



**Becoming Issachar
Prophecy Update
Matthew 24**

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As I discussed last week, the Holy Spirit has opted to do as He is always privileged to do, modify my teaching plans. I had intended to do a prophecy update every few months, but as I shared last week, He has made it clear to me with single verse that we need to be like Issachar, a people who understood the times they lived in.



We will continue to study the word as always, but I will now be adding in an update of a sort at the beginning of each Sunday's time together.

Again, here is the scripture the Lord used to redirect me.

1 Chronicles 12:32

"From the sons of Issachar, men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do, their chiefs were two hundred; and all their kinsmen were at their command." (NASB 2020)

As we study the topic of prophecy, as followers of Christ, we are in the same category of His close servants as were the prophets.

Amos 3:7-8

"Certainly the Lord GOD does nothing Unless He reveals His secret plan To His servants the prophets. A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken! Who can do anything but prophesy?" (NASB 2020)

We have all the prophecy about His soon return in the Old Testament as well as in the New. Here is the thing, based on the word of God, we are not to be in the dark and wonder, but we are to know what is going on and understand the times. As Jesus followers, our relationship with God is not the same as believers would have in the Old Testament.

John 15:15

"No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, because all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you." (NASB 2020)

As we see what is taking place around us today, the extreme convergence of not just a few of the signs of the second coming of Christ, but the extreme convergence of all the signs, we find ourselves in awe at the time the Lord has chosen for us to live and serve Him in.

He is incredibly clear in His word that we are to understand and know the times we are living in and my challenge will be keeping up with what He is doing and what is taking place out there.

We are all equipped, as followers of Jesus, with the Holy Spirit to help us understand.

John 16:13-14

"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take from Mine and will disclose it to you." (NASB 2020)

With that background, I want to take a look at a couple of things today, the increase in lawlessness, and the developments taking place in the world of what I call, "Beast Tech."

In Matthew 24, Jesus is asked three questions by his disciples. And it is those questions we find the basis for many of the things we will be discussing here each week.

Matthew 24:3

"As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?'" (ESV)



1. "When will these things be," pretty much asking the question surrounding the impending destruction of the Temple Jesus had alluded to in Matthew 24:2. But more broadly, when, as it pertains to His Second Coming too.
2. "What is the sign" of your coming, the questions is not about the rapture of the church, but about His second coming. To many folks confuse the two. The total question is when and what.

The rapture of the church takes place before the Tribulation. Jesus meets us in the air fulfilling the promise of John 14:1-3. The second question is not about that event. The rapture of the church has no sign, it is an imminent event that Paul was looking forward to, and we are looking forward to today. At any second, He will return for His church, and the church age ends, and the Day of the Lord begins.

The second question is about His return at the end of the Tribulation, the Second Coming of Christ. This is an event that is at least 7 or more years after the pretribulation rapture of the church. Then there is the third question.

3. As we come to the third question, it is the same when and what as applied to the signs of the end of the age.

Think of it as parallel questions being asked about events in the near term as well as in the soon already but not yet future as well.

But about the Second Coming, Mark Hitchcock tells us the following.

There is nothing more clearly stated in the Bible than the fact that Jesus Christ is coming again. **The second coming of Christ to this earth—his visible, literal, physical, glorious return—is explicitly referred to 1,845 times in the Bible.** It is mentioned in twenty-three of the twenty-seven New Testament books. Three of the remaining four books contain only one chapter (Philemon; 2 John; and 3 John), and Galatians implies the Second Coming in 1:4. There are 260 chapters in the New Testament and 318 references to the second coming of Christ. (Hitchcock 1999, 70)

The disciples asked these questions because they are no different than we are, they have heard Him speak of some of these topics, and they too are trying to put the pieces together.

The location where these questions are being asked is not a coincidence considering what took place before the destruction of the first Temple.

Ezekiel 11:23

"And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain that is on the east side of the city." (ESV)

Prior to the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon, Ezekiel was given the view of the glory of the Lord leaving the Holy of Holies, exiting the eastern gate and then pausing at the top of the Mount of Olives.

Now here is Jesus, already talking about the fall of Jerusalem that will be taking place in the near future, and pausing to answer questions at the top of the Mount of Olives. Just a few days earlier, He had entered the city through the eastern gate as the coming King, but was rejected.

When He leaves in the ascension, He does so from the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:9-12). The disciples are specifically told by the angel there



Acts 1:11

“and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? **This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.**”” (ESV)

Bells and whistles should be going off here; He will return at the Second Coming the same way He ascended when He departed here in Acts. Zechariah saw that. The nation as one repents and asks Him to save them (Zechariah 13:9), and He does.

Zechariah 14:3–5

“Then the LORD will go out to fight against those nations, as he has fought in times past. **On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem.** And the Mount of Olives will split apart, making a wide valley running from east to west. Half the mountain will move toward the north and half toward the south. You will flee through this valley, for it will reach across to Azal. Yes, you will flee as you did from the earthquake in the days of King Uzziah of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all his holy ones with him.” (NLT)

The signs being asked for by the disciples are those signs connected with that specific event. So, why the uproar today?

Simple, because we are seeing those events begin to be fulfilled, not here or there, but everywhere, all at once.

Israel being in the land is a basic requirement. Fulfilled as the nation returned in unbelief beginning in 1948. But things started moving along way before then. But many prophecies in order to be fulfilled rely on the Jewish nation being in Israel.

One of the things we are told about is lawlessness being rampant before the second coming. As we have learned recently. What is lawlessness is determined by the one making the accusation.

When you talk about lawlessness, I am going to look at it from the perspective of the laws of the land as well as the Constitution. What is happening just in this nation? We appear to have a rather severe fraud problem connected with reduced oversight and an influx of those entering our nation who are having difficulty becoming part of our culture.

“Vice President JD Vance announced the creation of a new assistant attorney general position to help investigate billions of dollars in fraud affecting the federal government during a White House press briefing on Jan. 8.

The announcement follows recent revelations of widespread fraud in Minnesota, with more than 1,500 subpoenas filed and nearly 100 indictments secured, according to the vice president.” (Gillmore 2026)

And from what we have been seeing recently, the level of fraud is not limited to just one state but may be much broader. The amazing thing about it is how there are groups speaking out wanting to say there is nothing going on here, why are we looking?

Lawlessness is not limited to individuals but also involves government as well. For example, recent events in the UK.

According to figures published on Friday (4/4/25), officers make around 12,000 arrests annually under Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003 and Section 1 of the Malicious Communications Act 1988. These laws criminalize causing distress by sending messages that are “grossly offensive,” or by sharing



content of an “indecent, obscene or menacing character” via electronic communications networks. (Daily Telegraph NZ 2025)

Increases in lawlessness are also related to those who are coming from nations who do not have anything close to a Biblical worldview. An article last year raised the alarm about correlation.

The increase in sexual violence in the European Union in recent years has generated an intense debate about the role of mass immigration in such crimes. While some political and media actors have tried to minimize the correlation, official data and multiple reports reveal a different reality. The impact of mass immigration, mostly from regions with value systems and cultural norms that radically differ from the European ones, has challenged security and social cohesion in many cities on the continent.

Belgium and Germany are two other countries particularly affected by this phenomenon. In 2021, Belgium recorded 5,000 reports of sexual violence, with 20% of perpetrators of foreign origin. Germany, one of the countries hardest hit by the 2015 migration crisis, reported 11,500 rape cases in 2022, with an alarming 40% of perpetrators of Syrian, Afghan or Iraqi origin.

In the UK, the crisis of sexual assault by migrant gangs has been particularly shocking. The Rotherham scandal, where at least 1,400 girls were abused by organized groups of Pakistani, Kurdish, and Kosovar origin between 1997 and 2013, exposed the inaction of the authorities for fear of being accused of racism. (Villamor 2025)

I want to reference Beast Tech, and this is from a report coming out of the UK as well. It appears the Prime Minister has read the book of Revelation and has made an interesting decision. First the scripture.

Revelation 13:16–17

“He required everyone—small and great, rich and poor, free and slave—to be given a mark on the right hand or on the forehead. And no one could buy or sell anything without that mark, which was either the name of the beast or the number representing his name.” (NLT)

All economic functions will be tied in digitally into a single source, read government-based database. By the time of the Tribulation, this will be relied totally as the key to buying and selling. A digital id and digital currency appear to be the base requirement enabling this later in that time. Where are we on the timeline here?

Announced late last year in the UK, welcome to digital id.

Once introduced, digital ID will be used to verify a person's right to live and work in the UK.

It will take the form of an app-based system, stored on smartphones in a similar way to the NHS App or digital bank cards.

The ID will include information on the holders' residency status, name, date of birth, nationality and their photo.

When he first announced the scheme, Sir Keir said: "You will not be able to work in the United Kingdom if you do not have digital ID. It's as simple as that."

*Digital ID will be available to all UK citizens and legal residents aged 16 or over, and **will be mandatory in order to work**. However, it will be optional for students, pensioners or others not seeking employment.*



The government will consult on whether children aged between 13 and 16-years-old should be included the scheme, since many already work part-time.

Officials have stressed it will not function like a traditional identity card, and people will not be required to carry it in public.

Sir Keir also confirmed that you wouldn't need a digital ID to access medical services or go to hospital. But the system is being designed to integrate with some government services, to make applications simpler and reduce fraud.

In time, the government said that digital IDs would make it easier to apply for services such as driving licences, childcare and welfare, and to access your tax records.

It added the ID could also be used to "streamline verification processes across private sectors" - such as when opening a bank account or buying or renting property.

Asked about the cost of the scheme, Sir Keir told the BBC he expected digital ID would save money overall "because it stops fraud". (Hagan 2025)

So, how close are we? We are already working down the path in this nation to a CBDC (Central Bank Digital Currency) per a paper from the Fed in 2022. (US Federal Reserve 2022)

In fact, the test is already on per the Silicon Review last year.

The Federal Reserve has initiated a pilot program for a central bank digital currency (CBDC), collaborating with JPMorgan, Bank of America, and Citibank to test digital dollar transactions in Texas and California. This marks a significant step toward modernizing the U.S. financial system, potentially reshaping banking automation, digital payments, and regulatory compliance. The pilot aims to assess the efficiency and security of CBDC transactions, focusing on real-time settlements and integration with existing banking infrastructure. If successful, a digital dollar could streamline cross-border payments, reduce transaction costs, and enhance financial accessibility. However, it also raises concerns over privacy, cybersecurity, and the centralization of financial control, prompting debates over regulatory oversight. (The Silicon Review 2025)

The infrastructure is being put in place as we speak. I am going to stop at this point.

The bottom line, Luke 21:31 "In the same way, **when you see all these things taking place, you can know that the Kingdom of God is near.**" (NLT)

Here we are on this side of the rapture, and we see these shadows all converging. This is just a couple of them. We wonder why much of the news media does not report the truth anymore, the reason is simple, they are part of the deception here at the end of the age.

Just Be Faithful!
Paul Shows Us How In Extreme Circumstances
Acts 22:30 – 23:31

As we enter this section of the book of Acts, the similarity to the lying and gaslighting which is on display today, globally; we will see also used against Paul. Satan has never changed his tactics or how he leads those who are his servants to lie and abuse those who are faithful to the Lord. Solomon is correct with his observation.



Ecclesiastes 1:9

"History merely repeats itself. It has all been done before. Nothing under the sun is truly new." (NLT)

How can someone see an event and then give an absolutely insane opinion of who is responsible and what needs to take place and be so irreconcilably offended about truth?. We need to stop this! Welcome to Jerusalem, around 64 AD.

We are going to discover that being a follower of Jesus Christ and taking the bible seriously not only offends the world, but also offends organized religion.

The Temple leadership at one time in their history were indeed the ones who pointed the people to YAHWEH and were the keepers of Torah. But that was then, now, the High Priest is a Roman appointed functionary who is not even in the line to be High Priest per the law. This is now a quasi-global religious movement that is trying to create enough anger at the status quo and the Roman Empire that the people will rebel and overthrow them. That won't work out so well.

So, here is the situation we find Paul in. The enemy has been busy setting up a mine field for him there in Jerusalem. Some of the schemers have even managed to infiltrate the church and convinced the leadership of the potential culpability of Paul to some of the allegations being made. All false of course. But gaslighting has fruit that is produced and the solution the church comes up with, with is seriously goofy, is one of those.

But Paul wants to see his own people, the Jews come to faith in Christ, so he, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, goes along with it. Now he is under military protection, there has been a riot, and the Roman military leadership is measuring out next steps.

We will also become witnesses to how the Holy Spirit operates in a believer when that believer is placed under stress. Paul will still be Paul and he is more concerned about the character of God than his own safety. That also includes how others interpret, or as we shall see, misinterpret and abuse, the Torah.

Paul will go full Pharisee on the High Priest, who will absolutely deserve it. Remember, he is being led by the Holy Spirit and the rebuke, contrary to many commentators, is from the Lord through Paul direct to the High Priest. Let's look at our text.

Acts 22:30–23:5

"Now on the next day, wanting to know for certain why Paul had been accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Council to assemble, and he brought Paul down and placed him before them. **Now looking intently at the Council, Paul said, "Brothers, I have lived my life with an entirely good conscience before God up to this day." But the high priest Ananias commanded those standing beside him to strike him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law, order me to be struck?"** But those present said, "Are you insulting God's high priest?" And Paul said, "I was not aware, brothers, that he is high priest; for it is written: 'YOU SHALL NOT SPEAK EVIL OF A RULER OF YOUR PEOPLE.' "" (NASB 2020)

The Roman commander is still more than a little concerned over the events of the previous day, especially when he discovered his prisoner was a Roman citizen. So, technically, he releases Paul the next morning and he still wants to know what all the fuss is about.

This Roman, has power over the Sanhedrin that they most likely do not appreciate at all. Note who calls the meeting.



Years earlier, the leadership of the Temple joined together with the Roman Empire in order to retain control over Jerusalem and their various money-making enterprises. The same leadership that Jesus objected to so strongly on two occasions in the Temple. The result is the Romans control who is the High Priest, and the Romans literally call all the shots for now.

The Roman commander is exercising his prerogative and basically has ordered the Sanhedrin to meet and, on his turf, too. The crowd was unable to state the grievance, maybe limiting the group to the leadership will resolve everything. He has no idea they are the ones behind all of this.

Historically, whenever the church has turned into a religious organization and partnered with the state, the results always eventually wind up showing the state having the real control. It is no longer about the Lord, it is about control and yes, this will also be in vogue during the Tribulation as well and it is indeed an ongoing conversation today.

If Paul is to be charged as a Roman, there must be valid charges, and the purpose of the meeting is to determine if there are any charges at all. But for now, Paul is under Roman Military protection, and he does indeed need it.

The Roman commander has a real sticky issue. Paul is a Roman citizen so the normal process cannot be utilized, and no one has shown up with any charges. Releasing him would be in order but releasing him means he will be dead very soon after that. And releasing a Roman citizen to be killed by a non-Roman mob is not anything that will further enhance his career.

He is still fact finding, and his scheduling this meeting is a logical next move because he can still protect Paul in the meeting environment without having to demonstrate a maximum effort as he did the day before.

Paul is going to provide us a practical example of how to share our faith with a hostile audience. He is fully surrendered to the Lord and allowing the Holy Spirit to speak through him. Paul is relying on the Lord for what he will say, and he will also give us a practical example of how to do God's will when it is really tough to do so. Oh, and there is a debate as to whether or not Paul loses his temper or simply demonstrates his superior knowledge of the law by holding Ananias, who he may not recognize, accountable for his actions.

Paul has already alluded to vision issues in his letter to the church in Galatia (Galatians 4:15) so his not recognizing the high priest could be that.

Paul begins his conversation with the leadership by identifying with them. They really are his brothers and as he states this, he also adds that he has not done anything contrary to the Hebrew scriptures.

But the High Priest, Ananias, has other ideas of where this conversation should go. He is not interested in negotiations at all and has a demonstrated history of doing pretty much what he wants to. He is not a believer; he is a religious leader who is serving Satan and trying to end the discussion and prevent Paul from sharing the gospel with all who are in the room. He is a Sadducee, and Paul will pick up on that.

Acts 23:2

"But the high priest Ananias commanded those standing beside him to strike him on the mouth." (NASB 2020)

Once again, we find those who are into religion, are the very first to turn to violence against those who stand for Christ. "This order was illegal, for the Jewish law said, "He who strikes the cheek of one Israelite, strikes as it were the glory of God," and "He that strikes a man strikes the Holy One." All this



flashed through Paul's mind in an instant." The Talmud was clear, and Paul knew his Talmud. (Hughes 1996, 302)

In the Babylonian Talmud we read the following:

C. And R. Hanina said, "He who hits an Israelite's jaw is as if he hits the jaw of the Presence of God.

D. "For it is said, 'One who smites man [an Israelite] attacks the Holy One' (Prov. 20:25)." (Neusner 2011, Sanhedrin 58b 308)

In addition, in Leviticus we learn the High Priest especially is to remain impartial. He isn't based on this action.

Leviticus 19:15

"Do not twist justice in legal matters by favoring the poor or being partial to the rich and powerful. Always judge people fairly." (NLT)

Ananias had a rather dubious reputation per Josephus. Ananias was the son of another Ananias, "this younger Ananus, who, as we have told you already, took the high priesthood, was a bold man in his temper, and very insolent; he was also of the sect of the Sadducees, who are very rigid in judging offenders, above all the rest of the Jews." (Josephus and Whiston 1987, 537-538)

Ananias wants Paul canceled, dead actually and so do those who are Sadducees since all they are truly interested in is the maintenance of their various economic activities and the retention of power at all costs. And the Jews in town from Ephesus are playing right into this.

I am sure Paul shows all of the physical signs of having been beaten the day before. Ananias wanting to continue the activity is not at all out of character for him. Paul, when struck, reacts as a Pharisee.

Acts 23:3-4

"Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law, order me to be struck?" But those present said, "Are you insulting God's high priest?" (NASB 2020)

Isn't that just like Satan to do a redirect. We see that in the news constantly. In the past week we have read of several individuals who have indeed violated the law and in the process of committing multiple felonies, were stopped by others. The redirect we see, also playing into where we are on the prophetic calendar, then turns around and tries to make it the fault of those who were attacked and had to defend themselves.

Isaiah 5:20-23

"Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes And clever in their own sight! Woe to those who are heroes in drinking wine, And valiant men in mixing intoxicating drink, Who declare the wicked innocent for a bribe, And take away the rights of the ones who are in the right!" (NASB 2020)

This is where the religious leadership has arrived there in Jerusalem, it also tends to be where the religious leadership has arrived at historically over the past 2000 years.

And now we live in a culture trying to do the same. That is all the game plan of Satan which has never changed.



The action we see is as follows, Paul provides an introduction which is meant by an egregious violation of the Torah, the oral law as well as Temple ethics and Paul, who knows the law, knows it and he responds as a Pharisee to the act. As he does so, he is meant with the off the scale hypocrisy of a few in the room who are trying to twist the blame around onto Paul for Paul having been struck, illegally, at the command of the High Priest. I don't think Paul lost his temper, I think that Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, went full pharisee on Ananias. But note, he does apologize. Or does he?

Acts 23:5–6

“And Paul said, “I was not aware, brothers, that he is high priest; for it is written: ‘YOU SHALL NOT SPEAK EVIL OF A RULER OF YOUR PEOPLE.’ ” But Paul, perceiving that one group were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, began crying out in the Council, “Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!”” (NASB 2020)

Paul directly quotes from Exodus 22:28, and whether his apology is genuine or not, he does know his Torah and has appropriately apologized per the law, for what I believe, was an intentional act. He is already playing to the Pharisees in the room. He is more Jewish than the High Priest.

There are some who say Paul lost his temper, I don't think so. I think Paul reacted as any Pharisee would react and he very well may not have known that Ananias was the High Priest. But the rebuke was there and now the room knows that he knows the law better than many of them do, and the Pharisees in the room, intellectually, have now joined him.

This is not the Paul who ran off to Damascus to find Christians to imprison, this Paul is now empowered by the Holy Spirit who is giving him the words to speak, to include the rebuke. And the Spirit reminds him of the dichotomy of beliefs there in the room. So, he plays right to that in a masterful stroke of rhetoric.

And it began with the rebuke.

The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection, the Pharisees did, and Paul knows it. The Pharisees were law keepers, the Sadducees not so much. So, as a follower of Jesus Christ, who resurrected from the grave and ascended to the Father, he makes a very theologically correct statement. “I Am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead.” I doubt they would have the idea of a mic drop at that point in history, but that would make a good one. He obtained the emotional reaction he knew he would get and at the same time remained on task for how he would evangelize Jews.

Paul regularly comes back to this theme (24:14–16, 21; 26:6–8, 22–23; 28:20), showing that it is central to his apologetic with Jewish audiences. By this means he links the prophetic hope about Israel's future with the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. (Peterson 2009, 612)

In other words, this is not just him setting the Pharisees against the Sadducees, that did work by the way, but it is central to what his teaching is for those who know the law.

Acts 23:7–9

“When he said this, a dissension occurred between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. And a great uproar occurred; and some of the scribes of the Pharisaic party stood up and started arguing heatedly, saying, “We find nothing wrong with this man; suppose a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?”” (NASB 2020)

And just like that, we now have a near riot in the Sanhedrin. It really makes one wonder what kind of debates they held and who wound up injured in them.



Paul recognized, by the actions of the High Priest, that he was not going to get a fair hearing today at all in this venue. The fix was in. The power in the Sanhedrin had been with the Sadducees for some time, but that did not stop the Pharisees and the Scribes from strongly voicing their opinion. All of this in Hebrew of course and totally not understandable to the Roman commander who sees the following.

Paul gets hit, Paul says a few words, there are those who support Paul, and then there is everyone else. And boom, near riot...again. Probably multiple fights break out among those in the meeting. I say that because of the next verse.

Acts 23:10–11

“And when a great dissension occurred, the commander was afraid that Paul would be torn to pieces by them, and he ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force, and bring him into the barracks. But on the following night, the Lord stood near him and said, “Be courageous! For as you have testified to the truth about Me in Jerusalem, so you must testify in Rome also.” (NASB 2020)

The Greek word that Dr. Luke uses here is στάσεως (staseōs). It means a bit more than a simple disagreement. Paul has done this on purpose, he knew where it would go and now he is temporarily off the agenda.

The word staseōs means a “condition of being in a certain position or state of affairs...movement toward a (new) state of affairs, uprising, riot, revolt, rebellion...lack of agreement respecting policy, strife, discord, disunion.” (Arndt, et al. 2000, 940) A pretty rich word to use here.

In other words, this appears to be more than a lively disagreement. Notice the reaction of the Roman commander who is literally, a bystander. By the way, this is where most “religious” people want to take the conversation, they want to argue their point, rather than study views. There is only one view, theirs.

Welcome to the ministry of the online heresy hunters who look under rocks everywhere to prove their theology is more orthodox than yours. They tend to be unreasonable in their examples and are not interested in coming to agreement or agreeing to disagree. This tendency to be irreconcilable has always been around, but we do know, thanks to Paul’s letter to Timothy, it is one of those things we will see more of in these last days.

The religious leadership that Paul is facing, they are at that point. They want Paul dead, nothing else will do. We see this playing out in our culture today. Since we are in the last days.

2 Timothy 3:1–5

“But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, slanderers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness although they have denied its power; avoid such people as these.” (NASB 2020)

The Temple leadership as personified in Ananias are there. The unfortunate thing, we see this increasing, not decreasing all throughout our culture today.

Apparently, some of the vigorous debate with fists was moving too close to Paul and his safety is still the concern of the Roman commander. He has his troops remove Paul from them by force, again, this time not in chains. Now it is truly a protective detachment taking care of their charge.

Craig Keener points out that “Paul’s strategy is especially brilliant because he manipulates the outcome of the preliminary inquiry before the Sanhedrin. He plays particularly to Lysias, by leading the Sanhedrin’s



members to fight over what would arouse them but provide no charges under Roman law. Even if this ploy did not lead directly to Paul's freedom, it would establish a legal precedent in his favor in Lysias's report, a precedent Paul later cites in 24:20–21. Such precedents were not binding on governors, but they would shift prejudice in his favor. Luke thus portrays Paul as clever—more clever than his opponents.” (Keener 2014, 3283) Being Spirit led does that.

By now, Paul is most likely wondering what he has gotten himself into. He has tried now for two days to share the gospel with his own people, unsuccessfully.

As we pointed out earlier in our study, that was his primary motivation for agreeing to the process proposed by the Jerusalem church leadership. It has not worked at all, and Paul is now feeling like the opportunity is now gone. There is a real possibility that after the last two days, he would be a bit discouraged and disappointed.

There is nothing the Jerusalem church can do to help. I am sure they are now also doing a bit of soul searching about how they ever allowed themselves to be sucked in by the enemy as they have just witnessed. I suspect they are steering clear out of self-preservation. Paul is where he is, because of them.

But the night following his abortive appearance before the Sanhedrin, the risen Lord appeared to Paul as he had done at critical moments before, and bade him cheer up: Paul had borne witness to him in Jerusalem (a reference this, no doubt, to his speech at the top of the steps to the crowd in the temple court), and he would live to bear similar witness in Rome. (Bruce 1988, 430)

No Paul, you are not done yet, you are indeed going to get to Rome and testify about Jesus there as well. What a word of encouragement from the Lord.

All Paul has done is remain faithful to what the Lord has shown him and where he has been directed by the Spirit to go. That is all we are asked of the Lord as well. Where he has us right now, we are to be faithfully obedient as we serve Him there and if or when it is time to move on, He will indeed make it obvious. Until then, we remain faithfully engaged in the work he has called us to even if it feels like we are tilting at windmills. Our enemy is real.

I wish this message could be communicated to those who are caught up in the church climbing schemes we see in several denominations. You graduate from school and start off in a small church, but you are already looking at that next place to go to which is bigger. And when you get there, you are already looking for the next place after that.

I have bad news for those who get caught up into that, it isn't Biblical. We are to serve faithfully where He has us until He moves us. And here is the reality, he may not ever move us and the flock or group you are serving are those who need your love and heart for the Lord. I love how Pastor Chuck puts it to help us keep perspective.

Never forget that it's not your job to add to the church. That's His job. Your job is to feed the flock, tend to the flock, love the flock, and see to it that they're cared for. This is especially true for a smaller flock. The Lord said, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: you've been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things: enter into the joy of thy lord” (Matthew 25:21). The Lord's not going to make you a ruler over many until you've been faithful with a few. Don't constantly be thinking, Oh, but I wish we had a thousand here or I wish we had five thousand here. Minister to those eight or ten people that you do have. Be faithful in ministering to them. Be faithful in nourishing them and the Lord will add daily, as He sees fit, those that should be saved. The size of the church is not your concern, nor should it ever be. (Smith 2000, Kindle Location 151)



Paul has received assurance from the Lord that there is still more to do. He has two years of delay yet in front of him. This is not anything to blame on the church in Jerusalem, the Lord knew this was coming and Paul will eventually share Jesus with the Emperor.

Acts 23:12–15

“When it was day, the Jews formed a conspiracy and put themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. There were more than forty who formed this plot. They came to the chief priests and the elders and said, “We have put ourselves under an oath to taste nothing until we have killed Paul. Now therefore, you and the Council notify the commander to bring him down to you, as though you were going to investigate his case more thoroughly; and as for us, we are ready to kill him before he comes near the place.”” (NASB 2020)

Remember the folks who traveled to Jerusalem all the way from Ephesus who want Paul dead? They still do.

The first plot to kill him in transit (Acts 20:3) fell apart when Paul shifted his itinerary. This led to the second attempt which had more involved in it to include gaslighting Paul to others in Jerusalem enough to the degree the church began to believe the lies resulting in a really dubious plan. And the plan worked and there was Paul, in the midst of the Temple. However, the reaction time of the Roman military stopped them from killing Paul then. The Lord’s protection is real.

They now know he is being protected by the Roman garrison, so they hatch another plan. This seems rather crazy as we read it, but we do see similar behavior take place today.

Several western states have become the poster child of litigating followers of Christ and churches into oblivion in the name of various abominations disguised as civil rights. The issue is simple, as followers of Jesus follow Him into the marketplace, there are those who do not want to see and hear of Him there and they will not be satisfied until the one who is serving the Lord is destroyed and unable to even make a living.

Here, we see a group of forty men binding themselves in an oath, talk about another violation of the Torah, to kill Paul. Their goal, and the Sanhedrin was to play along with it, was to request the Romans to once again bring Paul to the Temple, and then they would kill him.

From a practical perspective, this is something that was not well thought out, since Paul is now protected by professional Roman soldiers. It also relies on the assumption that the Roman commander will play ball. It appears that they had never taken the time to study Isaiah in depth. See, Paul is right in the middle of God’s will. He is God’s servant.

Isaiah 54:17

“No weapon that is formed against you will succeed; And you will condemn every tongue that accuses you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, And their vindication is from Me,” declares the LORD.” (NASB 2020)

What is it that stands in the way of their plan? The Lord. And it is an apparent “coincidence” involving Paul’s nephew.

Did you know that the word coincidence only shows up once in the entirety of the New Testament, and Jesus is the one who uses the word in Luke 10:31 as He provides details of the parable of the Good Samaritan. “The word coincidence is translated from the Greek word synkyrian, which is a combination of two words: sun and kurios. Sun means “together with,” and kurios means “supreme in authority.” So



a biblical definition of coincidence would be “what occurs together by God’s providential arrangement of circumstances.” (Got Questions Ministries 2014-2021)

There is no such thing as serendipity in the Bible.

Proverbs 19:21

“Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.” (ESV)

Those things that we see take place in our life that seem to be a happy coincidence, are really God’s plan. Again, we go to Paul.

Romans 8:28

“And we know that **for those who love God all things work together for good**, for those who are called according to his purpose.” (ESV)

Here in Acts, it just so happens that as the “top secret” plans are being discussed with the Sanhedrin, Paul’s nephew just happens to hear it. A Godowince if ever I saw one. We typically would say God’s providence is in this.

In fact, several of them back-to-back. Yes, there are some scholars who have difficulty believing this section of scripture, I have no problem at all. God can and indeed does, do whatever He choses to do and uses whoever He opts to use all the time. I have seen this enough in my life to attest to it. So, this is very plausible to me.

Acts 23:16–22

“But the son of Paul’s sister heard about their ambush, and he came and entered the barracks and told Paul. Paul called one of the centurions to himself and said, “Take this young man to the commander, for he has something to report to him.” So he took him and led him to the commander and said, “Paul the prisoner called me over to him and asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you.” The commander took him by the hand, and stepping aside, began to inquire of him privately, “What is it that you have to report to me?” And he said, “The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down tomorrow to the Council, as though they were going to inquire somewhat more thoroughly about him. So do not listen to them, for more than forty of them are in hiding to ambush him, and these men have put themselves under an oath not to eat or drink until they kill him; and now they are ready and waiting for assurance from you.” Then the commander let the young man go, instructing him, “Tell no one that you have notified me of these things.”” (NASB 2020)

There is something we see here in this, Paul is now being treated with respect by the garrison.

This is a rather sizeable conspiracy. 40 men ready to kill, and the Sanhedrin, meaning possibly 70 others also known. “Large conspiracies are difficult to keep hidden, and secrets often become known. Further, there is no question that leaks were common in this period.” (Keener 2014, 3311)

We see that his nephew has access to Paul, if Paul is a Roman citizen, by birth no less, then his nephew would possibly be as well. And then consider this, Paul talks directly with a Centurion, and Paul is not a normal prisoner. The conspiracy is laid bare because of an overheard conversation somewhere. Leave it to the Lord to defeat OpSec.

He has a demonstrated history of this all throughout the Old Testament.



2 Kings 6:11–12

“The king of Aram became very upset over this. He called his officers together and demanded, “Which of you is the traitor? Who has been informing the king of Israel of my plans?” “It’s not us, my lord the king,” one of the officers replied. **“Elisha, the prophet in Israel, tells the king of Israel even the words you speak in the privacy of your bedroom!”**” (NLT)

It is really tough to have good OpSec against the Lord or His people since He is omniscient and omnipresent.

Acts 23:23–35

“And he called to him two of the centurions and said, “Get two hundred soldiers ready by the third hour of the night to proceed to Caesarea, with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen.” They were also to provide mounts to put Paul on and bring him safely to Felix the governor. And he wrote a letter with the following content: “Claudius Lysias, to the most excellent governor Felix: Greetings. When this man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them, I came up to them with the troops and rescued him, after learning that he was a Roman. And wanting to ascertain the basis for the charges they were bringing against him, I brought him down to their Council; and I found that he was being accused regarding questions in their Law, but was not charged with anything deserving death or imprisonment. When I was informed that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, also instructing his accusers to bring charges against him before you.” So the soldiers, in accordance with their orders, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris. But on the next day they let the horsemen go on with him, and they returned to the barracks. When these horsemen had come to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him. Now when he had read it, he also asked from what province Paul was, and when he learned that he was from Cilicia, he said, “I will give you a hearing when your accusers arrive as well,” giving orders for Paul to be kept in Herod’s Praetorium.” (NASB 2020)

The goal is to be on the road out of Jerusalem no later than 9pm. Speed is of the essence, but operational safety is as well so to move Paul, the Roman commander will use 200 troops, 70 calvary and Paul will also be on horseback, as well as 200 bowmen/spearmen. 470 total to move one man to Caesarea as soon as possible.

Paul’s military escort takes him as far as Antipatris, a Roman military outpost, which was about sixty miles (97 km) northwest of Jerusalem (v 31), and about three-quarters of the way to Caesarea. The foot soldiers stay the night, and then return to Jerusalem after sending Paul and the horsemen on their way to Caesarea (v 32). (Mohler Jr. 2019, 143)

The Roman commander, Claudius Lysias, sent along a letter with his own testimony and a key aspect is in verse 29.

Acts 23:29

“and I found that he was being accused regarding questions in their Law, but was not charged with anything deserving death or imprisonment.” (NASB 2020)

This verse fits Luke’s pattern of showing that Christianity and her leaders, when accused before governmental officials, were always acquitted and deemed innocent. Rome had nothing to fear from “the Way”! (Utley 2003, 257)

The reaction of this Roman commander, as well as the Governor, is consistent with the way those who do not know Jesus react today. We all have our own goals and there is this distraction popping up called Jesus that if I ignore it long enough, it might go away. Spoiler alert, He never will. “Many people go through life just pursuing their own goals or seeking to survive rather than engaging in a serious way with what God has for them. Whether this is the result of their own background and training about life or is



motivated by the self-focus our culture tends to generate, it is a major distraction from the reason we were created by God. The Creator deserves more than a patronizing recognition in our lives.” (Bock 2007, 684)

Paul was insistent on introducing others to the one who had saved him, and I tend to be the same way.

Coming to Christ is not complicated, it is not anything requiring multiple steps, or even training to do. It just requires an acceptance of what He did for us on the cross.

Romans 3:21–24

“But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.” (NLT)

Romans 10:9–13

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”” (NLT)

ABC's of Salvation

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.

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