

Acts 22

Local Credibility?

Read Acts 22: This chapter is a clash between what Paul has been longing for, as opposed to what God sees for his life. Paul is yearning to save his people. Paul has seen the light of Jesus Christ. He has gone further in; and done the research and found Christ all over the Old Testament. He feels that his own people might get past their misunderstandings if one of their own countrymen (with credibility) lays it out according to their way of thinking. Paul had gone to every synagogue that he can to reveal Jesus throughout the Old Testament to make a bridge for his countrymen to see the true messiah. His efforts have had mixed results.

Paul has been mischaracterized as a heretic who was supposedly telling people to ignore the teachings of Moses and Abraham. This is not so. Paul was teaching the people the underlying purposes for what Abraham and Moses talked about. Paul was telling the people that the *ceremonies, memorials, and rituals* were to keep the idea alive until a person really got it. All of the rituals are about Jesus, if you are paying attention. The reality behind what inspired the tabernacle and temple furnishings and sacrifices was accomplished by Jesus. The Holy Holidays were all about Jesus. Paul was just saying that getting into a right personal relationship with Jesus was more important than temple calendar of activities.

Paul thinks that his former level of zeal and commitment to incarcerate and kill Christians would earn their respect.

³ For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, ⁴ though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: ⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. ⁷ But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ (Philippians 3)

Paul starts out his credentials by pointing out that he was a student of Gamaliel. Gamaliel was the grandson of the famous Elder Hillel, who wrote much of the

Mishna, Talmud and Midrash (extra-biblical commentaries and extrapolations). Gamaliel was the senior teacher in Israel. He was a Pharisee in the Sanhedrin (Supreme Court). He continued the teachings of his grandfather, Hillel. Here is what Gamaliel would have emphasized as he disciplined Paul:

- Humility about your credentials
- Importance of bible study
- Respect for the legal process
- Meaning of true repentance
- Practical legal maxims

You can see how these teachings shaped Paul. They show up throughout his writing. He was very proud but referred to himself in the third person when things pointed too much towards his credit. He spent years meditating on the scriptures. He was contrite about his own shortcomings. He was quick to adopt cultural adages to colorize his messages.

On the other hand, Paul discovered that all of these extra-biblical commentaries and oral traditions were subject to conjecture, because they mixed human understanding with God's messages to men. God has specifically told us not to *fill in the blanks* and pass it off as factual. God rejects these oral traditions. The Jews are super bright when comes to biblical commentary, but they tend to take it beyond what God has said.

² You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, so that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I am commanding you. (Deuteronomy 4:2)

Then the Lord answered Job from the whirlwind and said, ² “Who is this who darkens the divine plan By words without knowledge?” ³ No tighten the belt on your waist like a man, And I shall ask you, and you inform Me! ⁴ Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding, ⁵ Who set its measurements? Since you know. (Job 38)

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord. ⁹ “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts (Isaiah 55)

It is wise to relate to people according to their world view. That would be logical. In reality, apologetics can sometimes be a smoke screen. It is often just a spiritual battle, wrapped in superficial arguments. They will not be *confused by the facts*. Their personal philosophy is not changeable, regardless of the evidence to the contrary. When it comes to issues about Jesus there are just some people who will close their ears to it. All of Paul's authority (as one of them) meant nothing to them. They proceeded to try to kill him.

Paul was rescued by the Roman Commander and some centurions. They had heard so many conflicting witnesses regarding his supposed crime. The Romans thought that he was an Egyptian who raised up 4,000 men in the desert for an insurrection. None of the false witnesses were really in agreement.

It was obvious to the soldiers that this was an emotionally driven and insincere crowd, and that maybe Paul was being victimized. Paul threw another curve at them and shocked the Romans with his Roman citizenship. They would have been demoted and beaten severely if they were ever caught punishing a Roman citizen without a fair trial. The next day, an inquiry and forum were set up to get to the bottom of who was causing this uproar. Paul welcomed the chance to tell his story. His conscience was clean. It's unfortunate that you have to spend so much energy chasing down the false statements to prove your point. Paul wanted to honor Moses and Abraham by honoring God; but they only saw him as an enemy of Israel.