

God Is Government

Isaiah 33:22

*“For the LORD is our judge, the
LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD
is our king; he will save us.”*



THE SOVEREIGNTY OF MANKIND

PART ELEVEN

As we study the Bible, we see the history of Israel as a demonstration of the sovereignty of God in His provisions, woven like a fabric with the sovereignty of Israel in its freedom to obey God or reject Him, to ruin their lives or to seek His face. We can find a wide range of examples in this drama. We will look at two Biblical people to highlight this. In this document we will look at the Case of Paul within the Book of Acts. In Part Twelve we will look at the Case of Ruth.



In Acts chapters 9 and 22 we find that Paul the Apostle was once Saul of Tarsus, who persecuted the Jews and had them beaten in the synagogues and thrown into prison. While on his way to Damascus, Saul had a life changing interruption by Jesus Christ, and Paul became the apostle to the Gentiles. In Acts 10, the Lord taught Peter that He accepted the Gentiles as well, but it was Paul whose special mission was to go to the Gentiles. Think about it! Had it not been for the Jews rejection of Christ we would not have Paul in the Bible, nor we would have salvation for the Gentiles as the Bible teaches us. Details about the Apostleship of Paul is part of our [Study of Revelation](#).

Paul was a Jew and a Pharisee. He was taught by the great legal authority and Sanhedrin leader Gamaliel, and naturally Paul was passionate about the Law. As a Christian leader, Paul continued to embrace a deep love of his people, the children of Israel. And like Moses, Paul expressed willingness to trade his own salvation for the salvation of his people. That is impressive. I do not know that I love anybody outside of my family that much. No matter how neat I think you are. I would be hard pressed to give up my salvation. Moses and Paul were stronger men.

In Acts 21, we find a very interesting situation in which Paul has a clear choice to make. He has traveled on all his missionary journeys, and he is making his way back to Israel. We find in this chapter two occasions in which the Holy Spirit warns Paul against going to Jerusalem. Luke tells us the story:

“3 Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden. 4 And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.”

- Acts 21:3-4

Paul and Luke have made their way across the Mediterranean Sea. When they land on the coast of Lebanon, they find that the Holy Spirit has given Christians in the city of Tyre warnings for Paul against going to Jerusalem. Paul and Luke pray with these Christians and apparently take those words into consideration, but they continue heading south. They reach Caesarea on the coast of Israel, and they remain in the home of Philip the Evangelist. While they are there, they get another warning against continuing to Jerusalem.

“10 And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. 11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.”

- Acts 21:10-11

This passage is very interesting. The Holy Spirit has spoken through multiple people, warning Paul that danger lies ahead of him in Jerusalem. Paul's Christian friends clearly interpret the Holy Spirit's word for Paul as a message not to go. Paul understands the Holy Spirit's counsel in a different manner; he believes the Lord is preparing him for what lies ahead:

“12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. 14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.”

- Acts 21:12-14

It is easy to get the impression that God actually does not want Paul to go to Jerusalem, and that might be the case. All the Christians, including Luke it seems, beg him not to continue on to his demise, and Paul is

pricked to the heart over the situation. He is adamant about going, though, and his friends finally give up. Paul continues to Jerusalem, where mobs of angry Jews try to beat him to death, and he is handed over to the Roman authorities. From this point onward, Paul is in Roman custody.

Was it actually Paul's destiny to spend the last years of his life waiting for his trial and execution in Rome? Perhaps God had other plans for Paul, other things for him to do. We will never know, because Paul chose the path to arrest and imprisonment.

Whether God's first choice or not, the path Paul took still here bore great fruit. Paul honored God, and he witnessed about Christ before the leaders of Israel and the world. We learn in Acts 24:24-27 that he spent two years often speaking about Christ with Felix the governor in Caesarea. After Festus took the place of Felix, Paul gave his testimony to both Festus and King Agrippa and his wife Bernice. Paul became a prophet to those aboard the ships taking him to Rome, and during his years of imprisonment, he lived in his own house and ministered to all who came to him. He made disciples of people within Caesar's household. He taught an escaped slave named Onesimus, and finally he testified before Caesar himself. A great many leaders of Roman world heard the Gospel because Paul chose to go to Jerusalem and suffer in bonds.

Again, we see interesting interplay between the sovereignty of man and of God. Paul had a choice. He had it in his heart to go to Jerusalem, and he went despite the Holy Spirit's warnings. His choice bore fruit, but it may or may not have been God's best plan. The Holy Spirit spoke, Paul decided to keep going, and God did not stop him.

God does not rest all of His plan with one individual. He has plans (A, B, C, etc.). Depending on the individual choice in Plan A God will either stay with the plan or move on with Plan B. If God moves on two things happen. God's plan will always be accomplished but not by his preferred individual. The individual in Plan A rejects God and will be severely judged, even to death. We call this a Kingdom moment or choice. Our daily lives are directed through these sorts of Kingdom choices. Where are you in your Kingdom choices?