**Round Top Church Christian Fellowship**

One Week till the Resurrection - April 4, 2021

 ***Satan Falls for God’s Plan. Do You? - Acts 22:1-30***

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March 28th In the Year of Our Lord

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(Unless otherwise noted, NAS is quoted.)

 **Setting the Stage**

After returning from a long mission trip and submitting an offering collected from the mission field to James and the Elders, Paul has been arrested by a Jewish mob in Jerusalem. The mob was beating him when a Roman commander came with soldiers and then the mob stopped beating Paul. James and the Elders had attempted to pacify the Jews and their leadership by directing Paul to perform a Nazarite vow in the Temple. During this process is when Paul was identified by Jews who had seen him during his mission. The Roman commander removed Paul to a barrack. Paul then asked if he could speak to the Jews who were present where he was being held.

**How do we view this speech?**

One view is that of a man attempting to save his life by convincing his enemies not to kill him.

Another view is to accurately determine the historical biblical context. Paul is a man who is on a mission, commissioned by the resurrected God, Jesus Christ, who he personally met. He has been in the mission field for a few years carrying-out the work God had called and directed him to do. This is another opportunity to perform the task he was sent to do. What a great opportunity to witness God at work in his life. Paul knew that regardless of what took place he was to be faithful to his calling.

**Acts 22:1** "Brethren and fathers, hear my defense which I now offer to you."

2 And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew dialect, they became even more quiet; and he said,

**Paul’s Witness: Connects and Identifies with his Audience**

**Gives Credentials**

**Accounts for Experience of Persecuting the Way**

**Worked for High Priest**

 3 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today.

 4 "I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons,

 5 as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify. From them I also received letters to the brethren, and started off for Damascus in order to bring even those who were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished.

**Epiphany – Gives Personal Account with God**

 6 "But it happened that as I was on my way,

approaching Damascus about noontime,

a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me,

 7 and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me,

'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'

 8 "And I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?'

And He said to me,

'I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.'

9 "And those who were with me saw the light, to be sure, but did not understand 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,

'Get up and go on into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.'

11 "But since 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.

**Independent Witness**

 12 "A certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, and well-spoken of by all the Jews who lived there,

Ananias (Greek name for Hebrew name, Hananiah,

"favored of the LORD" or “Yahweh has been gracious”)

 13 came to me, and standing near said to me,

'Brother Saul, receive your sight!'

And at that very time I looked up at him.

14 "And he (Ananias) said, (commissioning)

'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth.

15 'For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard.

 16 'Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized,

and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'

**Personal Encounter - Trance**

 17 "It happened when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I fell into a trance,

 18 and I saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me.'

 19 "And I said, 'Lord, they themselves understand that in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in You.

 20 'And when the blood of Your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving, and watching out for the coats of those who were slaying him.'

 21 "And He said to me, 'Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'

 Reviewing the text of Acts 9:15 we read:

15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;

 The point being that Paul could have included the fact that he was commissioned to witness to kings and the sons of Israel too. The account in Acts 9 highlights the fact that Paul went to synagogues in Damascus to witness to the Jews. However, they soon opposed Paul and plotted to do away with him.

 20 and immediately he *began* to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."

 21 All those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying, "Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and *who* had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?"

 22 But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this *Jesus* is the Christ.

 23 When many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with him, (Acts 9:20-23)

**Rejection**

 22 They listened to him up to this statement, and then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he should not be allowed to live!"

 23 And as they were crying out and throwing off their cloaks and tossing dust into the air,

**State Citizenship Rights for Good**

 24 the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, stating that he should be examined by scourging so that he might find out the reason why they were shouting against him that way.

 25 But when they stretched him out with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman and uncondemned?"

 26 When the centurion heard this, he went to the commander and told him, saying, "What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman."

 27 The commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" And he said, "Yes."

 28 The commander answered, "I acquired this citizenship with a large sum of money." And Paul said, "But I was actually born a citizen."

 29 Therefore those who were about to examine him immediately let go of him; and the commander also was afraid when he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had put him in chains.

 30 But on the next day, wishing to know for certain why he had been accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Council to assemble, and brought Paul down and set him before them.

 Here we see Paul calling upon his Roman citizenship rights to protect him from unjust treatment by the Romans. We know from reading Romans 13 that government is formed to execute or accomplish God’s good and protect people from bad factors and evil. We see here that the Roman commander was trying to get the facts about Paul’s circumstances. Thus, the Roman commander was doing good. Government does not always act good. We know the end of Paul’s incarceration ends in his martyrdom at the order of the state, most likely by the order of the Roman Emperor Nero by 68 A.D.

3 For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same;

 4 for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.

 5 Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake (Romans 13:3-5).

**What do we learn from Luke’s account of Paul’s return to Jerusalem?**

1. We are all relieved and happy that God did not call any of us to the mission field to do what Paul was sent to accomplish regardless of the circumstances.
2. Paul knew that he was walking into challenges/trouble. Many people told Paul before he arrived in Jerusalem of the trouble he would have. However, prior to these warnings, Paul knew in advance, from the time of his commissioning by God as Jesus Christ, that he would suffer proclaiming the Gospel Message in Jesus’ name.
3. Being a missionary for God is not for cowards or wimps.
4. Missionaries/ministers for God need to be 100 percent sold-out to God in order to withstand the fallen world’s rebellion against God’s messengers and threats of personal safety.
5. Reading about Paul’s missionary journeys brings to light the huge chasm and conflict between what God wants to do through His ministers and the evil opposition.
6. There was success in Paul’s missionary trips. Many people, both Gentiles and Jews, surrendered to God.
7. God’s spiritual work through Paul is eternal. It is eternal in that people became eternally saved and eternal because these accounts became part of the Church record that will be with the Church till the Second Coming.

**Comparison – Jesus and Paul**

**Jesus “Triumphal Entry” into Jerusalem and Paul’s return to Jerusalem after a long missionary tour.**

God as Jesus knew that He was riding into trouble/challenges when He mounted the donkey to fulfill Zechariah 9:9,10.

**Luke 19:37-38**

37 As soon as He was approaching, near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles which they had seen,

 38 shouting: "BLESSED IS THE KING WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" (Zechariah 9:9-10)

 To add fuel to the religious fire, Jesus did not hold his followers back from publicly calling Him “King”. Even though this was misunderstood by many, Jesus proclaimed to be a “King” of a kingdom not of this world (John 18:36).

 39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, rebuke Your disciples."

 40 But Jesus answered, "I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!"

 41 When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it,

 42 saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes.

 43 "For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side,

 44 and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation."

 In verses 43, 44 Jesus is recalling the judgement upon Jerusalem in the days of Isaiah, Jeremiah and prophecies of Ezekiel. Jesus’s audience knows all too well the history of the Babylonian destruction and captivity in 600 B.C. to 537 B.C.

**Isaiah 29:3** I will camp against you encircling you, And I will set siegeworks against you, And I will raise up battle towers against you.

**Ezekiel 4:2** "Then lay siege against it, build a siege wall, raise up a ramp, pitch camps and place battering rams against it all around.

**Jeremiah 6:6** For thus says the LORD of hosts, "Cut down her trees And cast up a siege against Jerusalem. This is the city to be punished, In whose midst there is only oppression.

**Ezekiel 26:8** "He will slay your daughters on the mainland with the sword; and he will make siege walls against you, cast up a ramp against you and raise up a large shield against you.

 Jesus had already thrown *gas on the fire* by entering the city approaching the Passover - He then went to the Temple and physically removed those taking financial advantage of the common person and overturned their tables.

 Like Jesus, Paul knew what he was doing by going to Jerusalem. He knew the religious authorities would have him arrested or a mob might stone him like they did Stephen.

**Luke 19:45** Jesus entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling, 46 saying to them, "It is written, 'AND MY HOUSE SHALL BE A HOUSE OF PRAYER,' but you have made it a ROBBERS' DEN." 47 And He was teaching daily in the temple; but the chief priests and the scribes and the leading men among the people were trying to destroy Him, 48 and they could not find anything that they might do, for all the people were hanging on to every word He said.

 We see the hostility toward God throughout history. By adding the Incarnation ministry, Resurrection, Ascension, spiritually empowering Disciples and the promise of the Second Coming with judgement – the rebellious fallen world cannot tolerate God’s presence or ways.

**What did the Triumphal Entry and Paul’s return to Jerusalem mean?**

1. God’s plan was preordained despite fallen humanity’s evil will to prevent His eventual victory. (Isaiah 53, Psalm 22, Acts 2 & 9)
2. Evil continues its attempt to stop God in the face of its own defeat.
	1. Example: Test in the Wilderness (Matthew 4)
3. Evil is in constant denial of God’s superiority and authority.
	1. Evil does not possess love. God is Love (1 John 4).

4 Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant,

 5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered,

 6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never fails; (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

* 1. Evil cannot forgive and seeks revenge (Job 1).
	2. Evil is bitter and hateful (Cain murders Abel – Genesis 4).
1. God is responsible for sin’s destruction.
	1. The Cross & Resurrection
	2. Paul’s Witness all the way to Caesar’s household (Phil. 4:22).

5. God works in the opposite way of Satan and sin.

The following verses taken from English Standard Version ESV

**Romans 12:19** Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”

**Romans 12:17-21** Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

**Ephesians 4:31-32** Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

**Proverbs 20:22** Do not say, “I will repay evil”; wait for the Lord, and he will deliver you.

**Leviticus 19:18** You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.

**Luke 6:31** And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

**Deuteronomy 32:35** Vengeance is mine, and recompense, for the time when their foot shall slip; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and their doom comes swiftly.’

**Matthew 5:43-48** “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ...

**Mark 11:25** And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.”

**Matthew 5:7** “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

**AMEN**