

### Paul is Sent to Caesarea Acts 23

#### Introduction

Paul was rescued from the hostile Jews by the Roman soldiers, but became a prisoner. The prophecies of chains and tribulations were coming true, probably sooner than Paul had expected. He will remain a prisoner for the rest of the Book of Acts. He will have several opportunities to share his testimony, even with royalty. Eventually, he will be taken to Rome just as the Lord had promised him (Acts 23:11).

But, before Paul leaves Jerusalem, the Roman commander will rescue him two more times! First, from the Sanhedrin (the Jewish council) and, second, from a group of overzealous Jews. It is exciting to see God moving Paul toward Rome and graciously protecting him along the way.

#### Outline of Acts 23

- I. Paul Faces the Council - Acts 23:1-11
- II. Paul Learns of a Conspiracy  
- Acts 23:12-22
- III. Paul is Saved by the Commander  
- Acts 23:23-35

#### I. Paul Faces the Council - Acts 23:1-11

Roman Commander Claudius Lysias took Paul to the **Sanhedrin**. He hoped to discover why the Jews were against him. As usual, Paul was eager to speak and defend himself. The Jews from Asia had accused him of teaching against the Jewish people, the law, and the temple (Acts 22:28). Paul told them that he had *lived in all good conscience before God* up to that very day. In other words, he had lived as a true and loyal Jew. He had said nothing against his people, the law, or the temple.

Ananias, the high priest (not to be confused with Annas in Acts 4:6), is described in history as a greedy man who stole the tithes from the

priests. He did not like what Paul had said, so he ordered Paul to be struck on the mouth. Ananias was abusing his power because Jewish law said that a person was innocent until proven guilty. Paul had to be tried and convicted before he could be punished.

Ananias was a hypocrite because he was judging Paul for being accused of violating the law, while he was violating the law himself! Paul was angry. He called the high priest a *whitewashed wall* which was a dirty mud wall painted with a lime wash to hide the dirt. The Sanhedrin understood the term full well. The prophet Ezekiel had used it to represent hypocrisy many times (Ezekiel 13). Ananias looked fine on the outside (whitewashed) but was corrupt underneath (mud wall). Paul's words, *God will strike you*, were a prophecy of Ananias' punishment for his actions. History records that Ananias did not die a natural death but was assassinated.

Some members of the council who stood near Paul **rebuked** him for scolding God's high priest. Paul explained that he had not realized that the command came from the high priest. Paul knew and honored the law: *You shall not speak evil of the ruler of your people* (Acts 23:5 as quoted from Exodus 22:28). It did not matter whether or not the high priest deserved respect, Paul showed respect for the position he held. When you are tempted to speak badly about someone God has placed over you, remember Paul's words and choose to pray for the person instead.

Paul knew that he would not get a fair hearing before the Sanhedrin. Looking at his audience he saw two types of people: Sadducees and Pharisees. Because the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection and the spirit world, the Pharisees opposed them. Paul made a

statement that would divide the crowd. He said that he was being judged because of his faith in the *resurrection of the dead*. Paul's father had been a Pharisee and Paul had followed in his footsteps. Like a good Pharisee, he believed in the resurrection of the dead. As a Christian, he also believed in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. But, the Sadducees' denial of the resurrection made Christianity impossible *for if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen*. (1 Corinthians 15:6). The Sadducees had opposed Peter and John when they taught the resurrection of the dead (Acts 4:1-2), and, now, they opposed Paul for the same reason.

Paul's words caused the council to divide against itself. The scribes (interpreters of the law) and Pharisees defended Paul. They found nothing wrong with Paul's teaching. They were not going to deny that an angel or a spirit had possibly spoken to Paul and revealed God's truth to him.

The arguing became so great that the Roman commander had Paul removed with force by his soldiers. Paul needed protection from the Jewish leaders just as he had needed protection from the Jewish people.

Back at the barracks, the Lord stood by Paul and spoke to him, calling him by name. Paul was very comforted. Even though his life was in danger, the Lord told him that he would not be killed in Jerusalem. God was sending him to Rome. Paul would witness in Rome just as he had in Jerusalem.

## II. Paul Learns of a Conspiracy - Acts 23:12-22

The day after the meeting in the Sanhedrin, some of the **fanatical** Jews made a plan to kill Paul. In fact, there were more than forty Jews who took an oath not to eat or drink until they killed Paul. These Jews went to the chief priests and elders, and they explained their vow. They asked them to help by deceiving the Roman commander and arranging a meeting

with Paul. Their plan was to wait and kill Paul on his way to the council chambers.

Providentially, Paul's *sister's son* (nephew) heard the plan to murder Paul.<sup>1</sup> It is not clear how Paul's nephew found out about the plan, but, when he did, he immediately went and told Paul. He was allowed visits from family and friends because he was a Roman citizen, held in military custody, and not yet proven guilty. Paul listened to his nephew's news and then had a centurion take his nephew to the commander. The nephew told the details of the plan to the commander. The commander warned Paul's nephew to tell no one that he had spoke to him. He didn't want word to get back to the Jews that their plan had been discovered.

## III. Paul is Saved by the Commander - Acts 23:23-35

Paul was not safe in Jerusalem and the commander had to act immediately. As soon as Paul's nephew left, the commander called for two centurions and ordered them to prepare 200 soldiers, 70 horsemen, and 200 spearmen to take Paul to Caesarea that very night. Felix, the governor of Syria, resided there. He would be better able to protect Paul, and he also had authority to decide Paul's fate.

Paul was sent off *the third hour of the night* (which was three hours after sunset, around 9 p.m.) with at least 470 men. Paul was also given a horse to ride. God chose Paul as His missionary to the Gentiles and used his Roman citizenship to give him special protection under the Roman laws. God thinks of everything... in fact, he **ordains** everything. His plan is perfect!

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<sup>1</sup> This is the only time we hear about Paul's family. In Philippians 3:8, Paul says *I have suffered the loss of all things* and may have been speaking about his family. It is likely that he was rejected by them because of his conversion. However, his nephew obviously loved his uncle and God used him to save Paul life.

The Roman commander writes a letter to Governor Felix. In it, he names himself as Claudius Lysias and explains Paul's situation with four points:

1. I rescued him.
2. I brought him in front of the Jewish council.
3. I found he was charged with nothing deserving death or chains.
4. I sent him to you when his life was threatened.

The commander did not tell Felix the whole truth. He said that he had *rescued (Paul) having learned he was a Roman*. However, Lysias had not really rescued Paul because he was a Roman citizen. He learned that information some time later (Acts 22:25-26). Lysias had taken Paul to the Jewish council because he was trying to learn what Paul had done wrong.

Lysias said that he had found *nothing charged against him deserving of death or chains*. The Jews wanted to kill Paul for issues concerning their Jewish law. But, in Lysias' opinion, Paul was innocent. He had not broken the Roman law.

Lysias immediately sent Paul to Felix when he learned of a plan to murder Paul. He also ordered the Jews to take their accusations to Felix also.

Of course, there is no mention in the letter about Lysias' plan to have Paul scourged (Acts 22:23-25). Lysias did not want that to be known since he could have been punished for nearly breaking the Roman law.

The soldiers did as they were commanded and snuck Paul out of Jerusalem by night. This was the third time Paul had to sneak out of a city. First, at Damascus, the disciples had let him down through the city wall in a basket at night (Acts 9:25), and, second, he had left Thessalonica at night to escape to Berea (Acts 17:10).

The soldiers went with Paul to Antipatris, a Roman military station about 35 miles from Jerusalem. The journey was through rough

country and took all night. After they reached Antipatris, the chance of danger was probably over. The remaining 25 miles to Caesarea went through open country and mostly Gentile communities. The foot soldiers returned to Jerusaelm, and the seventy horsemen took Paul and Lysias' letter the rest of the way.

When they arrived in Caesarea, Felix read the letter and asked Paul what province he was from. The reason he asked that question was to figure out where the trial would be. A prisoner could be tried either in the province where the crime supposedly happened or in the prisoner's native province. Paul's home province was Cilicia, and it was closely linked with the province of Syria. In fact, the governor of Cilicia was Felix's boss. Felix decided to deal with the case himself, but he would wait until Paul's accusers arrived. In the meantime, Paul was kept in the Praetorium, a palace which Herod the Great had built for himself. †

### Prayer

Remember God's plan is perfect. Pray that God will help you trust in Him when you're having a bad day because everything that happens is ordained by HIM.

### Memory Verse

Psalm 139:16 *Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.*

### Vocabulary

**Sanhedrin** - the supreme council of the Jewish people in the time of Christ and earlier

**rebuked** - criticized or corrected sharply, reprimanded

**fanatical** - with extreme, unreasonable enthusiasm

**ordains** - prearranges unalterably

**Questions for Acts Lesson 19**

All questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

**DAY ONE: Review last weeks lesson and notes.**

1. In what ways did God encourage Paul in Chapter 23?

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2. ♥(Heart Question) How has God encouraged you lately?

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**DAY TWO: Read Acts 24:1-9.**

3. a. List those who traveled from Jerusalem to Caesarea to present their case against Paul.

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- b. Who was Turtullus?

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- c. How did Turtullus flatter Felix?

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4. a. List the charges which were made against Paul.

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- b. From Acts 2:22, why might Christians be called a *sect of the Nazarenes*?

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5. In verses 6-8, Turtullus made the following statements about Paul. Circle True or False. See Acts 21:30-36 to help you determine if the statements are true or false.

- a. ( T or F ) “He even tried to profane the temple.”  
b. ( T or F ) “We seized him, and wanted to judge him according to our law.”  
c. ( T or F ) “The commander Lysias.....with great violence took him out of our hands.”  
d. ( T or F ) Lysias commanded “his accusers to come to you.”

**DAY THREE: Read Acts 24:10-21.**

6. a. What was Paul’s attitude when he had the chance to speak? Give verse.

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b. According to verses 14 and 15, what did Paul believe?

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7. a. In whom was Paul's hope? \_\_\_\_\_

b. Who else had the same hope? \_\_\_\_\_

c. How did Paul's hope affect his way of life? \_\_\_\_\_

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d. ♥ (Heart Question) What is your hope? Tell how your hope affects your way of life.

8. Underline the statements which Paul made in his speech to Felix. Give the verse where the statement is found.

a. He had gone to Jerusalem to take alms and offerings to his nation. vs. \_\_\_\_\_

b. He had been happy to take his Gentile friends into the temple. vs. \_\_\_\_\_

c. Jews from Asia found him in the temple with no mob or tumult. vs. \_\_\_\_\_

d. The Jews from Asia should have been there to present their case against him. vs. \_\_\_\_\_

e. The Jews from Asia were nothing but troublemakers. vs. \_\_\_\_\_

9. What was the real reason that Paul was standing in judgment before Felix?  
Give verse. vs. \_\_\_\_\_

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#### **DAY FOUR: Read Acts 24:22-27.**

10. Each of the statements below should tell what Felix did after Paul finished speaking. Circle True or False next each statement which is true. If the statement is not true, correct it and give the verse where you found the correction.

a. ( T or F ) Felix adjourned the proceedings.

b. ( T or F ) Felix promised to make a decision on Paul's case when Lysias arrived.

c. ( T or F ) Felix commanded the jailer to keep Paul in the dungeon.

d. ( T or F ) Felix forbade Paul to have any visitors.

11. a. The next time Paul spoke to Felix, who was with Felix? \_\_\_\_\_

b. What did Paul speak about? \_\_\_\_\_

c. Who was afraid? \_\_\_\_\_

12. a. What did Felix say to Paul? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

b. Did Felix see Paul again? What reason is given?

\_\_\_\_\_

13. a. Why did Felix leave Paul a prisoner when he left office?

\_\_\_\_\_

b. How long did Paul remain a prisoner in Cesarea? \_\_\_\_\_

**DAY FIVE: Read Acts 25:1-12.**

14. From the time Festus took office, how many days passed before he had Paul brought to the judgment seat?

\_\_\_\_\_

15. Who complained against Paul? What proof did they have of their complaints?

\_\_\_\_\_

16. a. What was Festus' suggestion?

\_\_\_\_\_

b. Where did Paul say he ought to be judged? Why?

\_\_\_\_\_

c. What was Festus' decision?

\_\_\_\_\_

**VOCABULARY FOR ACTS LESSON 19**

***"The more words you know, the more clearly and powerfully you will think...  
and the more ideas you will invite into your mind."***

— Wilfred Funk

**DAY ONE: Write the definition of the vocabulary word.**

**Sanhedrin** - \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**rebuked** - \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**fanatical** - \_\_\_\_\_

**ordains** - \_\_\_\_\_

**DAY TWO: Write three sentences using three different vocabulary words from this lesson.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**DAY THREE: Circle the word's synonym(s).** (Synonym is a word/phrase that means the same thing.)

**rebuke** - ..... criticize ..... praise ..... scold

**fanatical** - .....not interested ..... frenzied .....zealous

**ordain**..... decree ..... establish ..... predestine



**DAY FOUR: Match the word to its meaning.****rebuked**

the supreme council of the Jewish people in the time of Christ and earlier

**Sanhedrin**

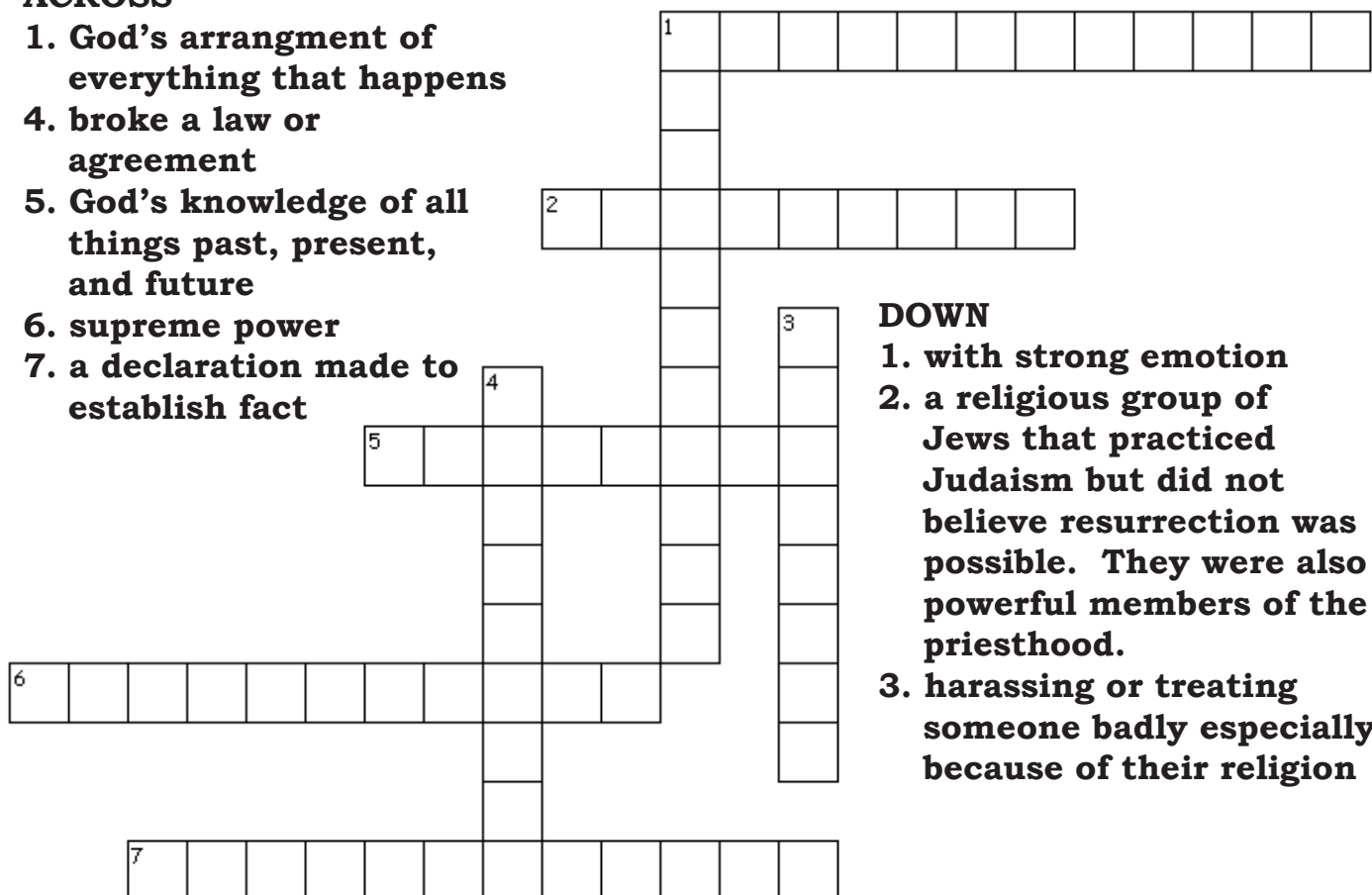
criticized or corrected sharply, reprimanded

**fanatical**

with extreme, unreasonable enthusiasm

**ordains**

prearranges unalterably

**DAY FIVE: Review previous vocabulary word(s).****ACROSS****1. God's arrangement of everything that happens****4. broke a law or agreement****5. God's knowledge of all things past, present, and future****6. supreme power****7. a declaration made to establish fact****DOWN****1. with strong emotion****2. a religious group of Jews that practiced Judaism but did not believe resurrection was possible. They were also powerful members of the priesthood.****3. harassing or treating someone badly especially because of their religion**

**WORD-BANK**  
 persecution  
 testimony

**sovereignty**  
**foreknown**  
**providential**

**Saducees**  
**violated**  
**passionately**



# ANSWER KEY

## ACROSS

1. God's arrangement of everything that happens  
**PROVIDENTIAL**
4. broke a law or agreement **VIOLATED**
5. God's knowledge of all things past, present, and future  
**FOREKNOWN**
6. supreme power **SOVEREIGNTY**
7. a declaration made to establish fact **TESTIMONY**

## DOWN

1. with strong emotion **PASSIONATELY**
2. a religious group of Jews that practiced Judaism but did not believe resurrection was possible. They were also powerful members of the priesthood. **SADDUCEES**
3. harassing or treating someone badly especially because of their religion **PERSECUTION**