

>>>>>>> Acts - Lesson 34 <<<<<<<<

- 1) Paul has returned to Jerusalem, participated in a vow at the insistence of the elders and James, and has been attacked by the crowd because of false things that have been said about him.
- 2) Well we are in the middle of the mess and the commander still does not really get what Paul is being accused of.
- 3) That's were we're going to pick up.

Acts 22:30-23:11 (NIV)

- 4) As usual, the hardness of heart and despicable acts of the Sanhedrin do not disappoint.
- 5) From the very first statement, Paul becomes a challenge for them.
- 6) The LABC comments on his statement regarding his fulfilling his duty to God in good conscience.

He was ready to stand before God and be accountable for his choices and actions. Inherent in Paul's statement, of course, was the challenge: were **they** ready?²⁷

- 7) This was obviously taken as an offence to the chief priest Ananias so he has Paul slapped.
- 8) Josephus describes Ananias as profane, greedy, and hot-tempered.
 - a) He was hated by many of his Jewish contemporaries because of his pro-Roman policies.
- 9) With words reminiscent of Jesus' comment to this group years before Paul lashes out because of this unjust and humiliating slap which was ordered by Ananias.
- 10) It is interesting to me that Paul commented that he did not realize that Ananias was the high priest.
- 11) I think Bruce Barton's comment on this really sums it up – you can pick the reason you might think from among those he gives:

Paul may not have recognized Ananias as the high priest because of poor eyesight. Or perhaps his words were ironic, expressing his amazement that one who would behave so badly (and illegally!) toward him could be the high priest. Most likely, Paul simply did not know who the high priest was or even that he was present at the trial.²⁸

- 12) Paul, however, sees a way to use this group's differences to his advantage by inciting them to an argument about resurrection.
- 13) He first identifies himself as a Pharisee. This had the possibility of accomplishing several things.

²⁷ Bruce Barton et al., [*Life Application New Testament Commentary*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 2001), 553.

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- a) First, it allowed an opening, should the opportunity present itself, to talk about the resurrected Messiah Jesus Christ.
 - b) Second, at least part of the council would have had some sympathy or empathy for him as a Pharisee.
 - c) Finally, however, the item that takes center stage is his comment which surfaced the controversy between the Sadducees and the Pharisees regarding resurrection.
- 14) Though legitimate, neither of the first two items came into play because of the all-out war that broke out between the two factions of the council.
- 15) Paul is then whisked away by the troops on the order of Claudius Lysias the commander and taken back to the barracks.
- 16) I think the final verse of this section is very important:
- ¹¹ 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.”
- 17) As I thought about this, it came to me that this is perhaps what Paul knew all the while on the journey to get here.
- 18) The Holy Spirit was not stopping him because it was not His purpose to stop him – His purpose was simply to warn Paul and to prepare him for the perils ahead and at that, He was obviously successful!!

Acts 23:12–15 (NIV)

- 1) I must say here that I still stand amazed at this group of people.
- 2) The Pharisees, Sadducees, the Sanhedrin and now over forty Jewish men all involved in a plot to kill a man who has not been tried or convicted of any crime whatsoever.
- 3) To the contrary, the only charge that has really been brought against him is that he was assumed to have brought a Gentile into the temple.
- 4) Beyond that, he has only been accused of accidentally insulting the high priest.
- 5) At any rate, moving on we see that God is still in charge.

Acts 23:16–22 (NIV)

- 6) We begin this section of the passage with a unique reference to Paul’s family.
 - a) This is the only place in scripture where his family is mentioned.
 - b) It has been put forth by several scholars that they believe that Paul’s family had disowned him when he became a Christian.
- 7) That being said, it appears that at least his sister and nephew knew him, were in contact with him, and in this situation cared enough to inject themselves into the situation in order to save Paul’s life.

- a) The possibility is that Paul's sister discovered the plot and had her son go to present the findings to Paul and the commander.
- b) As we see, the nephew is seemingly quite young – perhaps too young to have discovered all this on his own.
- 8) Once Paul hears the story, he sends him directly to the commander Claudius Lysias because, of course, he knew that he was the only one who could truly prevent this plot from taking place.
 - a) This is especially true since the plot indirectly involved the commander himself – he would have been an unknowing pawn in this plan.
- 9) So, on to what the commander will do about it...

Acts 23:23–35 (NIV)

- 1) The commander decides that he will have no part in this plot so his plan is to send this entire mess off to the governor Felix his superior.
 - 2) To state the obvious here, he absolutely will not allow anything to happen to Paul under his watch.
 - a) Basically 200 infantrymen, 70 horsemen, and 200 spearmen – a 470-man army!
 - b) I would say that the 40 men who had decided to make this vow were going to get mighty hungry and thirsty before they penetrated that group.
 - 3) It's a bit ironic that this is the second time that Paul has been sent off to Caesarea to save his life.
 - a) The first time by his brothers in Jerusalem many years before and now by this commander.
 - 10) Felix was the Roman governor or procurator of Judea from A.D. 52 to 59.
 - 11) He was in the same position that Pontius Pilate was when Jesus was crucified.
 - a) We will talk some more about Felix shortly.
 - 12) Here is one of those cases where history helps us put a pin in a biblical event.
 - a) In verse 27 of chap 24 we find
- ²⁷ When two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, but because Felix wanted to grant a favor to the Jews, he left Paul in prison.
- b) So, since we know this fact, we can determine that this incident in Jerusalem took place in AD 57.
- 13) We might ask how Luke knew what was written in the letter from Claudius Lysias?
 - a) This letter was probably read aloud in court when Paul came before Felix.
 - b) Also, a copy may have been given to Paul because he was a Roman citizen.
 - 14) It is interesting to note that the letter is almost correct.

- a) The first big discrepancy we see is that Lysias claims to have rescued Paul “because” he was a Roman citizen – not true.
 - b) The events were, however, carefully rearranged in their order.
 - c) Also, the fact that Claudius Lysias had placed Paul in chains and was going to have him flogged is left out.
 - d) Just a little bit of a coverup by “omission” – lie of omission is a lie none the less?
- 15) Though the commander had stated that Paul was guilty of “no charge against him that deserved death or imprisonment.” Felix decides to hold him over under guard until the Jews from Jerusalem who were accusing him arrived.

Acts 24:1–9 (NIV)

- 1) Tertullus was probably a Hellenistic Jew. Some think he may have been a Gentile but that is much less likely.
- 2) He was absolutely the designated spokesperson for the group.
 - a) One assumes that the Jewish leaders decided that needed a lawyer to speak to Felix for them so they either hired Tertullus or he volunteered.
- 3) He begins by trying to ingratiate himself and the Jews to Felix.
- 4) Then he launches into the set of lies he has been programmed to spout.
 - a) Paul is a troublemaker.
 - b) Stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. (some truth in this but the Jews are normally the ones revolting and rioting not Paul)
 - c) He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect.
 - d) Tried to desecrate the temple.
- 5) Ananias and the rest of the Jews join in backing up his accusations.