

# **“JERUSALEM MEETS ROME AND FINDS BABYLON: A STUDY IN CHURCH PURITY”**

**FALL 2022-SPRING 2023**

**January 11, 2023**

**“ARRESTED AND IMPRISONED” Acts 21-28**

## **I. LIVING IN DANGEROUS TIMES**

- A. *A message that changes paradigms and cultures WILL make enemies; if it affects economies and or power structures it will make DEADLY enemies*
- B. *Paul was a thoroughly convinced radical for Christ. His urgency and certainty about the gospel irritated a number of those who did not like his message. Though Paul was often opposed by the business people and powerful of the community of Gentiles, he was most often opposed by and vehemently hated by the Jewish population. They sought his death. They had no appreciation for his way of having “Jerusalem meet Rome”. They felt he made too many compromises of the Jewish faith to the Roman heathens and atheists. That made for people who wanted to see him either imprisoned or dead.*
- C. *Jesus had been hated and persecuted by some people during His ministry. His was an encounter of heaven with the Judaism of His day, a Judaism that was the creation of the rabbis, scribes, Pharisees and other lawyers. He confronted their traditions. His was Heaven meets Jerusalem in an attempt to correct it. Eventually He would allow them to abuse Him, violate Him and ultimately take His life. But His life was a sacrifice to God for the salvation of millions of others who would follow Him. His death had true and real meaning for millions; it was not a waste*
- D. *Jesus had told His disciples on the last night of His earthly existence that just as He had experienced hatred and trouble, so would all those who follow Him. He explained that hatred, trouble, persecution and even death would await those who follow Him; it is a part of our inheritance in Christ. He told us in advance so it would not come to us as a shock when it happens just as He said it would.*
- E. *The apostles knew well that persecution would come. For instance, Paul wrote:*

2Ti 3:12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. (NKJV)

Ro 8:17 and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

Ro 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (NKJV)

*Peter also wrote:*

1Pe 4:12 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;

13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. (NKJV)

- F. We conclude that it would be NORMAL for the believer to suffer for Jesus rather than not suffer! It is our heritage and history. It is what our Lord told us would happen and what the apostles suffered. That we have lived in a free country in which its citizens have exercised freedom of religion and speech is the exception to the rule. We are grateful that men/women of character and faith have been in the ascendancy of power to this day!*
- G. Therefore, as an application of this reality, we should anticipate or even expect some form of persecution leading to arrests, imprisonments and/or even death to take place in our own country. It may happen in a very short while this rest from persecution may come to a close and a new totalitarian government replace what we have now. If so, we want to be a people biblically prepared for life under persecution. No better examples can be given us than those found in Scripture. Acts 21-28 gives us an account of the arrest and imprisonment of the apostle Paul and the way in which he handled it. Ultimately, he would be killed for his faith and truly that may be the fate of all who follow Christ in the coming years. Let our minds absorb the many accounts of our brothers and*

*sisters, worldwide and over all generations who have suffered and died under the persecution of the adversary since the days of Christ!*

## **II. THE ACCOUNT AND EXAMPLE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL IN HIS MINISTRY STRUGGLE AGAINST HIS ENEMIES**

- A. *The opposition to the gospel and Paul's preaching of it became more intense with each year of ministry. **Anticipate growing hostility to the gospel as it changes people's lives. Watch the signs; listen to the Spirit.***
- B. *He is completing another mission tour and is returning to Jerusalem meeting with the new churches, their leaders and families all the way back.*
- C. *Within every true fellowship of born again persons, the Holy Spirit is very alive and a vital part of that ministry. Where He is not present the gospel is being stifled or even not present. Everywhere he went the Holy Spirit through His people in the churches is warning Paul that his life is in danger. **Anticipate that as spiritual opposition is building in the world of the spirits, it will be made known to the members and warnings may be given to those in leadership that the opposition could be preparing to take action.** 21:4, 8-14, 17-25*
- D. *It was no real surprise to him when the Spirit's warning began to unfold:*
  1. *He was recognized and accused by his adversaries 21:27 **We should know that we are being watched for our faith and the opportune time is being waited for.***
  2. *His adversaries sought to gain public support 21:27-28 **Cowards will always seek to find help by public speech (use of available media) and exaggerated inflammatory words.***
  3. *It strikes and with physical violence! They want to kill the messenger. 21:30-31 **When the strike comes we should not expect it will be peaceful and orderly. More damage can be done through violence brought on by false understanding.***
  4. *The legal authorities will likely get involved at some point; sometimes to protect and sometimes as the antagonists.*

*In this case, it was to protect Paul from the public beating he was receiving. **We should not be surprised if some physical harm takes place before the authorities are involved. They cannot be all places at all times and adversaries will take advantage of their absence to perform vigilante justice.***

5. *Arrests will take place for protection, for filing charges or for sorting out what the problem is. **Jail time is a real possibility. God may use such times as a “cool down” period for all involved.***
6. *Look for opportunities to make your case for preaching Christ. Take advantage of every legal break and right of citizenship you can. **Be ready to defend why you believe what you do from your history, your testimony and the Word of God. But know that your accusers are not dealing with actual truth but with their opinion of what you have done to them, their culture and their security.***
7. *Don't be hesitant to bring up your rights as a citizen. **In our country, that may mean asking for an attorney before you answer more questions. But calmly answer what you can. You can be calm because you had already anticipated it was going to happen.***
8. *Do not hesitate to create division among those who question you. This diversion will divide the accusing parties as to the object of their complaint.*
9. *Do not expect your adversaries to fight fair or to appreciate the slowness of the legal system when it is revenge they are seeking. If incarceration and removal from public view and influence is the desired effect then we can anticipate they will delay the process as long as possible. If it is your removal from earth they have in mind, they will develop strategies for taking matters into their own hands.*
10. *Until the matter is resolved you might expect more trials, and perhaps more incarceration. Take advantage of the “down time” and speak to your captors the gospel. But*

*stick to your story! Keep telling them how God has touched you and saved your life.*

- 11. Keep appealing to the highest courts if the matter is not resolved. Take advantage of the legal system and the rights granted you. If a means of escape opens before you do not take it lest your guilt be assumed to be correct. Use every means available to speak the gospel and demonstrate kingdom citizenship.*
- 12. In the end, your life and future are in the hands of God as was the life of Christ. Justice may not be done at all. There may be a great miscarriage of justice! Paul kept taking advantage of his time under arrest to preach the gospel. If God chooses to release you to freedom again, praise God! But if He should choose to leave you there, then make the best of it. But there is a very real possibility that the worst miscarriage of justice may result in your homegoing to the Father. We must be ready as we learn to read the signs.*