

The Acts and Torah of the Apostles Study Guide

Chapter 22

22:1-21

Paul's message to the Jewish audience was his personal testimony:

- v. 2-3 – He showed how his background was fully Jewish in terms of speaking Hebrew, his physical heritage, education and dedication to the Law. He revealed that he had been taught by Gamaliel about the Torah. As we learned from chapter 5, Gamaliel was called a “teacher of the Torah.” That means he was someone who was so highly learned in the Torah, that he could give expert opinion on theological matters, and his opinion would carry much weight in decisions. Gamaliel had the respect of the Sanhedrin and he advised them not to punish the Messianic believers, and they listened. But in this case, Saul, who only went by his Hebrew name at that time, had a similar dedication to the Torah, but he applied it with much more zeal. He was so zealous for the Torah that he acted without grace and sought to impose his position on everyone who disagreed. Paul phrased it as being “strictly according to the Law of our fathers.” That phrase is an indicator that the Torah had become institutionalized and codified according the traditions of men. Yeshua used a similar term—“the tradition of the elders” (Mat 15:2). So, Paul was emphasizing the dysfunctional transformation of the Torah (lit. “instruction”) of Moses into the Law of the fathers.
- v. 4-5 – Then he showed how his zeal for the Law of our fathers led to him persecuting the people of the Way. He said in v. 3 that his audience shared that same zeal, and by implication, the same inclination toward persecution as they were doing to him. This illustrates how zealousness can lead people to do harmful things to others. You can be so convinced of your rightness and the need to defend it, that you will resort to any means necessary, including violence, in order to purify a community from what you believe to be deviants.
- v. 6-16 – He recounted his transformation into a believer and disciple of Yeshua, and it parallels the text of chapter 9.
- v. 17-21 – Here we are given information that was not previously disclosed in the book of Acts. After Paul's Damascus road experience, when he returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, he fell into a trance. The Greek word is *ekstasis*, which literally means “an amazement of the mind.” It is the same word used to describe Peter's experience with the vision of unclean animals in chapter 10 when God showed him that Gentiles should not be considered unclean. In this case, God showed Paul that he was being called to take the message of salvation to the Gentiles. These are the only two times in the New Testament that individuals were sent into a trance by God. These callings to the Gentiles were so outside the way of thinking that was prevalent in the Jewish culture of that day, that it was necessary to communicate God's message in a dramatic way. Merely searching the Scriptures or hearing someone else speak to them about it would not shake them from their abhorrence of Gentiles & the inability to perceive God ever loving them. Both Peter and Paul needed an experience that would totally “amaze their minds” to the point of convincing the validity and significance of what God was calling them to do.

22:22-30

- v. 22 – But the Jewish crowd that was mired in the widespread state of intolerance of Gentiles, and had not received divine intervention, reacted in an understandable way. They called for Paul’s death.
- v. 23 – They began to riot, and that was never something the Romans would tolerate.
- v. 24 – But the simple solution, in the Roman manner, was to compel people to give the information they desired through physical violence. So they prepared to scourge or to flog Paul, meaning they would strike him with whips that had pieces of metal and bone tied to the end of leather straps. The blows would tear away pieces of skin and cause much bleeding. This form of punishment could readily produce the desired confession. But it could also cripple or kill the person, so it was only used on non-citizens of Rome. And the Roman officers assumed that Paul was a common Jew without Roman citizenship.
- v. 25 – That is why Paul brought his citizenship to the attention of the centurion who was about to supervise the scourging.
- v. 28 – There were three ways a person became a citizen in the Roman empire:
- By birth in a city of the original Roman Republic centered around modern-day Italy, or in free cities in surrounding lands that aligned with Rome during various civil wars and were rewarded for their loyalty with the right to enact their own laws and the privileges of Roman citizenship. Since Paul’ was born in one of those free cities—Tarsus in the province of Cilicia in modern-day Turkey—he had the rights of citizenship.
 - Starting in the mid-forties of the first century A.D., under the reign of the emperor Claudius, some people born outside of free cities could purchase citizenship. Here in this passage, we see that was the case for the commander of the cohort.
 - A lifetime of service (minimum of 25 years) in the Roman army could also lead to citizenship.

In any event, Paul’s right as a Roman citizenship not to be held in chains or to be scourged was respected. But the commander still had to resolve the social problem in the city of Jerusalem because the anger among the Jews still persisted. So the next day he ordered a formal hearing regarding the issue.