

Paul's Three Missionary Journeys followed by Five Trials and Defense

BEFORE CROWD (Acts 21, Acts 22) ✓

Before Jewish Council in Jerusalem (Acts 23)

Before Felix in Caesarea (Acts 24)

Before Festus in Caesarea (Acts 25)

Before King Herod Agrippa of Caesarea (Acts 26)



Bethany Bible Study & Discussion

Wednesdays
7.30-8.30PM

ACTS 23:1-24

Paul's Defence #2

Paul before the Sanhedrin (1-5): Who are the Sanhedrin? What was Paul's testimony? Why was the high Priest upset? Why does Paul harshly criticize the high Priest? Is Paul's reaction justified? Why have the Romans and Jews been unable to prosecute Paul?

Paul's causes division between Pharisees & Sadducees (6-10): What is the key difference between Pharisees & Sadducees in terms of their beliefs? How does Paul use the division to his advantage, and was this the right thing to do? Can we fight God? How is Paul rescued?

Acts: 23
11.18.2020

Jesus ministers to Paul (11) What is (are) Lord's message(s) to Paul?

Assassination Plot and Paul's escape (12-22): Who was plotting against Paul? What was their plan and how was it foiled? Should we fear secret plots against us? Who helps with Paul's escape and what's amazing about this escape? Where is Paul headed next?

Personal Reflection: *Paul is rescued from angry Mob and from guarded Prison ... do you doubt God's protection and escape plan for your life?*

Paul before the Sanhedrin (1-5)

Who are the Sanhedrin? What was Paul's testimony? Why was the high Priest upset? Why does Paul harshly criticize the high Priest? Is Paul's reaction justified? Why have the Romans and Jews been unable to prosecute Paul?

What is Sanhedrin? (as seen in Acts 4)

- Jewish court system with final authority on Jewish law
- Anyone going against their ruling could be put to death
- 71 Members with high Priest with the senior rank
- Consistent with Old Testament Teaching (Deuteronomy 16:18)

Deuteronomy 16:18

“You shall appoint judges and officers in all your gates, which the LORD your God gives you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with just judgment.

- Unlike the unruly Mob of Acts 22, Paul is now before an educated elite group.

Paul's Testimony

Introduced himself as 'law abiding' living in good conscience before God (1) ... if the conscience convicts, Paul did not do it

I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience"
(II Timothy 1:3, NIV)

"Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity and godly sincerity.
(ii Corinthians 1:12, NIV)

"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (I Corinthians 11:1, NIV)

What is our testimony?

Reaction to Paul's Testimony

Why was the high Priest upset? (2)

Perhaps considered Paul's testimony of clean conscience as blasphemous, boastful, and a lie

Commands Paul to be hit on the mouth

Why does Paul harshly criticize the high Priest? Is Paul's reaction justified?

Paul is angry that High Priest (acting as a judge) is guilty of breaking the law (Deuteronomy 25:1-2, can be beaten only after proven guilty)

Paul justifies his harsh reaction by saying he did not know it was the high priest (5) and further quotes his knowledge of scripture (5) (Exodus 22:28 ... do not curse the ruler of your people)

☞ God's children should exercise restraint when faced with opposition

If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also, ([Matthew 5:39](#), NIV) . Paul himself writes "When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it" ([1 Corinthians 4:12](#), NIV)

... so Paul's reaction can be considered as a short-tempered impulsive reaction, and not justified.

Not Guilty!

- Why have the Romans and Jews been unable to prosecute Paul?
 - While there have been accusations, they were false accusations
- Jews – no case, as Paul did not speak against their God or the Law
- Romans – no case, as Paul did not break any civil or criminal law

Paul's encounter with Pharisees and Sadducees (6-10)

What is the key difference between Pharisees & Sadducees in terms of their beliefs? How does Paul use the division to his advantage, and was this the right thing to do? Can we fight God? How is Paul rescued?

Sadducees and Pharisees (8)

Sadducees – do not believe in resurrection, angel, or spirit (8, Luke 20:27)

- but Resurrection is fundamental to our faith and gospel message – first persecution began because of preaching of resurrection, [Acts 4:1-2](#)

Pharisees – believe in resurrection (8) but added man made traditions

➤ Jesus denounces woes upon Pharisees ([Mathew 23:13-35](#)) for keeping the law without understanding or without the right spirit.

How does Paul use the division to his advantage, and was this the right thing to do?

- Paul declares he is a Pharisee and that he is being charged for something that Pharisees believe (that is, Resurrection)
 - He said that intentionally knowing it will divide the council
 - Pharisees support Paul and declare, “we find no evil in this man”
- Paul uses this opportunity to proclaim the central message of gospel (that is, Resurrection).
- Some argue that Paul’s strategy (while successful) suggests that Paul is depending on his heritage, rather than seeking God’s help to defend himself. Had Paul depended on God, God would have also made a way for him.

“let us not fight against God” (9)

- Good advice 😊
- We cannot fight against God and win!

Paul rescued again (10)

- Continuing conflict between Sadducees and Pharisees could have lead to physical harm to Paul
 - Roman commander asked the soldiers to take him to barracks (similarly rescued - Acts 21:32, 22:24, 23:10, 23:23)
- If in God's will, God is able to rescue His children from harm.

Despite Paul's impulsive reaction to high Priest
and using divisions to rescue himself
... LORD IS GRACIOUS TO HIM

The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said,
"Take courage! As you have testified about me in
Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome."

(Acts 23:11, NIV)

Lord Jesus ministers to Paul

What is (are) Lord's message(s) to Paul?

“And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome” (11)

❑ Other visions to Paul ... Acts 16:9, 18:9, 27:33

Lord's messages to Paul

1. Assurance of Lord's Presence
... what more could Paul ask for?

And he said unto him, If thy presence go not *with me*, carry us not up hence (Moses, Exodus 33:15)

➤ Our Journey is worthless without God's presence in our life.

Lord's messages to Paul

2. message of comfort ...
be of Good Cheer ...
encouragement in time of
discouragement!

“Be of Good Cheer” ... a message that
Jesus used to cheer up people!

- Disciples caught in storm (John 16:33)
- Paralytic man (Mathew 9:2)
- Woman with bleeding issue (Mathew 9:22)
- Disciples before crucifixion (John 16:33)

Lord's messages to Paul

3. message of confirmation and re-commissioning

“as you did in Jerusalem ... do in Rome”

... what did Paul do in Jerusalem that pleased the Lord?

... these words will encourage Paul to keep going and fulfill his desire to go to Rome (19:21)

✓ we all would like to hear “well done, good and faithful servant” (Mathew 25:21)

Assassination Plot and Paul's escape (12-22)

Who was plotting against Paul? What was their plan and how was it foiled? Should we fear secret plots against us? Who helps with Paul's escape and what's amazing about this escape? Where is Paul headed next?

Plot to Kill Paul

- Jews getting frustrated that mob is not able to harm Paul, Prison cannot hold Paul, and the council is unable to convict him
- So take matters into their own hands and plot to kill Paul
- Plan ... have chief priests and elder to request commander to bring Paul for further questioning, and kill him before he reaches

Paul's grand escorted escape

16 – Paul's nephew warns Paul of the plot, and informs the commander also of the plot

- Paul escapes to Caesarea with full protection provided by the chief captain (23-24)
 - 200 soldiers + 70 horsemen + 200 spearman!
 - Isn't God's protection of his children is amazing!
 - Isaiah 54:17 ... no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper

Secret plots are not a secret to God
... also, our life is an open book before God
(a blessing and a warning)

ECCLEIASTES 12:14 (NIV) For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

Luke 8:17 (NIV) For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open.

Luke 12:3 What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs.

➤ **Appropriate Response: PROVERBS 28:13** Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who **confesses** and renounces them finds mercy.

Personal Reflection

Paul is rescued from angry Mob and from guarded Prison ... do you doubt God's protection and escape plan for your life?