

Paul Addresses the Jerusalem Mob, Part I

Text: Acts 21:37-22:2

Introduction:

Having wrongfully been accused of teaching Jews to reject Moses, and of bringing Gentiles into the temple, Paul has been violently apprehended by a Jewish mob. As they were beating him and seeking to kill him, the commander of the guard came with an army of soldiers, put chains on Paul, and sought to get to the bottom of the cause of the uproar. Amidst the tumult, he could not get a straight answer concerning the wrong that Paul had done. And so, he decided to have him taken into the barracks. The mob was so angry, wishing Paul dead, that Paul had to be carried up the stairs by the soldiers, lest the violent mob laid hold of Paul and beat him some more. As he was taken away, the mob repeatedly yelled, "Away with him," indicating that they wanted the Roman soldiers to end Paul's life.

This morning, Paul will be given an opportunity to address the mob, just before he is taken into the barracks.

I. Paul Addresses the Jerusalem Mob, Part I

"Then as Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, 'May I speak to you?' He replied, 'Can you speak Greek? Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?'" (vs. 37-38).

Question #1: What does Paul wisely do here, to gain a brief audience with the commander? What does this reveal about the commander's assumption about Paul? Comment on the providence of God here? How might this be relevant for us? [Our upbringing, background and natural abilities can be useful for the kingdom. What providential tools are in your belt?]

"But Paul said, 'I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I implore you, permit me to speak to the people'" (vs. 39).

Question #2: How does Paul use this brief opportunity to speak to the commander? Comment on the compelling nature of what he says? If Paul's request is granted, what significant opportunity would he have here, which he did not have, when he was quickly apprehended by the Jewish mob? [He will be able to gain an audience with the Jews, under the protection of the Roman soldiers. He will be given a chance to speak without being attacked].

Question #3: Considering that this mob wants to kill Paul and has already begun to beat him, what does Paul's design here, reveal about Paul himself? What might motivate him to this end? [The love of Christ, and a reminder that he was once on the other side of this fence]. Apply this to us.

"So when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people" (vs. 40a).

Question #4: What was Paul's position here in addressing the mob? [up on the stairs]. What benefit did this secure? [protection and projection].

Question #5: In what ways (up to this point) has Paul been used to fulfill God's words in Acts 9:15-16?

"And when there was a great silence, he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, saying, 'Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now.' And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent" (vs. 40b - 22:2).

Question #6: What does Paul wisely do here? How was this effective? What does Paul's communication with the commander and then the Jews, tell us about Paul here? Apply.

Question #7: What has Paul managed to accomplish, which was originally not (but ought to have been) granted him? [He is able to give a defense]. How would we presume that Paul will use this opportunity? [for the Gospel]. What might we be naturally tempted to do?