

LESSON NINE

(22:1-23:35)

The Voyage To Rome At Jerusalem. 22:1-30

22 *“Brethren and fathers, hear the defense which I now make before you.”*

And when they heard that he addressed them in the Hebrew language, they were the more quiet. And he said: 3 “I am a Jew, born at Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as you all are this day. 4 I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, 5 as the high priest and the whole council of elders bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brethren, and I journeyed to Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished.

6 “As I made my journey and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone about me. 7 And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’ 8 And I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And he said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you are persecuting.’ 9 Now those who were with me saw the light but did not hear the voice of the one who was speaking to me. 10 And I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do’ 11 And when I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and came into Damascus.

12 “And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, 13 came to me, and standing by me said to me, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight.’ And in that very hour I received my sight and saw him. 14 And he said, ‘The God of our fathers appointed you to know this will, to see the Just One and to hear a voice from his mouth; 15 for you will be a witness for him to all men of what you have seen and heard. 16 And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name.’ ”

17 “When I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance 18 and saw him saying to me, ‘Make haste and get quickly out of Jerusalem, because they will not accept your testimony about me.’ 19 And I said, ‘Lord, they themselves know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believed in thee. 20 And when the blood of Stephen thy witness was shed, I also was standing by and approving, and keeping the garments of those who killed him.’ 21 And he said to me, ‘Depart; for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’ ”

22 Up to this word they listened to him; then they lifted up their voices and said, “Away with such a fellow from the earth! For he ought not to live.” 23 And as they cried out and waved their garments and threw dust into the air, 24 the tribune commanded him to be brought into the barracks, and ordered him to be examined by scourging to find out why they shouted thus against him 25 But when they had tied him up with the thongs, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, “Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman citizen, and uncondemned?” 26 When the centurion heard that, he went

to the tribune and said to him, "What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman citizen." 27 So the tribune came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?" And he said, "Yes." 28 The tribune answered, "I bought this citizenship for a large sum." "But I," replied Paul, "was born a Roman citizen." 29 So those who were about to examine him withdrew from him instantly; and the tribune also was afraid, for he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had bound him.

30 But on the morrow, desiring to know the real reason why the Jews accused him, he unbound him, and commanded the chief priests and all the council to meet, and he brought Paul down and set him before them.

22:1 - **My defense** - This address tells the history of Paul's conversion, in an attempt to present Christ to them as the reason for his conversion.

V. 2 - Paul's past life gave him a keen understanding of his people and their preferences. Using their language was a smart thing to do.

V. 3 - **Tarsus** - A great city in the Roman empire. However, his religious education (the Greek term translated "educated" is more often translated as discipline, as in Hebrews 12, etc. It was used in Luke 23:16 to describe what Pilate intended to do with Jesus) had been in Jerusalem under the direction of an illustrious Hebrew scholar, which doubtless impressed many in his audience. Moreover, he recognized their earnestness for the things of God, and admitted that he had been as they were, zealous for God. See 21:20.

strict manner - A careful and exact manner of life. See the root of this word in Luke 1:3; Acts 18:26; 24:22 and Ephesians 5:15.

V. 4 - **this Way** - Clearly understood as meaning Christianity. See here Philippians 3. Paul's confession was that his ignorance and unbelief brought him to do such things. Then the implication was that had he understood the law rightly, he would have believed in Jesus as the promised Messiah.

V. 5 - The high priest would have been Caiaphas. Probably some of the Sanhedrin remembered Paul well. Paul attempted to show how zealous he was for the law, and how right (correct) he considered himself to be though so very wrong. (This is a good time for us to consider why we believe as we do).

V. 6 - The fact that it was midday makes the "great light" all the more meaningful, as it flashed around him, brighter than the noonday sun.

V. 7 - His recollection of the event was vivid, especially the idea of him being a persecutor of the Lord.

V. 8 - The speaker is revealed as being Jesus from Nazareth. We know that Jesus was a common name then, so the further identification was required. The crux of the gospel is that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the son of the living God. His hearers doubtless listened to this with great interest, since it said a great deal about the true character of Jesus.

The obstacle here, as far as the listeners were concerned, was that Jesus was God. But the greater obstacle, and more unacceptable, was the fact that salvation in Jesus was for the Gentiles (see v. 22). Recall Peter's opening words in ch. 2:22.

V. 9 - Those in Paul's party saw the light and heard the sound of the voice in Aramaic. They evidently did not hear the word or did not understand what they heard - only Paul understood.

V. 10 - How different Paul's obedience to the Lord should have been from what it was! Many of us have in some degree, learned that our discipleship is not perfect either. The commendable point in Paul was that his allegiance to the Lord was such that he was willing to do as he was commanded even when it meant a radical conversion of his lifestyle.

V. 11 - The heavenly source of his blindness is disclosed: the glory of the light. Some interesting uses of the effects of light are in Paul's epistles, such as II Cor. 3:7; 4:4-6.

V. 12 - Notice the mention that Ananias was in favor with the Jewish populace of Damascus. We need to be aware that all these things are mentioned to convince his audience that he was a zealous Jew who only changed because of God's intervention. Thus, Paul's present status was in response to a divine imperative, which fact would hopefully bring his hearers to a point of acceptance of the "way" themselves.

V. 13 - **Brother** - The word meant one of a family or faith, as in 22:1; Rom. 10:1; etc.

V. 14 - **The God of our fathers** - Often this was Paul's appeal to the Jews. For us, it spells out the sameness of God, the eternity of his being and plans for redeeming man, etc. Ananias explained just how Paul fit into God's plans.

V. 15 - **witness** - The English "martyr" transliterates the Greek word. Notice here that the Christian religion is one of evidence and directed at one's rationality.

V. 16 - A verse we often quote. The Greek term has a personal interest in it: get immersed for yourself (in your own interest). Paul was to invoke Jesus' name (Rom.

10:13) and in the obedience, have his past life with its sinful nature replaced with a new life, hidden with Christ in God, II Cor. 5:17, Col. 3:1-4.

Here is a good place to comment further on the doctrine of immersion, supplementing what was said on 2:38 and 8:36. Certainly one's theology is on the line insofar as the issue of becoming a Christian is concerned. In regard to immersion, some questions to be asked about the matter would be like these:

1. What does the Scripture teach, if anything, about the person who is to do the immersing (in order for the immersion to be valid)?
2. What must be said, if anything, at the time of immersing (not what is possible, but does the Bible specify anything that must be stated orally)?
3. Can any part of the person be unimmersed and the act yet be valid?
4. What about the person who has ceased being Christian and then wishes to return to God - must they be immersed again, or were they merely a straying son?
5. Must anyone be present to witness the act other than the two people involved?

We need to recognize that the recitation of the facts about immersion may not indicate understanding them. For instance, for the act to be valid, must the candidate understand all the reasons why, or just some? Suppose said person believes some results accrue to him, but not others (though wrong about either or both)? If the results are not known or understood, are said results still applied?

Additionally, we need to consider the actual things we believe about immersion, as to what is to be taught prior to the act, as well as what is taught afterward? What must the candidate know or understand prior to immersion to make it valid? Can said person not believe that some results take place, and the results still happen regardless of the disbelief?

Some of the reasons and/or results for immersion might be these:

1. Jesus commanded it (and the apostles)
(Matt. 28).
2. Remission of sins (i.e., to be saved).
3. Reception of Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).
4. Putting on Christ (Rom. 6; Gal. 3).
5. Dying to law (Rom. 7).
6. Entering the kingdom of God, the Church
(John 3; I Cor. 12).
7. Regeneration (II Cor. 5; Titus 3).
8. Obeying the righteousness of God (Matt. 3).
9. To obtain a clear conscience (I Peter 3).
10. Accepting Jesus' death for ours (Rom. 6).
11. Following example of Jesus (I Peter 2:21).

We reiterate the fact that the early Christians did not have problems either with the mode or the necessity of the act in question. None of the New Testament books

argues about the “mode of baptism”. It was only immersion that was taught and practiced. None of the epistles ever encourage the recipients to be immersed, but rather assume those who receive the letters have been immersed.

V. 17 - Ch. 9:26-30 reveals this incident from the viewpoint of Paul’s acceptance by the church in Jerusalem, and gives the same basic reason for leaving Jerusalem: Jewish opposition. Note that he was in the temple, and praying - both indicate a continued interest in the Jewish way of life even though he was a Christian.

V. 19 - A reflection of his past life, to impress upon his auditors that something very demanding must have happened to have caused him to change from Saul the Jew unto Paul the Christian; thus to give his bearers a subtle hint to consider the facts.

V. 20 - Saul never could forget the death of Stephen. Perhaps it was because Stephen and he were brothers of the same synagogue.

V. 21 - Relating his vision in the temple, and the express command of God to him, was an attempt to convince the crowd that his actions were directed by God. A noble effort that failed.

V. 22 - The word “Gentiles” was too much and the riot resumed. The crowd kept shouting and saying that he should have been killed before this time.

V. 23 - Just how deep was the rage of the crowd is evident by this verse. They were screaming, and throwing their garments about, and heaving dirt into the air; surely a vivid picture of a mob.

V. 24 - The chiliarch evidently thought Paul was guilty of more than seemed evident from Paul’s speech (if he could understand it, being in Aramaic), and gave orders to get the correct information. We would note that police brutality is not a new thing.

V. 25 - The magic word: Roman citizen! Paul made the same point in 16:37, only too late. The command may have been given in Latin, and if Paul did not understand it, he would not have known what was to take place until he was being tied up.

V. 26 - It would be a grave error to proceed if what Paul affirmed was true. As v. 29 shows, it was bad enough to have chained him up. But as matters stood, not much else could have been done under the circumstances.

V. 27 - The chiliarch’s question almost implies that Paul was lying.

V. 28 - During the reign of Claudius, Roman citizenship, a valuable possession, could be purchased. As we know, Paul’s birth brought him the citizenship. Perhaps Paul’s father or grandfather were citizens of Rome as well as being Jewish by birth and religion. Some argue that all born in Tarsus were Roman citizens.

V. 29 - At this development, the proceedings came to a halt, and a different course is taken. Paul's citizenship will explain the treatment he is accorded in ch. 23.

V. 30 - Because of Paul's varied background, Lysias has him brought before the Sanhedrin. We know that it was a question about Jewish law, but with far-reaching implications. Certainly the Jewish attitude about their law brought up trouble, such as in chapter 22, and now in chapter 23.

The Voyage To Rome **At Jerusalem. 23:1-30**

23 *And Paul, looking intently at the council, said, "Brethren, I have lived before God in all good conscience up to 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 shall strike you, you whitewashed wall! Are you sitting to judge me according to the law, and yet contrary to the law you order me to be struck?" 4 Those who stood by said, "Would you revile God's high priest?" 5 And 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.'"*

6 But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead I am on trial.." 7 And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. 8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. 9 Then a great clamor arose; and some of the scribes often Pharisees' party stood up and contended, "We find nothing wrong in this man. What if a spirit or an angel spoke to him?" 10 And when the dissension became violent, the tribune, afraid that Paul would be torn in pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them and bring him into the barracks.

11 The following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Take courage, for as you have testified about me at Jerusalem, so you must bear witness also at Rome."

12 When it was day, the Jews made a plot and bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. 13 There were more than forty who made this conspiracy. 14 And they went to the chief priests and elders, and said, "We have strictly bound ourselves by an oath to taste no food till we have killed Paul. 15 You therefore, along with the council, give notice now to the tribune to bring him down to you, as though you were going to determine his case more exactly. And we are ready to kill him before he comes near."

16 Now the son of Paul's sister heard of their ambush; so he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. 17 And Paul called one of the centurions and said, "Bring this young man to the tribune; for he has something to tell him." 18 So he took him and brought him to the tribune and said, "Paul the prisoner called me and asked me to bring this young man to you, as he has something to say to you." 19 The tribune took him by the hand, and going aside asked him privately, "What is it that you have to tell me?" 20

And he said, "The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire somewhat more closely about him. 21 But do not yield to them; for more than forty of their men lie in ambush for him, having bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they have killed him and now they are ready, waiting for the promise from you." 22 So the tribune dismissed the young man, charging him, "Tell no one that you have informed me of this."

23 Then he called two of the centurions and said, "At the third hour of the night get ready two hundred soldiers with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go as far as Caesarea. 24 Also provide mounts for Paul to ride, and bring him safely to Felix the governor." 25 And he wrote a letter to this effect:

26 "Claudius Lysias to his Excellency the governor Felix, greeting. 27 This man was seized by the Jews, and was about to be killed by them, when I came upon them with the soldiers and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman citizen. 28 and desiring to know the charge on which they accused him, I brought him down to their council. 29 I found that he was accused about questions of their law, but charged with nothing deserving death or imprisonment. 30 And when it was disclosed to me that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, ordering his accusers also to state before you what they have against him."

23:1 - Paul fastened his eyes on the members of the Sanhedrin and delivered a real blast to them, in effect saying that his manner of life had been lived as he understood God wanted it to be lived. He had thought it correct to be zealous for the law, persecuting Christians; and thought it correct to renounce Judaism for its appointed successor, Christianity. Hence, he had no apologies for anything in his life.

conscience - This facet of our consciousness (personality) is troublesome to many people. It is a God-given facet that is found in every person, which is based upon what is believed to be right or wrong, and having to do with the reaction that comes when either the right has been done, or the wrong done. The problem with conscience arises because each person can determine the base upon which conscience works. Obviously, the more one believes that a certain act is right or wrong, the greater the reaction when said person does the right, etc. Hence, there are vast differences of reaction in people over the same issue, and this even among Christians (i.e.: abortion, going to war, divorce, etc.). Paul was a murderer even under his own Mosaic law, but considered his actions not to be so, because he justified himself on the basis that what he was doing was right (i.e., Christians were blasphemers and deserved to be punished; and he was doing God a service, John 16:2). So it is with all of us. This is the reason why one could live in all good conscience and yet be condemned to hell.

lived - The Greek means one's manner of life or behavior as a citizenship. See Philippians 1:27; 3:20.

V. 2 - Ananias was a Sadducee, a politician (and scoundrel). He had been appointed high priest in A.D. 37, succeeding Caiaphas.

V. 3 - Jesus had spoken of turning the other cheek (but see John 18:22-23). Paul, perhaps willing to do so, still pointed out that what was done was not lawful in Jewish circles (even if it was commonly practiced).

whitewashed wall - Something close to the word “hypocrite”.

V. 4 - The position, if not the person in it, was entitled to respect, since he was God’s representative, as Paul well knew (v. 5).

V. 6 - Several reasons might be suggested as to why Paul spoke as he did, among them 1) the remark just made had put him in a bad light (see Ex. 22:28), 2) no fair trial was possible, since he was a Christian, or 3) he considered that, as a Jewish Pharisee turned Christian, the cardinal point of the issue was a resurrection. Of course, since this was true, no fair trial was possible, since the issue would immediately divide the Sanhedrin (as it instantly did, v. 7).

V. 8 - **acknowledge** - Aside from the points of doctrine, the word in the Greek text stating what the Pharisees affirmed about certain points is normally translated “confess”. The Greek term simply means to affirm a point, or assert a belief, etc.

V. 9 - As the Greek text shows, a real fight occurred, and the trial was for all practical purposes over. If the Pharisees knew any of Paul’s experience on the Damascus road, even if they did not believe in Jesus, they could have agreed that an angel might have spoken to Paul. So they adjudged Paul innocent.

V. 10 - The Sadducees were not less adamant, and Paul was in danger of actually being torn in two. Recall the statement of Gallio in Ch. 18:15 about just such matters as are herein described.

V. 11 - God was not unaware of Paul’s inner feelings, and gave assurance that much was yet to be accomplished. One promise that Paul had received was to have words from Jesus, 22:14, and here were some of those words. It was a great help to Paul. The promise of going to Rome was undeniably a sustainer in the months and years ahead.

V. 12 - The 40 men, banding themselves together, and invoking with an oath and curse upon themselves, clearly show that the prejudice against Paul especially and Christians generally was unreasonable and beyond pacifying.

V. 14 - The men clearly had the support of the Jewish hierarchy.

V. 16 - Their best-laid plans were discovered by Paul’s nephew, who was yet friendly to his uncle (perhaps Paul’s relatives were Christians too?)

V. 17 - Note that the centurion was evidently not told what the Jews had in mind.

V. 18 - The nephew evidently was not an old person, though the same word described Paul in 7:58, and Eutychus in 20:9.

V. 21 - The young man makes the case clear, and also makes the part Lysias is to play very important.

do not yield - The Greek word is the common- “to be persuaded” and thus obey.

V. 23 - The preparations show that Lysias knew the danger the Jews presented, and the importance of Paul.

V. 26 - Felix, and his brother Pallas, had been slaves, but were made freedmen by Emperor Claudius. He married a daughter of Herod Agrippa I, Drusilla, mostly to win Jewish favor. Some describe him as very evil. These things may account for his refusal to let Paul go, as 24:27 points out. Note Luke 1:3; Acts 24:2; 26:25 for the “most excellent.”

V. 27 - The report of Lysias is not quite accurate when compared with Luke’s account, but who cared in that day or our day?

V. 29 - The actual issue was about interpretation of the Jewish law. This brings up the point that although the law was the same for every Jew, many things caused it to be variously interpreted. It is yet the same today with the New Testament (not to mention the Old Testament), for though it reads the same, the many sides of interpretation cause much division. Consider how the same law could be said not to teach a resurrection, angels, etc., by one group of Jews, and the exact opposite by another group. It is not different today, when issues that appear to be so plain to one are not so to another. We do well to keep such as this in mind when we have class discussion, etc.

V. 30 - Lysias had decided to throw the hot potato into the lap of Felix. As far as Lysias was concerned, Paul was innocent.

At Antipatris, 23:31, 32

31 So the soldiers, according to their instructions, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris. 32 And on the morrow they returned to the barracks, leaving the horsemen to go on with him.

V. 31 - **Antipatris** - Some 40 miles from Jerusalem, and then about 25 miles southeast of Caesarea.

In Caesarea, 23:33-27:1

33 When they came to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they presented Paul also before him. 34 On reading the letter, he asked to what province he belonged. When he learned that he was from Cilicia 35 he said, “I will hear you when your accusers arrive.” And he commanded him to be guarded in Herod’s praetorium.

V. 35 - It is now about AD 58-59. After two years, Paul will go to Rome, and spend two years there. It is commonly thought that the information needed by Luke to

write the gospel, and the parts of Acts that he did not personally experience, was gathered at this time.

Herod's praetorium - The Roman imperial guard. Paul mentions these in Philippians 1:13.

QUESTIONS

131. What things do you perceive Paul tried to accomplish in his address to the mob?

132. What reasons did Paul have for his conversion?

133. What did Ananias tell Paul God had planned for him?

134. Were Paul's sins forgiven before Ananias came to him or afterward?

135. Did Paul have faith in Jesus before Ananias came to him?

136. Why did Paul leave Jerusalem?

137. Do you suppose Paul purposely did not mention his Roman citizenship until he had to do so?

138. What evident rights did a Roman citizen possess?

139. What do you know about conscience?

140. Are rulers a terror to those who obey the law?
141. Should a Christian respect the office or the person in the office?
142. How could Paul the Christian still identify with a Jewish Pharisee?
143. How could the same Bible be viewed so differently?
144. Did Jesus' promise in Matt. 28:20 hold true for Paul?
145. Were the "forty" somewhat like Paul had formerly been?
146. What did the preparation made by Lysias signify about Paul?
147. Why would Lysias write what was not true?
148. According to Lysias, was Paul guilty?
149. What do you see about Roman jurisprudence in our text?

ABA REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 9

1. Describe Paul's life before he became a Christian.
2. If Paul had understood the law rightly, would he have believed in Christ?

3. What is significant about the “great light” appearing at midday?
4. What was the source of Paul’s blindness?
5. The Greek term “witness” is the same as what English word?
6. List eleven reasons for being immersed.
7. What was to accompany Paul’s baptism (22:16)?
8. Why don’t any of the New Testament epistles argue about the mode or method of baptism or encourage believers to be immersed (baptized)?
9. Describe the reaction of the crowd in Acts 22:22-23.
10. Why could one live in all good conscience and yet be condemned to hell?
11. Who is Ananias?
12. What are several possible reasons for Paul speaking as he did in Acts 23:6?

13. What oath did forty men make in Acts 23:12?
14. Describe the plot that the Jews made against Paul and how Paul escaped.
15. Who notified Paul of the plot against his life?
16. Identify Felix and Pallas.
17. Where was Antipatris located?
18. Define "Herod's praetorium".

**PLEASE REFER TO PAGE 97
FOR A SPECIAL STUDY
ON BAPTISM!!**