he is STILL a Jew, having been a Pharisee under Gamaliel, one of the great teachers of that time. He was taught according to the "strictness of our father's law" which certainly includes the Oral Traditions, as he wrote about in the Book of Galatians:

Galatians 1:13-14 For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and *tried to* destroy it. (14) And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

He relates how, with permission of the council of elders, he travelled to Damascus to bring back the traitorous Jews who believed that Jesus was the Messiah.

He then gives his testimony of his encounter with Jesus:

(Acts 22:6) "Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me.

(Acts 22:7) And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'

(Acts 22:8) So I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.'

(Acts 22:9) "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.

(Acts 22:10) 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.'

(Acts 22:11) 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 22:12) "Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt *there*,

(Acts 22:13) 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.**

This proud Pharisee of Pharisees was on the floor...having to look up at this Christian Jew whom he would have certainly arrested had Jesus not intervened!

The above we have read in Chapter 9 (and we will read about it again in Chapter 26.

The next 3 verses are “new” in the sense of additional details. Like most of us who have given our testimonies, they are not the same each time; we remember some new details.

(Acts 22:14) 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.'**

You need to make note of “the God of our fathers” – Paul is using specific phrases to show his listeners that it was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who was orchestrating this.

And he also uses a name with which they are familiar to describe the Messiah:

The “Just One”:

Deuteronomy 32:4 *He is* the Rock, His work *is* perfect; For all His ways *are* justice, A God of truth and without injustice; Righteous and upright *is* He.

This was understood as a description of King Messiah!

Verse 16 needs special attention:

Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'

The 'Believers Bible Commentary' speaks on Verse 16:
((strikethroughs are mine used to remove irrelevant thoughts))

Verse 16 has been misused to teach baptismal regeneration. ((rather than Holy Spirit regeneration)) ~~It is possible that the verse only applies to Paul as a Jew who needed to dissociate himself from his Christ-rejecting nation by water baptism (see comments on [Act 2:38](#)).~~

There are many opinions but the BBC states:

“A simpler solution, based on the grammatical construction of the original is as follows: Unlike the KJV, which punctuates as if there are four items in a row on the same level, [the NKJV](#), following the original, pairs the first two items and the second two items. In the Greek there is a finite verb modified by a participle in each half of the verse. **A literal rendering would be: “Having arisen be baptized, and have your sins washed off (by) calling on the name of the Lord.”** This last clause is supported by general biblical teaching (cf. [Joe 2:32](#); [Act 2:21](#); [Rom 10:13](#)).”

Romans 10:13 For "WHOEVER CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE SAVED." (which quotes Joel 2:32)

(Acts 22:17) "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.'** "

Galatians 1:15-19 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called *me* through His grace, **(16)** to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, **(17)** nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those *who were* apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. **(18)** Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. **(19)** But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

This is another addition to his testimony. Remember in Chapter 9:

Acts 9:13-16 Then Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. **(14)** And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.” **(15)** But the Lord said to him, “**Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. (16) For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.**”

Paul went out preaching in the synagogues of Damascus, but it doesn't say here that Ananias told him what Jesus said about his calling.

(Acts 22:22) 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!"

As we have seen, with the Jews, one can have a difference of opinion with another (most have different opinions even with their selves) ; one can believe or not believe the same exact things **BUT** as long as you are all Jews, these things will be tolerated! Even the first believers were accepted in Jerusalem as a new sect of Judaism (even though that attitude didn't last long!).

HOWEVER, if you to go to the heathen, the pagans, the unclean, the **GENTILES** and all hell breaks loose! And if your “so-called god” (Jesus) tells you to go, that’s a straw that breaks the

camel's back.

We need to understand that for 1500 years the Jews were commanded to remain apart from the gentiles. It was built into their laws:

Leviticus 19:26-28 'You shall not eat *anything* with the blood, nor shall you practice divination or soothsaying.

(27) You shall not shave around the sides of your head, nor shall you disfigure the edges of your beard.

(28) You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I *am* the LORD.

Exodus 20:3-5 "You shall have no other gods before Me.

(4) "You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness *of anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth;

Exodus 20:8-10 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. (9) Six days you shall labor and do all your work, (10) but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates.

Leviticus 11:2-4 "Speak to the children of Israel, saying,

'These *are* the animals which you may eat among all the animals that *are* on the earth:

(3) Among the animals, whatever divides the hoof, having cloven hooves *and* chewing the cud—that you may eat.

(4) Nevertheless these you shall not eat among those that chew the cud or those that have cloven hooves: the camel, because it chews the cud but does not have cloven hooves, is unclean to you;

Leviticus 19:26-28 'You shall not eat *anything* with the blood, nor shall you practice divination or soothsaying. (27) You shall not shave around the sides of your head, nor shall you disfigure the edges of your beard. (28) You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I *am* the LORD.

God wanted His chosen ones to be consecrated to Himself and to be separated from the nations around them.

But here's where things go off track:

Leviticus 19:17-18 '**You shall not hate your brother** in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. (18) You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, **but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I *am* the LORD.**

Here's where Rabbinic interpretation (and a healthy dose of prejudice) kicks in:

Who is my brother?

Who is my neighbor?

The Rabbi's narrowly interpreted these types of people as Jews therefore everyone else was an enemy!

And this doesn't include all of the commandments from the Oral Law which the Rabbi's believed to be as binding as the written LAW, if not more so.

BUT how conveniently they forgot the prophecies of Isaiah:

Isa 42:1 "Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One *in whom* My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; **He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.**

As one theologian put it, 'there was nothing that was more offensive, irritating, and provoking to them, than to hear of the calling of the Gentiles; The gentiles were not worthy of any of God's Blessings that were promised to the Jews. "I'm not sharing my blessings with the likes of you!"

(Acts 22:23) Then, as they cried out and tore off *their* clothes and threw dust into the air,

We have read of these actions when it comes to grief.

Job 1:20 Then Job arose, tore his robe, and **shaved his head**; and he fell to the ground and worshiped.

Job 2:12 And when they raised their eyes from afar, and did not recognize him, they lifted their voices and wept; **and each one tore his robe and sprinkled dust on his head toward heaven.**

**For whom exactly were these people grieving?
The loss of Jews to the gentile world!**

(Acts 22:24) 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.

As a matter of fact, it was unlawful even to tie up a **Roman** citizen before his guilt had been proved! To **scourge** him was a very serious offense.

(Acts 22:25) 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?**"

Paul, who played the Jewish card, now plays the Roman card
"Are you sure you want to do this to a Roman citizen?"

(Acts 22:26) When the centurion heard *that*, he went and told the commander, saying, "Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman."

Watch out!!!

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

(Acts 22:28) The commander answered, "With a large sum I obtained this citizenship." And Paul said, "**But I was born a citizen.**"

There were three ways to become **a Roman** in those days. *First*, citizenship was sometimes granted by imperial decree as a reward for services rendered, etc. *Second*, it was possible to become **a Roman** by birth. This was the case with **Paul**; he **was born** in Tarsus, a free city of the Roman Empire, and his father was **a Roman** citizen. *Finally*, it was possible to purchase **citizenship**, often at a very high price. Thus **the commander** had **obtained** his **citizenship** by paying **a large sum**.

(Acts 22:29) 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.

When it says "examine" him, that was a nice way of saying "let's beat him till he talks!". But they knew better than to do that to a citizen of Rome!

(Acts 22:30) 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.

Interesting that the "pagan" Romans had more judicial sense about themselves than did the Jews who had many laws about justice and fair treatment!

So, here we have Paul, nearly murdered for his beliefs. Satan lost the battle at the Cross. But that will never stop him from trying to devour and destroy Christians who love their God and Savior – nor will he stop devouring and destroying the Jews through whom He came into this world! And for both of them who He is returning again. The Second Coming means the lake of fire for those who hate God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit!

But why did Paul continue on with his mission after facing death and physical suffering – much at the hands of his fellow Jews?

How could Paul ever write in the Book of Romans:

Romans 9:1-5 I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, (2) that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. (3) For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, (4) who are Israelites, to whom *pertain* the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the

giving of the law, the service *of God*, and the promises; (5) of whom *are* the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ *came*, who is over all, *the* eternally blessed God. Amen.

Paul met Jesus! Paul knew Jesus! Paul loved Jesus! What else could explain his wish to be eternally separated from God if it meant that his brethren, the Jews, could be saved!

Beloved, I know we have met Jesus; I know that we know him and that we love him! Now we need to allow Him to mold us, motivate us and move us to have the same love towards those in this world who have not met him or met Him as He really is: Loving, Gracious, merciful, forgiving, transforming and faithful to bring us to our true home, His Father's House.

And how do we tell them about Him – with the words of our testimony and by being just like Him – the One who can save wretches just like us!