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**A0934 – August 23, 2009 – Acts 21:27-40 – The Proper Operation  
Of The Fourth Divine Institution**

Last time we worked with Acts 21:15-26. Paul came to Jerusalem. And we said what Paul did at Jerusalem related to the relationship of the Law of Moses to the Jewish Christian. The passage isn't interested in the Gentile Christian's relationship to the Law of Moses. That was addressed in Acts 15, and apart from a few Jewish sensitivities, the Gentiles were clearly set free from the Law of Moses. But just because we are not under the Law of Moses does not mean we are not under any Law whatsoever. We are under the Law of Christ. But the question we dealt with last week was the relationship of the Jewish Christian to the Law of Moses. That's a more difficult question because of what Paul taught versus what Paul did. What Paul taught was that the Law of Moses could not justify a man before God; that only faith alone in Christ alone could justify. But Paul followed parts of the Law of Moses; he took vows, he had Timothy circumcised and he went into the Temple last week and went through purification ritual. So what's the relationship of the Jewish Christian to the Law of Moses? Well, in 1 Cor 9:20-21 Paul says he is not under the Law of Moses but under the Law of Christ. So, therefore, we gather that when Paul kept portions of the Law of Moses he did not do it to be justified before God or to be sanctified before God, but simply as a freedom he has in Christ, being a Jew. The only problem I have with Paul doing this is that he did it to appease 20,000 Jewish believers in Jerusalem who think the Law of Moses is mandatory and so when Paul follows the Law of Moses they can only think that Paul is saying Jewish believers must follow the Law of Moses. And therefore what Paul did was misleading. We don't even know if it solved the problem, we have no indication at all, only that what he did was essential to the plan of God and God used it to get Paul to Rome and those details are part of today's lesson.

But in any case we ought to have a clear understanding of the relationship of the Law of Moses to the Church as a whole so let's clarify.

Now, theologians have given a number of answers to this critical question. And there are really only three possible answers. Answer one says the Church is under the whole Law, answer two says the Church is under part of the Law and answer three says the Church is not under any of the Law. There simply are no other possibilities. It's all, some or none. Answer one: that the Church is under the whole Law of Moses contradicts Rom 10:4 which says Christ is the end of the Law for all who believe. Since all believers are in Christ then they are not under the Law of Moses. Therefore, answer one fails to comply with Scripture. Answer two says: the Church is under part of the Law of Moses and the simple answer is it too falls under Rom 10:4 and therefore Christ fulfilled the Law of Moses and therefore what more is there for the Church to do? Usually the way this is expressed is to take the Law and divided it into moral, ceremonial and social laws and then bring only the moral Laws over for the Church. That way we can preserve the Ten Commandments. But to do that contradicts James 2 because James says if you break one law you break the whole law. In other words, the Jews didn't divide the Law into three components. They viewed the law as one unit. The Law of Moses can't be divided up and the Church can't take part of the Law. Answer three says: the Church is under no part of the Mosaic Law because the Mosaic Law is a unit and that unit was done away in Christ. Therefore the Church is not under the Mosaic Law and this is the right answer. We are not under the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments were written to the nation Israel and we are not the nation Israel. The Church is not a nation, the Church is an organism. But don't go get the idea that because I'm not under the Law of Moses I can go and do whatever I want. Both Galatians and Corinthians say that we're under the Law of Christ and this Law, just like the Law of Moses, is a distinct unit of Law. So we have the Mosaic Law and that was a unit fulfilled by Christ and then we have Christ's Law and that unit exists for the Church. Now people will point out that many of these laws are the same as the Law of Moses and that is an indication that they're being carried over. How do we answer that? We say it's one and the same God. God's character didn't change so we'd expect to find similar laws and we do.

Today Paul is going to run into a different group. When he's trying to appease the Jewish believers the Jewish unbelievers are going to get all bent out of shape. Evidently this crowd of Jews knew Paul from Asia and the city of Ephesus and they see Paul in Jerusalem, make some false assumptions and almost kill him. So this is a group that plays the major role in Paul's arrest and imprisonment that will last for the next five years. The other big group is the Roman Army.

The big thing we learn today has to do with the Roman Army. That army never would have existed had it not been for divine institution number four; human government as invented and established by God. So let's review our basic divine institutions. At Creation God gave three infallible institutions to man. The first of these is responsible dominion. Responsible dominion means man made in God's image is to produce, he's to work, he's to labor and cultivate God's world. He is not to sit around like a lazy bum and mooch off everybody. God made man to work and God Himself showed us in creating in six days and taking one day of rest what work is and gave us the work week. All that is embedded in man and if man says I don't want to work and I'm going to sit around and do nothing then that society is going to be unproductive; they're not going to have any capital and they're going to destroy themselves.

The second institution is marriage and this is between one man and one woman in a contractual arrangement. If you try to fool around with this in any way and violate that form, living together before you're married to try it out, see if you're compatible or if you get attracted to the same sex and start going down the homosexual marriage route or any other arrangement it's a distortion of the original and it will have tremendous negative effect on society; it will have economic implications, family implications and eventually it will destroy a society.

The third one is family and this is the result of the marriage. You want to keep in mind how each one of these builds one on the other, there's a logical structure to the divine institutions because our God is a logical God. The family is the unit that results from the marriage and it's the basic unity of society. It's not the individual; the individual is not primary, the family is primary. So now we have in addition to a mother and a father, offspring. And those offspring are the responsibility of the mother and the father. So the

mother and the father are responsible to educate or decide on the education. That is not a state function. State education is nothing more than socialism. Parents have the responsibility to decide on the education their children receive and that includes the teachers, the curriculum, everything. That is a parental responsibility and the state should have no say whatsoever in that area. That's the way God would have it.

Now these three are the absolute core of any society. They were given in an unfallen world and they hold in a fallen world. The problem now is sin distorts and man likes to distort these institutions. But if any society tries that, that society will be destroyed.

Now we come to the fourth divine institution and the fourth one wasn't given till after the Fall and the Flood, Gen 9. If a man sheds the blood of man, that man's blood shall be shed. This is the beginning of human government. Before this, for 1600 years, there was no human government. The first human government was established after the Flood. It was at this time that God put the power of the sword in the hands of man so that men could govern other men. The sword in the Scripture is a weapon and it's a weapon used to enforce law and what it stands for is capital punishment. That is the most basic right of the government and if a government doesn't have that right it basically has no rights, no authority. Now I don't know how you feel about capital punishment but if you're against it just remember God instituted it knowing His own Son would be executed under a misappropriation of it. So, get over it! God gave capital punishment to the human race out of His grace to curb man's appetite for destruction and the right and duty to remove destructive men from society. The sword is a safeguard. Now the state, having this basic right to take life, has very specific boundaries of operation. The basic function of human government is to protect the people, not to manipulate them, not to control pricing, not to tell us how to educate, that's outside the sphere of government. The purpose of government is to provide law and order so it can protect within its national borders, to protect its citizens and today we get to see one of the finest examples of proper operation inside those boundaries exercised by the Roman Army. And this will show you, it may shock you, but human government operating through its law enforcement is an essential part of working out the plan of God.

To get the setting for where this occurs we go to Herod's Temple at the time this happened to Paul. Remember, Paul is going into the Temple to do his purification with these four Jews and to pay the expenses for their vow. And they were entering from the southern steps and they found about 30 ritual baths so you could do your purification outside just before you entered the Temple area. They went through that procedure and Paul purchased their offerings outside these gates. Then they walked through either the Double or the Triple Gate. They went up through the tunnel because remember, everything goes up and the Holy of Holies sat on the highest spot, so they went up through these tunnels and emerged inside what's called the court of the Gentiles. All this area a Gentile could walk in. But right here the Jews had put up this barrier called the Soreg. The Soreg enclosed this area and along the barrier periodically they'd have a stone with an inscription, some of them in Greek, some of them in Roman found that had been In Greek the inscription reads, "No Gentile may enter within the railing around the Sanctuary and within the enclosure. Whosoever should be caught will render himself liable to the death penalty which will inevitably follow." So the Jews had marked off certain areas and you had to qualify to go past certain boundaries. Inside is the court of the Jewish women and inside that is the court of the Jewish men which is where Paul has his problem today. The Jews had this area highly regulated, this was their law.

The Romans, on the other hand, had the upper hand and they kept a watchful eye on this. They operated from the Antonia Fortress. The Antonia fortress was located on the NW corner of the Temple. There is a set of stairs that lead from the Fortress of Antonia down into that courtyard. Those stairs were used for the Roman soldiers to come down into the courtyard when riot conditions occurred; those are the stairs that Paul was dragged up to get him out from the mob and into the protection of these barracks. So they could see what was happening in the Temple precinct. There was a tower at each corner. Three of these towers were 75 feet tall but the one on the SE corner was 105 feet tall. from this. And so they would station Roman sentries upon this tower and they would patrol back and forth looking for any disturbance down in the Temple courtyard and if something went wrong inside the soldier would send a messenger down to report to the commander and the commander had a cohort of soldiers permanently stationed there and he would get them all organized so they could go in and stop the riot. So this Roman cohort commanded the Temple area. And when there was a festival

going on, as here it was Pentecost, they were even more suspicious and they would station armed soldiers all along these walls so they could watch the people. So this is the central arena for where these events are going to occur. So keep the setting in mind as we work through.

And let's pick up in v 27. **When the seven days were almost over**, so it was the seventh day of the purification vows and every day Paul had been going in and out of the Temple for the purification ritual. It was the last day and what happens but **the Jews from Asia** see him. These are Jews from around Ephesus. They recognized Paul, probably the Jews from Jerusalem didn't recognize Paul because Paul hadn't been around Jerusalem for about 25 years, but the Jews from Asia had been around Paul and they knew what he looked like and here they are in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. And sure enough they see Paul **in the temple**.

The **temple** was a very sensitive spot, it still is a sensitive spot and it will forever be a sensitive spot. So let's get an idea of the Temple. The first Temple was built by Solomon; it was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586BC. This is the second Temple, first built by the Jews that returned from Exile by Zerubbabel but it was altered by the Hasmoneans and so forth. Finally Herod the Great had begun his great building project of expanding this second Temple. It was supposed to be his greatest feat and what he was remembered for down through history. Turn to Mark 13 to see what people thought of it. Mark 13:1, they've been in the Temple precinct, now they're departing, they're going over to the Mt of Olives and verse 1 says, "As He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" Now obviously they were quite impressed with the Temple. It was magnificent, author's state that from a distance it was so white it looked like snow. So they're admiring it, but "Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down." Now you can imagine that wasn't a very popular statement. Here we are staring at this glorious house of God and Jesus says the whole thing's going to be torn down. That doesn't get you political points. To see how people took him turn to Mark 14:58. This came out in the trial of Jesus; they had to pin Him on something and so they start listening to witnesses and you can tell the whole thing is a farce because the witnesses all contradict each other, but one comes out in v 58 about Jesus' Temple statements. "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple

made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.” And that’s going to stir people up because this is a sore spot with people. Now turn to the Gospel of John, chapter 2. John’s gospel comes later and John’s gospel is an interpretation of what Jesus meant. The other three gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke are known as the synoptics; they simply record what happened, who did it, what they said and so forth; facts, facts, facts. John’s gospel is an interpretation of the facts and in v 19 we get a divine analysis of this statement: I will destroy the temple and rebuild it. “Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” Now Jesus did say that so watch how the Jews respond. Verse 20, “The Jews then said, “It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?” <sup>21</sup>But He was speaking of the temple of His body. And there’s your interpretation, years later they reflected on this statement. V 22 explains, “So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.” So, later they realize, hey, Jesus was speaking of two temples. Obviously the thing that started the whole conversation was Herod’s Temple, it was beautiful and in that context Jesus said not one stone will be laid upon another that is not torn down. And that’s true that in a few years the Roman armies under Titus would come and destroy Herod’s Temple. However, He was also evidently talking about His body and how they would destroy His body but in three days He would raise it up again. And so they understand very well about Herod’s temple but the temple of His body? They’re not understanding that. You can see that the only thing they can think of is Herod’s building and everything centers on Herod’s Temple and its obvious the Temple has taken on unbiblical proportions. They’ve made it ultimate rather than God ultimate.

To see how common this was turn to Acts 6:13. This is Stephen and Stephen was saying the same things Jesus was saying. So when Stephen says it what do you think happens? People don’t like it, same story. Verse 13, “They put forward false witnesses who said,” if you put forth false witnesses you gotta know they took it serious because to put forward false witnesses was to become a lawbreaker yourself, so they were willing to take the risk. They put forward false witnesses who said, This man incessantly speaks against this holy place” the Temple, “and the Law; <sup>14</sup>for we have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us.” And then Stephen gives his defense in chapter 7, one of

the most brilliant defenses. So how did Stephen answer the charge? Look at v 44. He begins his historical recital. "Our fathers had the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness, just as He who spoke to Moses directed *him* to make it according to the pattern which he had seen." So to begin his discussion of the Temple what does he do? He recites history, he gives context. Why does he do that? Because meaning comes from context and to get the meaning of the Temple we have to go back to the origin of the Temple, the tabernacle. So he's building, verse 45, "And having received it in their turn, our fathers brought it in with Joshua upon dispossessing the nations whom God drove out before our fathers, until the time of David. <sup>46</sup>"*David* found favor in God's sight, and asked that he might find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob." So up to this point it's all been the tabernacle, this portable tent that was transported all over the place and where God's presence dwelled in a visible way. And then the time of David comes along and David builds himself a nice house of cedar and then it dawns on David, the Lord doesn't have a house, the Lord is over in a tent. I'd like to build him a house. And the context: David had just gotten back from winning a military battle and the typical politics of the ancient near east when a king had victory in battle is he'd come back and whatever god he attributed the victory to he'd build him a temple. So David is working out of his historical context and he's just had this great victory so he does like all the other kings and wants to build a temple for YHWH because he attributes his victory to YHWH. This was all a part of the culture. And we know the story that God wouldn't let David build it because David had too much blood on his hands. "But," verse 47, "it was Solomon who built a house for Him. <sup>48</sup>"However, the Most High does not dwell in *houses* made by *human* hands; as the prophet says:" What's he saying? What's Stephen's argument? Follow him closely. Stephen's a brilliant Jew. And in vv 49-50 he's going to quote from Solomon's dedicatory prayer of 1 Kgs 8. So by doing that he's lining himself up with Solomon, do you guys have a problem with Solomon? I just believe what he believed so he quotes him, v 49, "HEAVEN IS MY THRONE, AND EARTH IS THE FOOTSTOOL OF MY FEET; WHAT KIND OF HOUSE WILL YOU BUILD FOR ME?" says the Lord, "OR WHAT PLACE IS THERE FOR MY REPOSE? <sup>50</sup>"WAS IT NOT MY HAND WHICH MADE ALL THESE THINGS?" In other words, Solomon may have built the Lord a house but he never thought that he could pin God up in the house. The house was not a cage for God. Yes, the Temple was a place where people could come and meet God, it was a place to fellowship with God, it directed their attention to Him and there was a visible presence of Him. But don't conclude



from that that God is perched in the Temple. God is omnipresent; He's in all places at all times. So don't get all bottled up around the Temple. What's Stephen trying to do? What's he saying about the Temple? He's describing what the Bible says about the Temple and he's saying by implication, you guys have elevated it out of its biblical proportions. Now the people he said that to considered themselves the guardians of the Temple and therefore as the guardians of God. And from that you can see they were all turned around theologically in terms of where they're laying the emphasis. You don't guard God, God guards you. But you can see from their outlook on the Temple Jesus was offensive, Stephen was offensive and now Paul's offensive. We'd have to say if we went back to Solomon they'd be offended by him too, and yet he was the king who built the thing and dedicated it. So you can see how off the rocker they are. So Solomon, Jesus, Stephen and Paul are all on one page and all these other guys are on a different page. Now we see these were two worldviews in collision, they both have a place for the Temple but it's a different place. And these guys are oversensitive to this spot and it remains that way today.

So come back to Acts 21:27. These Jews from Asia see Paul in the Temple and immediately what do they do? They **began to stir up all the crowd**, which is in the imperfect, ongoing action, they stir and stir and stir the people up and finally they assault Paul. Now why do they do this? Because they don't like Paul. Remember Paul had spent almost 3 years in Ephesus teaching the word of God so that all Asia heard the word of God. He taught over 3,000 hours of Bible doctrine in Asia and the gospel had tremendous impact. Such impact that in Acts 19 it was cutting into the silversmith business of a man named Demetrius and he started a riot that ended up in the Great Theatre of Ephesus with a riotous crowd of 25,000. During that event the Jews tried to put a man forward to address the crowd because the Jews wanted to make very clear they were not associated with this Paul and Christianity. They were in a desperate situation; they were trying to avoid getting tied up in legal knots with Rome. Well, it didn't exactly work, the crowd drowned their spokesman out crying great is Artemis of the Ephesians for two full hours! And so the whole thing failed to get Paul isolated where they could attack him and so now we're in Jerusalem and they're still out to get Paul and this is their opportunity. So they incite this mob.

Verse 28, **crying out, "Men of Israel, come to our aid!** Now notice they do

not cry out Roman policemen, they cry out **Men of Israel**. In other words, they had a thing in that day like our citizen arrest. They call on their fellow citizens to help them arrest Paul. If you saw someone committing a crime the right thing to do was to interfere and stop it to protect others. Now that used to be the law of the land here, I believe it still is, but everyone's so afraid to do anything about the crime because they might end up getting sued in court by the criminal. And there's a good chance of losing so people today just mind their own business and let the crime happen. But in Israel at the time they had enough law and order and conscience to make a citizens arrest and that's what they're calling for here, Paul's committing a crime, **Men of Israel, come to our aid!** And to get everyone's attention they start throwing out accusations, things that we just saw were very sensitive subjects. **This is the man who preaches to all men everywhere against our people and the Law and this place; and besides he has even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.**" Now that's almost identical to the charges brought against Jesus and Stephen and Luke puts this in to draw our attention to the parallels. Why? Because the issues haven't changed. Their justification is given in v 29, **For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple.** Now here's the logic, the logic breaks down but watch how they reason, a) they saw Paul and Trophimus together in the city of Jerusalem, they were out walking the streets, a Jew and a Greek, b) Paul went into the **temple** c) therefore Paul brought Trophimus **into the temple**. Now a) and b) are true. But c) doesn't logically follow. Just because the two were seen together on the streets and Paul went into the temple doesn't mean Paul brought him into the temple. But here's what they're thinking. Paul is a Jew and if Paul will walk down the street with a Greek and he has no problem with that, then he'd have no problem bringing him into the temple. They hadn't actually seen Paul bring him in, they only suppose that he had, but that's where they're coming from. It's a false accusation. But if he really did it he committed a capital crime. Remember the Gentiles could come into this court but this balustrade or barrier here called the Soreg, was where they drew the line and if you crossed it was capital punishment for you.<sup>i</sup>

So they're inciting this mob and in v 30 it was successful. They'd learned this tactic well from Demetrius in Ephesus, **Then all the city was provoked, and the people rushed together, and taking hold of Paul they**

**dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut.** This took place in the inner courts. They rush together with one impulse, they assault Paul and drag him out and the Levitical priests slam the doors shut with a big bang. Why do they do that? Because they don't want Paul's blood in here, that would defile the Temple, so they drag him out and slam the doors to protect.

And then, v 31, they begin to take Paul apart, **While they were seeking to kill him, a report came up to the commander of the Roman cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion.** So here is where the fourth divine institution, human government, moves into the picture. They're all set up in their Antonia Fortress, the Roman sentry is patrolling from the tallest tower, he looks down into the court and he sees mass **confusion**, he sends a messenger down to the **commander of the Roman cohort**. And in our text today we get to see a well-oiled machine, the Roman Army, operate perfectly within the divinely authorized sphere. This shows you how government can function to protect its citizens. The **commander** is alerted to this confusion and he's got a whole **cohort** of men, that's ~600 men, it was the Roman equivalent to our Battalion, and so the **commander** here would hold the rank equivalent to a Lt Colonel. We'd say this is a well-seasoned military man, he commands around 600 men who are permanently quartered in the Antonia and his sentry has reported and watch the speed in v 32, **At once he took along some soldiers and centurions and ran down to them;** so we have **some** soldiers, we don't know how many, but we can imagine because he has **centurions** plural and centurions in Rome commanded around 100 men. He has at least two of these so we have probably 200-300 soldiers scrambling down these steps from the Antonia down into the Temple area **and** out here they're beating Paul and Paul's not going to last but three or four minutes max. You can see how fast they got there and **when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.** Now you better believe they did because when the Roman soldiers came they came in a formation to break up these kinds of riots. They were well-trained soldiers and one of their formations was like a phalanx and each man would line up about 2-3 feet from the next to form this wide band of men and they'd be locked side by side, each with their shield, they carried large convex shields that wrapped around each man and in the other hand each man had a sword called *machaira* and the *machaira* was a very useful short sword, it was about 18 inches long, it was sharp on both edges and it came to a sharp point.

With a double blade the Roman soldier when he swung his sword one way he didn't have to re-set for the next swing, he could just come back in the opposite way. So that quickened his attack and in battle speed is everything. So these soldiers race down into the Temple precincts in this formation, and I think if you saw 200-300 men coming at you with 18 inch razor sharp blades waving it in your face you'd back down, which is exactly what they did, they stopped immediately, **they stopped beating Paul.**

Now this is an instance where the fourth divine institution is working perfectly. We have a civil disturbance and a man is being beaten, the police intervene to protect a citizen. Verse 33, **Then the commander came up and took hold of him, and ordered him to be bound with two chains;** that amounts to our handcuffs **and he began asking** (imperfect), he turned to the crowd and starting asking over and over **who he was and what he had done.** And this goes on for a couple of minutes. **But** verse 34, **among the crowd some were shouting one thing and some another, and when he could not find out the facts because of the uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks.** Into the Antonia Fortress. Now there's a good officer; he obviously can't administer justice in the middle of a mob, he can't operate in that mess. So he takes Paul back. Verse 35, **When he got to the stairs, he was carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob.** This shows you how serious the situation was. When they were going up these stairs, Paul, it says, **was carried.** That doesn't necessarily mean he was literally carried on the shoulders of the troops but he had a perimeter defense; there were men ahead of him on the stairs, there were men on the side of him, and looking from the top down Paul was in the middle of these guys. As they moved, Paul moved with them. So it shows you the animosity, this was a major riot in the city of Jerusalem and the commander knows he faces a major situation. He takes every precaution. And v 36, **the multitude of the people kept following them, shouting, "Away with him!"** And if you know your gospels you know exactly where you've seen that shout before, Away with him, Away with him, precisely what John records they said of Jesus, except they added a little clause after it, crucify Him. So the point Luke's making is the parallel between Jesus and Paul. We'll see more of them in coming weeks.

And v 37, **As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I say something to you?"** And he said, **"Do**

**you know Greek?** Now what's the significance of those words, **May I say something to you?** They show that Paul recognized the authority of the state. He didn't mouth off; he respected the office of Roman commander. And yet Paul held the office of apostle. Paul had apostolic authority but just because Paul had apostolic authority did not mean that he had governmental authority. He recognizes the authority of the state because God established the state and therefore Paul submits to the state. In other words, just because you're an authority in one area doesn't make you an authority in every area and it certainly doesn't elevate you above the law enforcement. Some people have problems figuring out this principle and just because they're a big shot in one area they try to tell everyone else what to do. Paul was an authority but he respected authority. You can see it right in the words, **May I say something to you?**

Now, apparently Paul said this in Greek because the Roman commander is a little surprised and **asks, Do you speak Greek?** It was a shock and he concludes v 38, **Then you are not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?** And this shows you a little something of interest. The Roman army was obviously involved in gathering intelligence data and getting that intelligence to the officers in those sectors. In v 38 there was an Egyptian, well known in Roman intelligence, who led a band of **4,000 assassins** and this commander is operating on the intelligence data he has and so he supposes Paul was this Egyptian they'd been looking for. Now the background for this band of **Assassins** in v 38 is given to us by Josephus. There was a band of assassins that were causing problems in Jerusalem and the whole city was on pins and needles during this time because they were essentially a terrorist organization. And terrorists cause instability and people get uptight. Well, these terrorists had banded together for political purposes and they would target certain higher up Jews who they didn't like because they talked to the Roman authorities or they worked with them or for some other political reason. So to get rid of these people they would assassinate them and the way they did it was they would mark the target and start following him until he got into a crowded place, like a marketplace and when they were looking at the apple cart and there were a lot of people around they would bump up against one another and in the midst of all this someone would slip a knife out from under their garment and murder the guy in cold blood right there in the streets and in the crowd they'd slip away and

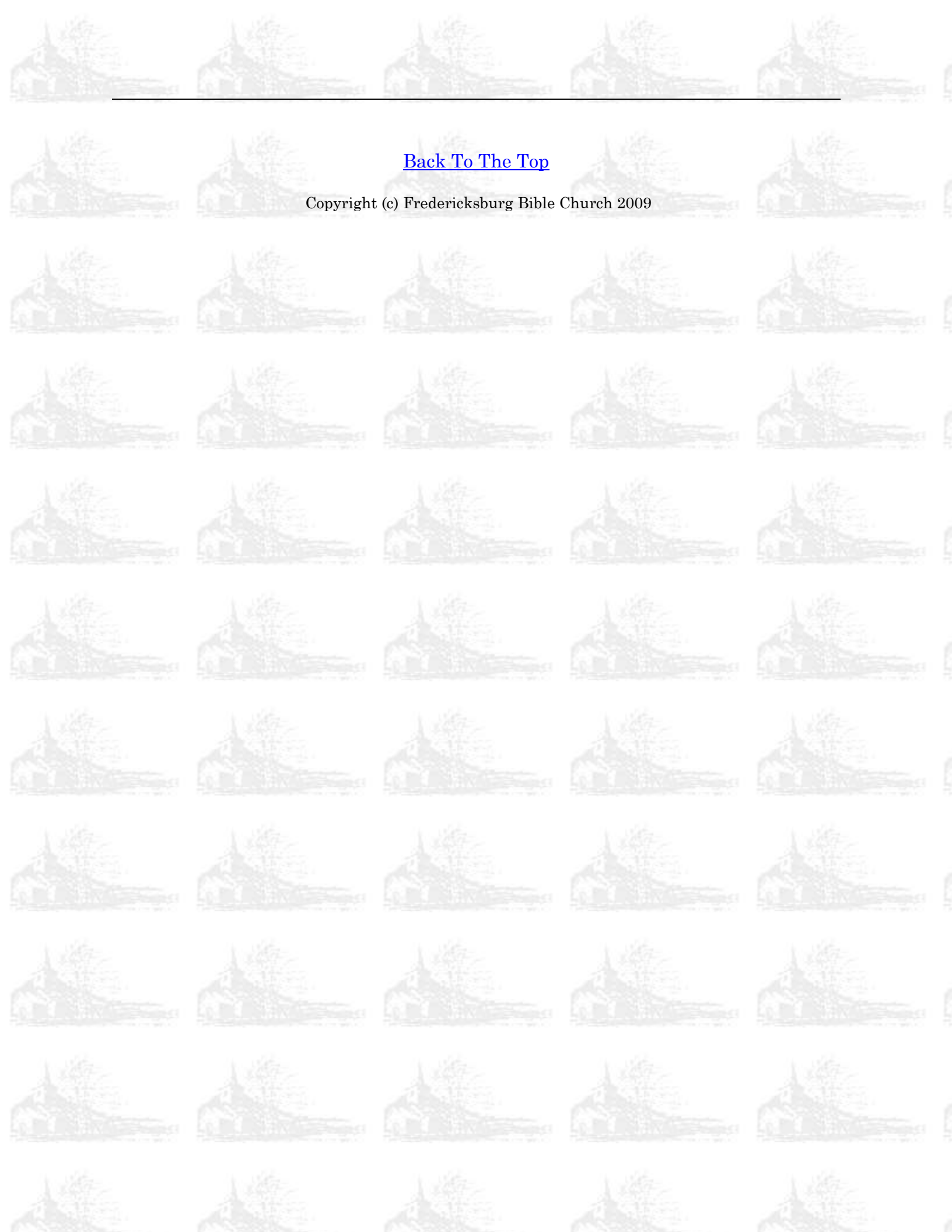
everyone would be standing there, who did it and no one could tell. Well, earlier the Egyptian man had come along to this band of assassins and convinced them that he was a prophet and that he had great powers and on one occasion he convinced them to all go up with him to the Mt of Olives which lies just across from Jerusalem, just the other side of the Kidron Valley. They positioned themselves all up on this hill and at his command the walls of Jerusalem were going to fall down and they could burn and rape and pillage, typical criminal behavior. But the word got to Felix, the Roman procurator and he ordered his soldiers to arm themselves and go up and wipe out this band of robbers so they did and they killed 400 of them but the head terrorist, the Egyptian, as is so often the case, escaped. So the Roman commander is working off this intel and he assumes from the confusion down in the Temple court that this Egyptian has made an assassination attempt and got caught. So you can see that the Roman army had intelligence data on file and they were very organized in their operation.

But seeing that Paul spoke Greek he realizes he's not that Egyptian so Paul says, v 39, **I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city; and I beg you, allow me to speak to the people.** 40**When he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the stairs, motioned to the people with his hand; and when there was a great hush, he spoke to them in the Hebrew dialect, saying,** and we'll go into Paul's defense next time.

So what have we seen today? We've seen the fourth divine institution function as it was designed to function in a life saving situation.. Things are going to be done in a lawful and orderly way, not by mob rule. And this shows how an institution works that God put in place two and a half millennia before He saved Paul. Had that commander and his men not responded so quickly and orderly then Paul would have been dead. So this is an excellent example of divine institution number four in action and how God used that Roman commander and his men, unbeknownst to them, to fulfill His plan which ultimately leads to Rome.

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<sup>i</sup> Josephus says in his Wars of the Jews that Titus addressed the people of Jerusalem saying, "Was it not you, he said, most abominable wretches, who placed this balustrade before your sanctuary? Was it not you that ranged along it those slabs, engraved in Greek characters and in our own, proclaiming that none may pass the barrier? And did we not permit you to put to death any who passed it, even were he a Roman?"



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