

Introduction

1. Back in chapter 21 a couple weeks ago we learned not only how Paul was going to face tribulation at Jerusalem, but how he responded with courageous faith and stayed true to his mission
2. Today, we see that come to fruition
3. Once again, I'm going to use some alliteration:
 - a. First we will see how Paul was accused, attacked and arrested for the sake of the Gospel
 - b. Second, we will see how Paul responds by offering an apology for the sake of the Gospel

A. Paul is ACCUSED, ATTACKED, AND ARRESTED for the sake of the Gospel (21:27-36)

1. Paul is falsely ACCUSED (21:27-29):
 - a. While Paul was finishing up his purification ritual in the temple, some Jews from Asia accost him and begin to stir up the crowds with false accusations (there are mainly two):
 - 1) The first accusation is that he preached against the Jews, the Law and the Temple (28):
 - a) They frame this as if it was Paul's mission in life: **"to all men everywhere"**
 - b) If this charge sounds familiar, it should because it's very similar to the false accusations they leveled against Stephen before they murdered him (READ Acts 6:11-13)
 - c) They also accused Paul of something similar on previous occasions (READ Acts 21:21)
 - d) In each of these, Stephen and Paul were accused primarily of preaching against their religious convictions and traditions
 - e) However, here in v. 28 it's different: they accuse Paul of not just preaching against the Law and the temple, but against Jews themselves!—at best this would make Paul a traitor to his own people, and at worst an anti-semite
 - 2) The second accusation, and most egregious, is that Paul had defiled the Temple:
 - a) The temple complex was made up of a series of courts that surrounded the Holy of Holies (show picture):
 - The court surrounding the Holy of Holies (the tall structure at the top) was reserved for priests and was called the Court of the Priests
 - In the front (bottom of picture), is the Court of Women and women were prohibited from going any further
 - Between these two courts was a smaller court reserved for Jewish men; it was called the Court of Israel
 - The largest of the courts surrounded the temple on three sides and it was called the Court of the Gentiles
 - b) Gentiles were prohibited from going beyond this court into the rest of the temple complex (not by the OT Law, but by their traditions and own laws):
 - Not only were the inner courts surrounded by extremely high walls, but there was another stone barricade about four and a half feet high creating another border (you can see it in the picture)

- Placed along this barricade at regular intervals were stone slabs etched with warnings in Greek and Latin warning foreigners not to go beyond the barricade
 - Two of them have actually been found and are currently sitting in museums in Istanbul and Jerusalem; they read: **“No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the temple and enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for what follows—death.”**
 - 1st century Roman-Jewish historian, Josephus, indicated that this was not a curse but a legal warning because the Romans allowed Jews to execute violators, even if they were Roman citizens
- c) The Jews claim was that Paul defiled the temple by bringing Gentiles beyond the barricade into one of the inner courts (probably the Court of Israel since that is where Paul would have been when they arrested him):
- Mind you, they didn’t see Paul do this
 - They simply claimed he did it because they had seen him elsewhere in the city with an Ephesian Gentile named Trophimus (29)
- b. Do we not see these same tactics used against us Christians today?
- 1) They don’t just disagree with what we teach or believe
 - 2) They falsely malign and accuse us of preaching against people by calling us bigots, homophobes, hate-mongers, white supremacists, racists, anti-women
 - 3) They’ve even begun to blame us for destroying society and the world—many of the media elites have specifically blamed Evangelical Christians for everything from the spread of Covid, to climate change, and even the failure of public education
 - 4) None of this should shock us, however, because Jesus warned that following Him would not be an easy road and that just as they hated Him, they will would hate us (Matthew 10:22): **“You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.”**
 - 5) What should our response be? Jesus answered this for us (READ Luke 6:22-36)
2. Paul is violently ATTACKED (READ 21:30-31):
- a. As we’ve seen before in Acts, Paul’s accusers didn’t stop at their false accusations
 - b. Back in v. 27 we saw that they stirred up the crowds (likely outside the temple) and recruited others to join them in attacking Paul
 - c. This led to an angry mob rushing into the temple, taking hold of Paul, dragging him out of the temple, and ultimately proceeding to beat him (see end of v. 32)
 - d. Later in the passage we learn that the mob had become so violent that Paul had to be carried to safety by Roman soldiers (v. 35)
 - e. According to v. 31 they wanted Paul dead: **“they were seeking to kill him”**:
 - 1) They were so intent on killing him, that when this attempt failed, they plotted two more assassination attempts which also failed: once when he was moved by the Romans to Caesarea (23:12-22) and a second time when they tried to get him moved back to Jerusalem (25:3)
 - 2) At the same time, they were demanding that the Romans execute him (Luke mentions or alludes to this five times: (21:36; 22:22; 23:29; 25:11; 26:31; 25:24-25)

- f. We have been fortunate here in the U.S.; while persecution is becoming more real, up to this point we have been mostly spared from the violence being faced by our brothers and sisters in Christ all around the world (display OpenDoors persecution map)
 - g. How are we going to respond if (when?) we start to face the kind of violence against us that they experience?—Will we follow Paul’s example?
 - 1) Paul knew he was going to face persecution in Jerusalem but he didn’t let it deter him from his God-given mission (READ Acts 20:22-24)
 - 2) He was even willing to die in his service to Christ (READ Acts 21:7-14)
 - h. As I was reflecting on this I was struck by something Jesus said to His disciples when He warned them about the persecution they would face (John 16:1): **“These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling”**
3. Paul is unjustly ARRESTED (READ 21:31-36):
- a. Luke records that word of what’s happening reaches the ears of a Roman commander who immediately gathers some forces and rushes down to the chaos:
 - 1) The Greek word for commander here refers to someone who was in command of 1000 soldiers, so he was likely in charge of the Roman fortress that sat just outside the northwest corner of the temple (it was named Antonia)
 - 2) He took two centurions and some soldiers with him—since centurions were each responsible for 100 soldiers there were likely 200 total
 - b. As soon as they arrive, the mob stops beating Paul, but instead of a rescue mission Paul is arrested:
 - 1) Paul is immediately bound by two chains (likely bound to two soldiers, one on each side)
 - 2) It appears the commander’s fact-finding mission only involved listening to the crowd who was attacking Paul, but they couldn’t get their story straight
 - 3) So, he orders Paul to be taken to the barracks, where we learn later that his plan was to have Paul **“examined by scourging so that he might find out the reason why they were shouting against him that day”** (22:24)
 - c. From an earthly perspective, all of this looks profoundly unjust:
 - 1) And, from that perspective, it certainly is...Paul is falsely accused and violently attacked by an angry mob, but he’s the one who gets arrested!
 - 2) However, there is another perspective from which we are to view what’s happening and the Lord revealed it to Paul:
 - a) Look at Acts 23:11: **“But on the night immediately following, the Lord stood at his side and said, “Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also.”**
 - b) So, the Lord’s plan was to use Paul’s arrest as a means of testifying about Him not only in Jerusalem, but Rome
 - c) Now we might ask, couldn’t Paul have done that without being arrested? Maybe, but it wasn’t God’s plan
 - d) When Jesus saved Paul on the road to Damascus, He laid out His plan and purpose for Paul and it included using Paul as His instrument to witness not just to Jews and Gentiles, **but to kings** (in other words, rulers at the highest levels of government; Acts 9:15)
 - e) That’s exactly what we see play out in the rest of Acts; consider this:

- As a result of his arrest, Paul is given at least six high profile opportunities to preach the Gospel in two of the most important cities in the Roman empire— Jerusalem and Caesarea
 - He is given the opportunity to preach to the mob, the entire Jewish council (e.g. Supreme Court), two Roman governors (Felix and Festus), King Agrippa (who was over all of Judea and Samaria), and finally the Jewish leaders in Rome
 - Then, when he arrives in Rome, he spends two years under house arrest, in his own rented quarters, where Luke says he was able to preach and teach about Jesus **“with all openness, unhindered”** (Acts 28:31)
 - In fact, it was during this time that Paul wrote to the Philippians and declared that his imprisonment in Rome resulted in **“Christ becoming known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else”** (Philippians 1:13)—this was the elite unit of the Imperial Roman army that escorted and protected high-ranking political official and served as personal bodyguards and intelligence agents for Roman emperors
 - It appears based upon Philippians 4:22 that some of Emperor Caesar’s own household became Christians!
- d. Paul’s arrest was certainly unjust, but it was part of God’s plan to spread the Gospel...all the way up to the highest levels of government and society!

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| <p>B. Paul responds by offering an APOLOGY for the sake of the Gospel (READ 21:37-40)</p> |
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1. I am using the word APOLOGY here, not in the sense of saying “I’m sorry”, but rather in an apologetics sense—in other words, a formal defense; it’s the word Paul uses in 22:1
2. As Paul is being led away to the barracks to be “examined” (e.g. scourged; v. 24), he asks the Roman commander if he can address the crowd and there’s a lot going on here:
 - a. First, Paul addresses him with respect: a more literal translation of v. 37 is, **“Am I permitted (or allowed) to say something to you?”** (as the Holman version)—is there a lesson in this for us?
 - b. Second, the commander assumed Paul might have been a famous Egyptian revolutionary:
 - 1) A few years earlier (approx. 54 AD), a Greek speaking Egyptian revolutionary led 4000 men out into the wilderness with plans to return and attack the city of Jerusalem, tear down the walls, overthrow the Romans, and install himself as the new leader
 - 2) These men were from a group called the “Assassins”—these men were a group of violent Jewish revolutionaries who would wander around the temple precinct secretly carrying daggers under their cloaks and killing Jewish aristocrats and others who collaborated with the Roman
 - 3) As the men planned to attack Jerusalem, the Roman army put down the rebellion by killing 400 of the men and capturing 200 others; the Egyptian escaped but was never found and never surfaced again
 - 4) It was apparently Paul’s eloquence in Greek, combined with the false accusations that he was a trouble-maker, that likely led the commander to ask Paul if he was not indeed the legendary Egyptian revolutionary
 - c. Third and last, Paul asks the commander for an opportunity to speak to his accusers:

- 1) Paul answers the commander by assuring him that he was not the Egyptian and certainly not a threat to Rome:
 - a) He was a Jewish, not Egyptian
 - b) He was from Tarsus, not Egypt—Tarsus was a city of a few hundred thousand people and was an important political, cultural, and educational city in the Roman Empire; this would have explained why he was fluent in Greek
- 2) What most important to us here, however, is that Paul begs the commander for an opportunity to speak to the mob (RE-READ 39-40):
 - a) How many of us, if in the same situation, would be begging for an opportunity to speak to the angry mob who just tried to kill us?
 - b) But, this is precisely what Paul does and the commander grants him permission
3. We will spend next week examining Paul's apology but I just want to highlight a couple things for us to take home with us this morning:
 - a. First, in spite of the angry and violent reaction of the Jews and threat against his life, Paul never lost sight of the mission to which Jesus called him which was preaching the Gospel
 - b. Second, as we'll see next week, Paul's goal in his apology/defense isn't so much about defending himself, avoiding unjust treatment, or even securing his release (though these are true to some extent), but rather his ultimate goal is to defend his obedience to Jesus in preaching the Gospel
 - c. As we face the ever increasing threat of persecution, we need to remember that our goal shouldn't simply be self-preservation, but defending our obedience to Jesus Christ and preaching the Gospel