SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 22

Far Away to the Gentiles — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

Chained and bruised, Paul answers a lying mob with the story of how Jesus arrested him — a zealous persecutor met by the risen Lord, washed, and sent to the nations. The crowd can stand everything but the last word, "Gentiles," and God uses a Roman citizenship to keep His witness alive.

00 The Text

ACTS 22 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

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,

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.

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.

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,

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 said, '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.'

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.'"

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,

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.

Marked in the text

- **v1** "hear my defense" — Command / instruction
- **v3** "educated under Gamaliel" — Time / place / contrast
- **v3** "being zealous for God just as you all are today" — Sin / warning
- **v4** "I persecuted this Way to the death" — Sin / warning
- **v6** "a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me" — God — His character & actions
- **v7** "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" — God — His character & actions
- **v8** "Who are You, Lord?" — Time / place / contrast
- **v8** "I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting" — God — His character & actions
- **v10** "What shall I do, Lord?" — Command / instruction
- **v13** "Brother Saul, receive your sight!" — Promise / blessing
- **v14** "The God of our fathers has appointed you" — God — His character & actions
- **v14** "to see the Righteous One" — God — His character & actions
- **v15** "you will be a witness for Him to all men" — Command / instruction
- **v16** "Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name" — Command / instruction
- **v18** "they will not accept your testimony about Me" — Sin / warning
- **v20** "the blood of Your witness Stephen" — Sin / warning
- **v21** "I will send you far away to the Gentiles" — Promise / blessing
- **v22** "Away with such a fellow from the earth" — Sin / warning
- **v25** "a man who is a Roman and uncondemned" — Time / place / contrast
- **v28** "But I was actually born a citizen" — Time / place / contrast
- **v4** "persecuted" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v7** "persecuting" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v15** "witness" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v25** "Roman" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

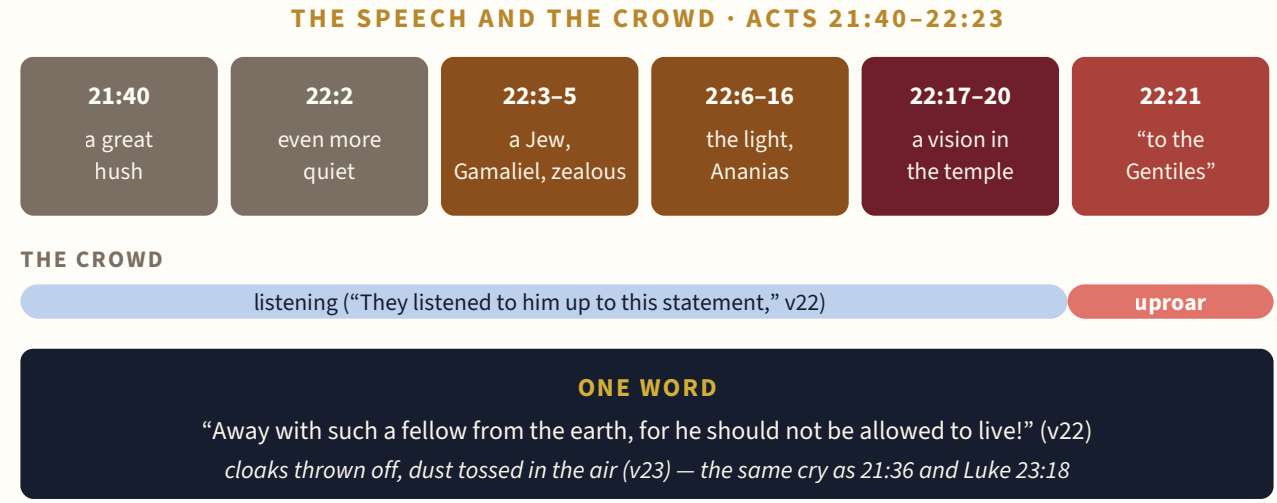
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 22:3

"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."

FIGURE · THE SPEECH AND THE CROWD



The crowd stays quiet through Paul's whole story; watch what happens at the last box, when he says "Gentiles."

Setting. The stairs of the Roman barracks (the Fortress Antonia) above the temple court, the same day as the riot of 21:27–40. Paul, in chains, speaks to the crowd in the Hebrew (Aramaic) dialect (21:40; 22:2). After the uproar the commander takes him inside to be examined by scourging (vv22–29), and the next day sets him before the chief priests and the Council (v30).

Structure:

- vv1–5 — **I was one of you:** "hear my defense" (v1); the crowd goes even quieter at the Hebrew (v2); born in Tarsus, brought up in Jerusalem, educated under Gamaliel, zealous for God (v3); persecuted "this Way" to the death, with letters from the high priest to Damascus (vv4–5).
- vv6–11 — **the light at noon:** a very bright light (v6); "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" (v7); "Who are You, Lord?" — "I am Jesus the Nazarene" (v8); the companions saw the light but did not understand the voice (v9); "What shall I do, Lord?" (v10); led blind into Damascus (v11).
- vv12–16 — **Ananias and baptism:** a devout Jew, well spoken of (v12); "Brother Saul, receive your sight!" (v13); appointed to know His will, see the Righteous One, hear His voice (v14); a witness to all men (v15); "Why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name" (v16).

- vv17–21 — **the vision in the temple:** praying in the temple, a trance (v17); "get out of Jerusalem quickly" (v18); Paul argues from his past — the synagogues, Stephen's blood (vv19–20); "Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles" (v21).
- vv22–30 — **the scourge and the citizen:** "Away with such a fellow from the earth" (v22); cloaks and dust (v23); ordered examined by scourging (v24); "Is it lawful … a Roman and uncondemned?" (v25); bought citizenship vs. born a citizen (vv26–28); the examiners let go; the commander afraid (v29); Paul brought before the Council (v30).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "said / saying" ×16 — vv2, 7, 8, 10 (×2), 13, 14, 18, 19, 21, 22, 25, 26, 27 (×2), 28.
- "heard / hear / listened" ×7 — vv1, 2, 7, 14, 15, 22, 26.
- "saw / see / seen / sight" ×6 — vv9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 18.
- "Roman / citizen / citizenship" ×6 — vv25, 26, 27, 28 (×2), 29.
- "commander" ×5 — vv24, 26, 27, 28, 29.
- "Lord" ×4 — vv8, 10 (×2), 19.
- "Damascus" ×4 — vv5, 6, 10, 11.
- "witness / testify / testimony" ×4 — vv5, 15, 18, 20.
- "scourging / scourge / examine(d)" ×4 — vv24 (×2), 25, 29.
- "persecuted / persecuting" ×3 — vv4, 7, 8.
- "light" ×3 — vv6, 9, 11; "voice(s)" ×3 — vv7, 9, 22.
- "Jerusalem" ×3 — vv5, 17, 18; "fathers" ×3 — vv1, 3, 14.
- "prisons / prisoners / imprison" ×3 — vv4, 5, 19.
- "Jew / Jews" ×3 — vv3, 12, 30; "Law" ×2 — vv3, 12.
- "Gentiles" ×1 — v21: the one word that ends the speech.

Contrasts: Zealous for God ⟷ persecuting God's Son (vv3–8). Saul binding others (v4) ⟷ Saul led by the hand (v11) ⟷ Paul bound with thongs (v25). Saw the light ⟷ did not understand the voice (v9). Jerusalem ⟷ far away to the Gentiles (vv18–21). Great hush ⟷ "Away with such a fellow" (21:40; 22:22). Bought citizenship ⟷ born a citizen (v28). Ready to scourge ⟷ afraid (vv24, 29).

Shape of the chapter: a speech in three panels — before, the turning point, after — that climbs from common ground to a single offensive word, then a sudden fall into violence that is stopped by one quiet legal question.

Chapter theme (my words): Paul tells the truth about who he was and what Jesus did to him, and he does it to the people who just tried to kill him. Grace that reaches a murderer, a persecutor and the Gentiles is still the thing religious people cannot stand to hear — and God keeps His messenger alive to keep saying it.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 22:16

"'Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'"

FIGURE · THREE TELLINGS OF THE DAMASCUS ROAD

ONE CONVERSION, THREE TELLINGS IN ACTS

	ACTS 9	ACTS 22	ACTS 26
WHO TELLS IT TO WHOM	Luke narrates	Paul · the Jerusalem crowd	Paul · King Agrippa
THE LIGHT	"a light from heaven" (9:3)	"about noontime, a very bright light" (22:6)	"at midday … brighter than the sun" (26:13)
THE COMPANIONS	"hearing the voice but seeing no one" (9:7)	saw the light, did not understand the voice (22:9)	"we had all fallen to the ground" (26:14)
ANANIAS	a disciple, sent by a vision (9:10–17)	"devout by the standard of the Law" (22:12)	not named
THE COMMISSION	"a chosen instrument … before the Gentiles" (9:15)	"I will send you far away to the Gentiles" (22:21)	"to open their eyes" (26:18)

Same event, different audiences: Acts 22 stresses the Law, the temple and a devout Jew.

Read across each row: the event is the same, but in Acts 22 (middle column) Paul stresses what a Jerusalem crowd would honor.

Why tell his story instead of answering the charge? The charge was that Paul attacked the Law and the temple (21:28). His answer is a life: a zealous Jew, trained under Gamaliel, devout Ananias, a vision while praying in the temple. Guzik: "Paul did his work of persecution with the official approval of the religious leaders" — he was the system's own man until Jesus stopped him. Henry: "There appears no passion."

Did the companions hear the voice or not? Acts 9:7 says they were "hearing the voice but seeing no one"; 22:9 says they "saw the light … but did not understand the voice." Many explain the difference from the Greek: *akouō* can mean to hear a sound or to understand speech, and the NASB's "did not understand" in 22:9 reflects that. They heard a noise; only Saul heard a message. Spurgeon: they "could not help sensing that extraordinary light." Guzik does not take up the question; the three tellings simply fit their audiences (see the figure).

What does "why are you persecuting Me?" teach? That Jesus counts what is done to His people as done to Him. Guzik: Paul "came to understand he was persecuting Jesus Himself, the shining Lord of glory." Sproul's sermon

summary: “he himself was arrested by the risen Lord Jesus.” Henry: “Paul, being a Pharisee, was proud of his spiritual eyesight” — and he was struck blind.

Does verse 16 teach that baptism washes away sin? This is a place where Christians differ, so I want to be careful. The verse joins three things: be baptized, wash away your sins, calling on His name. Spurgeon is plain: “This was not baptismal regeneration, for he was already regenerate” — Saul had already met and obeyed the Lord (v10). The washing comes by calling on the name of the Lord (Rom 10:13; 1 Cor 6:11), and baptism is its public, obedient sign. Henry presses the urgency: “Why should not that be done at the present time that must be done some time, or we are undone?” I hold with Spurgeon: faith in Christ saves; baptism is the first step of obedience and should not be delayed.

Why did God send Paul away from Jerusalem? Paul thought his history would make Jerusalem listen (vv19–20). The Lord knew better: “they will not accept your testimony about Me” (v18). Henry: “As God knows before who will receive the gospel, so he knows who will reject it,” and “It is God that appoints his labourers both their day and their place.” Guzik: “Jesus didn’t agree with Paul’s response.” Going to the Gentiles was not God giving up on Israel — Isaiah 49:6 says the Servant restores Israel *and* is a light to the nations. I believe God still has a future for national Israel (Rom 11:25–26); Paul himself kept going “to the Jew first.”

Why did one word set them off? Guzik: “This outraged, violent response was over one word: Gentiles.” The temple riot began over a Gentile supposedly in the holy place (21:28–29); now Paul says the God of their fathers sent him to Gentiles. Henry: “Galled consciences kick at the least touch.” The cry “Away with such a fellow” is the cry of 21:36 and Luke 23:18.

Was it right for Paul to claim his rights? Yes. Henry: “It is indeed the privilege of every man not to have wrong done him, except it be proved he has done wrong.” Guzik: “It was a serious violation of Roman rights to even bind a Roman citizen without due process.” Paul did not claim it at Philippi until after the beating (16:37); here he claims it before, and the whip stops. Using lawful protection is not a lack of faith — it kept him alive for Rome (23:11).

Word study (Greek):

- **defense — *apologia* (G627):** a speech answering a charge (v1); Phil 1:7; 1 Pet 3:15.
- **zealous — *zēlōtēs* (G2207):** as the crowd was zealous (v3; 21:20).
- **Way — *hodos* (G3598):** the early name for the faith (v4; 9:2; 24:14).
- **persecute — *diōkō* (G1377):** to hunt down (vv4, 7, 8).
- **flash around — *periastraptō* (G4015):** only 9:3; 22:6.
- **appoint — *procheirizomai* (G4400):** chosen beforehand (v14; 3:20; 26:16).
- **Righteous One — *dikaios* (G1342):** a title of Messiah (3:14; 7:52; 22:14).
- **witness — *martys* (G3144):** Paul (v15) and Stephen (v20).
- **wash away — *apolouō* (G628):** only 22:16; 1 Cor 6:11.
- **calling on — *epikaleō* (G1941):** calling on His name (v16; Rom 10:13).
- **trance — *ekstasis* (G1611):** as Peter’s (10:10; 11:5).
- **away with — *airō* (G142):** v22; 21:36; Luke 23:18.
- **scourge — *mastix* (G3148):** the Roman whip (v24).
- **uncondemned — *akatakritos* (G178):** without trial (v25; 16:37).

- **citizenship — *politeia* (G4174):** v28; Eph 2:12.

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **The defense is a testimony** — *apologia* is a story.
2. **Common ground first** — Hebrew, Gamaliel, the Law (Guzik).
3. **Zeal is not enough** — "as much a zealot as a rabbi" (Henry).
4. **To strike His people is to strike Him** (v7).
5. **The arrester arrested** (Sproul's sermon summary).
6. **"What shall I do, Lord?"** — the first question of a new man (Henry).
7. **"Brother Saul"** — a devout Jew's welcome.
8. **Washed — but not by water alone** (Spurgeon).
9. **God picks the place** (Henry).
10. **One word — Gentiles** (Guzik).

Cross-references: Isa 49:6; Luke 23:18; John 12:29; Acts 5:34–39; 7:52, 58; 8:1–3; 9:1–19; 16:37; 21:28–29, 36, 40; 23:11; 26:12–18; Rom 10:13; 11:25–26; 1 Cor 6:11; 9:1; 15:8–9; Gal 1:13–16; Eph 2:12–13; Phil 3:5–6, 20; 1 Tim 1:13–15; 1 Pet 3:15.

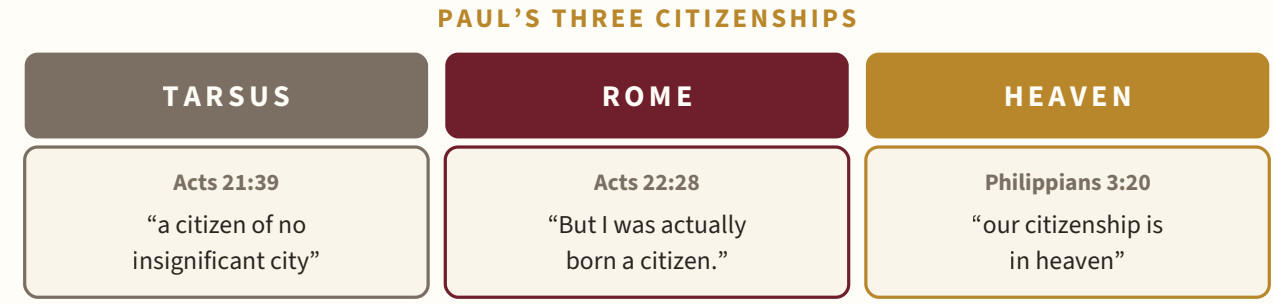
03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 22:10

"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.'"

FIGURE · PAUL'S THREE CITIZENSHIPS



Paul used his earthly rights without shame — and lived for the citizenship that cannot be bought.

Tarsus, Rome and heaven: Paul claims the first two when they serve the gospel, and lives for the third.

Example to follow — tell your story. Paul did not argue the charges; he told what Jesus did to him. A lot of the men I work with think they have nothing to say for God because of their past. Paul's past is exactly what he talked about — the prisons, the beatings, Stephen's blood. This week I will tell one man, plainly, who I was, how Jesus met me, and what He is doing now.

Sin to confess — sincere and wrong. Saul was zealous for God and was hunting God's Son. I have been sure I was right and been wrong — about people, about God, about myself. I confess that my sincerity is not the same as truth, and I ask the Lord to show me where I am still persecuting Him in the way I treat His people.

Command to obey — "Why do you delay?" Ananias did not let Saul sit on it: get up, be baptized, call on His name. Some of what God has shown me I have put off — a step of obedience, a call I owe, a confession. "What shall I do, Lord?" is a dangerous prayer, because He answers. I will do the thing I already know, today.

Promise to trust — "I will send you." Paul wanted to stay where his story made sense; the Lord said, "Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles." He decides where I am useful. For a man inside a facility or starting over in a new town, that is a promise: the Lord who sends is the Lord who goes with me — and He can use even Roman law to protect His work.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. Paul answered a false charge by telling his story. If someone asked me to "make a defense" of my faith, what would my honest story be — before Christ, meeting Christ, since Christ? (22:1–16; 1 Pet 3:15) *A changed life is the first apology for the gospel.*
2. Paul was sincere and zealous — and dead wrong. Where have I been sincerely wrong, and what did it take for God to show me? (22:3–5; Phil 3:5–6) *Paul was as much a zealot as a rabbi (Henry).*
3. Jesus said, "why are you persecuting Me?" about Christians Saul had never met as Jesus. How does it change the way I treat other believers to know Jesus takes it personally? (22:7–8; Matt 25:40) *He was persecuting Jesus Himself (Guzik).*
4. "What shall I do, Lord?" When did I last ask that and mean it — and what is He telling me to do that I keep delaying? (22:10, 16) *Why do you delay? (v16)*
5. Paul argued with Jesus about where he would be most useful. Where am I arguing with God about my "Jerusalem" — the place or people I think I should reach? (22:17–21) *God appoints his labourers both their day and their place (Henry).*
6. The crowd listened until Paul said "Gentiles." Who are the people I quietly think God's grace should not reach? (22:21–22; Eph 2:12–13) *This outraged, violent response was over one word (Guzik).*

Worship. The risen Jesus shines brighter than the noon sun and still stops a persecutor on the road by name — "Saul, Saul." He is the Righteous One who calls His enemies "brother," washes them when they call on His name, and sends them to the ends of the earth. He holds the whip and the hand of the commander, and He keeps His witnesses alive until their work is done.

Prayer. Lord Jesus, You knew everything I was, and You still met me. Thank You for not leaving me in my zeal and my blindness. Teach me to ask, "What shall I do, Lord?" and then to stop delaying. Give me courage to tell my story to the people who are hardest to face, and love for the ones I think are outside Your reach. Send me wherever You want, and let me go gladly. Amen.

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