

A Study in Acts

Chapter Twenty-Three – Paul’s Defense to the Sanhedrin.

ACTS 23:11-35:

In our previous lesson, the commander of the garrison in Jerusalem assembled the council and placed Paul before them in an attempt to ascertain both who he was and why the Jews became so stirred up because of him. His good intentions were fruitless because the Sanhedrin itself became divided by Paul’s words and fearing Paul be torn to pieces, he had Paul taken back to the barracks. It is here that pick our lesson.

Text #1

Acts 23:11-15 *“But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, “Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.”*

¹² And when it was day, some of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. ¹³ Now there were more than forty who had formed this conspiracy. ¹⁴ They came to the chief priests and elders, and said, “We have bound ourselves under a great oath that we will eat nothing until we have killed Paul. ¹⁵ Now you, therefore, together with the council, suggest to the commander that he be brought down to you tomorrow, as though you were going to make further inquiries concerning him; but we are ready to kill him before he comes near.””

Vs. 11 – This comforting statement by the Lord will be the second time that the Lord has appeared to Paul in seemingly distressful circumstances and settle him. The first was when he was at Corinth in **Acts 18:9-10**. This statement by the Lord as he stands by him, will for us become a theme for the remainder of Paul’s time in Judea and then his journey to Rome. The importance for us, is that as God promises are sure, there is a certain complete expectation that we work our part towards the fulfillment of those promises. This will be behind the reasoning when Paul appeals his case to Caesar, when he instructs the centurion and ship owners during the journey, etc.

Plot – Next Luke shares the plot of the Jews to kill Paul. Now keep in mind that this plot is not a spur of the moment thing, the heat of anger, and is not accidental. They have bound themselves under an oath and even vowing not to eat or drink until it is done (pure premeditation).

Exodus 20:13 *“You shall not murder.”*

An interesting point in the history during this time. You would think that the Jews would be afraid of the Romans enough to not even contemplate such an act. Yet, they have, without seemingly any fear, created a plot to murder Paul, which would surely have to include those who guarded him. The closer we get towards the coming full-scale war between the Jews and Rome, the bolder the Jews were becoming in acting against their Roman overseers.

Text #2

Acts 23:16-22 *“So when Paul’s sister’s son heard of their ambush, he went and entered the barracks and told Paul. ¹⁷ Then Paul called one of the centurions to him and said, “Take this*

young man to the commander, for he has something to tell him.”¹⁸ So he took him and brought him to the commander and said, “Paul the prisoner called me to him and asked me to bring this young man to you. He has something to say to you.”

¹⁹ Then the commander took him by the hand, went aside, and asked privately, “What is it that you have to tell me?”

²⁰ And he said, “The Jews have agreed to ask that you bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire more fully about him. ²¹ But do not yield to them, for more than forty of them lie in wait for him, men who have bound themselves by an oath that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him; and now they are ready, waiting for the promise from you.”

²² So the commander let the young man depart, and commanded him, “Tell no one that you have revealed these things to me.””

Paul’s Nephew – We do not know anything concerning the family of Paul, except that they were of Tarsus, and saw to it that he would be brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. Here we find out that he has a sister and a nephew.

In **Romans 16**, Paul mentions ‘*kinsmen*’ in the King James version (**Vs.7, 11, 21**). This is a Greek to English issue that sees a better understanding in the idea of ‘*countrymen*’, and has been updated in most versions to reflect this.

Plot Revealed – Paul, having been informed concerning the plot, does the first act of seeing the promise of the Lord fulfilled. He sends the young man to the commander to reveal to him this plot.

Text #3

Acts 23:23-25 *“And he called for two centurions, saying, “Prepare two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at the third hour of the night; ²⁴ and provide mounts to set Paul on, and bring him safely to Felix the governor.” ²⁵ He wrote a letter in the following manner:”*

Paul to Caesarea – The Spirit of God shares only what we need to know about all those who interact with His fulfilled plans. With that said, if we pay attention there are some things we learn about the commander and why he has his present position.

First, we are about to learn his name – Claudius Lysias.

Second, we learn a little about his wisdom.

- He sent Paul away before the plot unfolded.
- He avoids bloodshed.
- He avoids offense.
- And probably the wisest portion, he will transfer responsibility from himself to the governor.

Text #4

Acts 23:26-30 *“Claudius Lysias,
To the most excellent governor Felix:
Greetings.*

*²⁷ This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them. Coming with the troops I rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman. ²⁸ And when I wanted to know the reason they accused him, I brought him before their council. ²⁹ I found out that he was accused concerning questions of their law, but had nothing charged against him deserving of death or chains. ³⁰ And when it was told me that the Jews lay in wait for the man, I sent him immediately to you, and also commanded his accusers to state before you the charges against him.
Farewell.”*

Felix – Born Antonius Claudius (a Greek) and made a freeman by Claudius (this favor by Claudius and as it would continue with Nero caused him to reign in Judea without care and he was extremely corrupt and tyrannical., Tacitus).
He began his career as Procurator by seducing Drusilla, the wife of the king of Emesa, and illegally marrying her (she is the sister of Herod Agrippa II and Jewish by faith).

Note – You might notice that the commander embellishes a little in the details of his letter, of course in his favor.

Text #5

Acts 23:31-35

“Then the soldiers, as they were commanded, took Paul and brought *him* by night to Antipatris. ³² The next day they left the horsemen to go on with him, and returned to the barracks. ³³ When they came to Caesarea and had delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him. ³⁴ And when the governor had read *it*, he asked what province he was from. And when he understood that *he was* from Cilicia, ³⁵ he said, “I will hear you when your accusers also have come.” And he commanded him to be kept in Herod’s Praetorium.”

Antipatris - It was a military post on the road between Jerusalem and Caesarea, and was built by Herod the Great in 9 BC. It was about thirty miles northwest of Jerusalem and twenty-eight miles south of Caesarea.



Paul's Roman Cavalry Ride

Cilicia – When Felix hears that Paul is from this province, he is intrigued and decides to hear Paul once his accusers come. Cilicia has long been a favored province by Roman emperors.

Herod's Praetorium – This is Herod's palace in Caesarea. A very large multi-roomed headquarters. Paul is imprisoned in a house arrest style accommodation.