

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
Two World Changing Questions

Acts 22:1-11

September 16th, 2018

Main Point

God changed the course of history through the life of the Apostle Paul. In this account of Paul's conversion, we find two simple questions that will change the course of your life and possibly your world.

Getting Started

Who is Jesus, and what does He want you to do? Notice in this passage how Paul answers both questions in sharing how Jesus revealed Himself and how Jesus commissioned him to obey Him one step at a time. This passage chronicles Paul's conversion. Saul hated believers and considered them a threat to Judaism. But Jesus transformed him and turned his life around on the road to Damascus. We also must answer the same two questions if we want to follow Jesus. *Who is Jesus? Does He have a right to rule in my life? What does Jesus want me to do?* If we are not careful, we can unnecessarily clutter our lives by working hard to please the Lord with no regard for enjoying His presence and listening to what He truly calls us to do. Oftentimes, Jesus gives us enough light to follow Him one step at a time. Determine to enjoy Jesus by basking in his presence. Ask Him what He wants you to do and do it!

Observation

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Read Acts 22:1-5.

How did Paul address the people in Jerusalem? How did they respond to him when he began to speak?

How did Paul introduce himself? What did he have to say for himself in his own defense? How did he identify with his audience?

Read verses 4 and 5 again. Pay attention to how Paul persecuted believers. What did he do to them? What had he intended to do to believers who had fled to Damascus? What do these two verses say about who Saul was?

When Saul was granted permission to speak to the mob, he addressed them in Aramaic, the common language of Palestinian Jews, used throughout the Middle East at that time. He stood on the stairs of the fortress overlooking the crowd below. Paul's

defense was in three parts: (1) his conduct before his conversion, (2) his conversion and (3) his commission to share the Gospel.

Read Acts 22:6-11.

What stopped Paul dead in his tracks while on his way to Damascus? What did Jesus ask him, and how did Paul respond? How did Paul's companions respond to the light and the voice?

How did Jesus identify Himself? What did he immediately tell Paul to do?

Why did Paul's companions have to lead him by the hand to Damascus? Why did Jesus tell Paul to go to Damascus? How did Paul respond?

Paul's dedication to Judaism was so deep that only a radical supernatural transformation could change his viewpoint and trajectory in life. Jesus intervened in Paul's life in a miraculous way to transform Saul into Paul.

Application

Think about the two questions we introduced in the Getting Started section: (1) Who is Jesus and (2) What does He want you to do? Answering these two questions will simplify your journey of faith, allow you to enjoy the journey and relieve you of unnecessary pressure to perform to please others. Take some time in your group to seriously consider your answers to these two questions. Share your responses with those in your group.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for saving me from the penalty and power of sin, so I could enjoy and serve you forever! Show me how to *seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God* (Colossians 3:1-2). Help me to savor you so I can serve you willingly out of the abundance of the overflow of my heart.

Commentary

Acts 22:1-21 reports Paul's address to the Jewish mob in the temple courtyard in Jerusalem, the same mob who moments before had sought to kill him. This is the first time he shared his testimony while he was under arrest. With the permission of the Roman commanding officer, Paul addressed the crowd of Jews from whom he had been rescued. The people listened when Paul began to speak to them in their own native Aramaic. He shared his testimony with them.

22:1-5. Paul began by speaking of his life before he became a Christian. First, he noted his strong Jewish heritage. He was born into a Jewish family in Tarsus. Gamaliel was the leading teacher of the Jewish law (Torah) of his day. Torah studies consisted of learning by memory the written Old Testament law and the extensive oral interpretations of the law passed down from the great Torah teachers.

Paul emphasized his persecution of followers of this Way, Christians, and emphasized the intensity of his persecution. He had stopped at nothing, pursuing them even to their death. Paul emphasized his role as persecutor because it pointed to his Jewishness. The crowd had accused Paul of flagrantly violating Jewish law (Acts 21:28). Far from that, Paul showed that no one had been more zealous for the law than he. Paul rejected God through both religion and rebellion. You think you are good, Paul was better. You think you are too bad, Paul was worse.

22:6-9. These verses depict Paul's encounter with the Lord Jesus. Paul was journeying to Damascus to seek out the Christians among the Jews there (22:5). Just outside town he was stopped in his tracks. Although it was around noon, a light suddenly surrounded his party. Paul fell to the ground in awe at the heavenly vision. A voice from heaven addressed him by his Hebrew name, Saul. Jesus revealed Himself as the victim of Paul's persecution. To persecute Christ's church was to persecute Christ Himself. Paul wasn't looking for Jesus, but Jesus came looking for Paul. In the same way, Jesus came looking for you.

22:10-16. The second part of Paul's testimony sets forth Jesus' instructions to Paul. Paul responded by surrendering to God. This time Paul knew that the Lord was the Christ whom he had persecuted. Jesus told Paul to go into Damascus and await instructions. Paul had been blinded by the light and had to be led into the city.