

A Dramatic Encounter with Jesus (Acts 22:1-11)¹

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1. Context

- Paul has recently returned from his third missionary journey.
- Back in Jerusalem, in the temple.
- Recognized by Jews of the diaspora who are in Jerusalem.
- Accused of bringing a Gentile into the temple, a riot ensues.
- Rescued from the mob by the authority of Rome.

2. Passage (Acts 22:1-11)²

¹ *"Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now."*

² *And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent. Then he said:* ³ *"I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today."*

⁴ *"I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women,"* ⁵ *"as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished."* ⁶ *"Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me."* ⁷ *"And I fell to the ground and heard a voice*

saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' ⁸ "So I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.' ⁹ "And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me. ¹⁰ "So I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.' ¹¹ "And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus. (Acts 22:1-11)

3. A Bridge with the Crowd

- Paul cites his credentials as a zealous Jew (vv. 2-5)
- Speaks in Hebrew.³
- A Jew
- Taught by Gamaliel - grandson of Hillel and a beloved and esteemed Pharisee (Acts 5:34).
- Taught according to the strictness of **our** fathers' law.
- Zealous toward God . . . like them
- ⁴ *"I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, ⁵ "as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished."* (Acts 22:4-5)
- Summarized in Paul's epistle to the church at Philippi,
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. (Philippians 3:5-6)

4. A Dramatic Encounter with Jesus

- Paul on his way to arrest Christians - in zealous opposition to Christianity.
- ⁷ "... *Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?*" (Acts 22:7)
- ⁸ "... *Who are You, Lord?*" (Acts 22:8)
- Was Paul seeking God?
- Is Paul's conversion "fair?"
- One doctrinal statement on soteriology maintains: "it is impossible for God to be unfair to any person . . ."
- Is Paul's conversion fair? Was Paul treated equally to all other men, both saved and unsaved?
- Isn't Paul given an unfair advantage in comparison with other members of the human race? What about most who never had a direct encounter with the risen Christ?
 - Jesus audibly speaks to Paul.
 - Jesus manifests His glory to Paul - ¹³ "... *at midday . . . I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun . . .*" (Acts 26:13)
 - ¹⁶ "... *rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose . . .*" (Acts 26:16)
- How can we evaluate God's fairness? Will God always seem fair from our human perspective? Does "fairness" require "equal treatment"?
- What about the Biblical doctrines of predestination and election?
 - SODT doctrinal statement: "*The sovereignty of God also extends to the doctrine of divine election whereby those chosen by the council of the Lord's own will, shall come to Him in faith (Jn. 6:37, 39, 44; Eph. 1:3-18; 2 Thess. 2:13).*"⁴

- Is it fair for God to pass over the non-elect?
- God's sovereign purposes in salvation rarely satisfy our *perceived* notions of fairness.
- It would be completely fair if God passed by all humanity such that every person in history wound up in hell.
- If His *non-intervention* would be completely just, are we right to take offense when He demonstrates His love by sovereignly extending grace to some, the elect?

5. Application

- God is sovereign. In His sovereignty He answers to no one.
³⁵ *All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand Or say to Him, "What have You done?"* (Daniel 4:35)
- Every view along the spectrum of soteriology can be portrayed as unfair from our limited human perspective.
 - Calvinistic perspective: "God passes over some individuals—the non-elect. As a result, they remain lost. *The God of Calvinism is a monster!*"
 - Arminian perspective: "God looks into the future to see which individuals will choose Him. He declares these persons as His 'elect.' Yet He still creates those He knows will never choose Him, knowing in advance they are destined for hell. *The God of Arminianism is a monster!*"
- When God's sovereignty contravenes our notions of fairness, it is *our* perspective which is flawed, not God's actions.
- God's electing purposes in salvation align with His purpose and will, ¹¹ *In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will . . .* (Ephesians 1:11)

6. Closing Prayer

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SpiritAndTruth.org Scan Code^b
contact@SpiritAndTruth.org^c

Endnotes:

1. https://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Acts_by_Tony_Garland/76_Acts_22_1-11/index.htm
2. Unless indicated otherwise, all Scripture references are from the *New King James Version*, copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
3. Some translations understand this to be Aramaic rather than Hebrew.
4. https://spiritandtruth.org/spirit/doctrine.htm#The_Extent_Of_Salvation

Links Mentioned Above

- a - See www.spiritandtruth.org/id/tg.htm.
b - See <https://www.spiritandtruth.org>.
c - See <mailto:contact@spiritandtruth.org>.