

## **ACTS 23:1-35 PAUL'S ABORTED DEFENSE BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN; HIS REMOVAL TO GOVERNOR FELIX AT CAESAREA**

Paul's testimony to the Jerusalem Jews (Chapter 22) was totally rejected; that God would send him to the despised GENTILES (the Goyim) was beyond comprehension. Providentially, a pagan, a Roman Commander, Claudius Lysias (23:26), had become Paul's protector. In an effort to determine the precise reason why Jews sought to kill the apostle, he presents him to the Council, the Jewish Sanhedrin, as Chapter 22 closes.

### **23:1-5 Paul's Confrontation with the High Priest Before the Sanhedrin**

- v. 1 "And Paul earnestly beholding \_\_\_\_\_ \*?"  
\*THE SANHEDRIN (συνεδριον/sunedrion):
- The highest, most authoritative, Jewish regulating body;
  - Like the Senate and Supreme Court of the Jewish people;
  - Permitted by Romans to regulate Jewish internal affairs;
  - Made up of the High Priest plus 70 members;
  - First appears ca. 200 BC; ends in AD 66 under Roman pressures.
- v. 2 Paul expresses one sentence and is smitten on the mouth; he had spoken out of turn. Why?  
ANANIAS THE HIGH PRIEST:
- Held this office from 47-59 AD;
  - Appointed by the brother of Herod Agrippa I;
  - Notorious for his rapacity and violence (stole tithes from the priests);
  - Extremely wealthy and pro-Roman in attitude.
- v. 3 Paul rebukes Ananias (though not recognizing him).  
Historical Note: God did remarkably smite Ananias in AD 66; according to Josephus, he was besieged in the royal palace where having hid himself in an old aqueduct, he was dragged out and miserably slain by Jewish insurgents who rebelled against Rome.
- v. 4, 5 For whatever reasons, perhaps poor eyesight, perhaps the High Priest had not worn his special garments, Paul did not recognize him, so he apologizes.

### **23:6-10 Paul Changes His Tactics: He Points Out Truth Believed by Pharisees**

- v. 6 Paul's New Tactic:
1. "I am a Pharisee; my forebears were Pharisees."
  2. "I am accused because of the ancestral and scriptural hope of Israel; i.e., \_\_\_\_\_
- v. 7 Response of the Sanhedrin Council: bedlam!
- v. 8 Basis of the confusion:
1. The Sadducees rejected the eternity of the soul, hence life after death with rewards and punishment, and the existence of angels and spirits.
  2. The Pharisees took the Biblical position (Old Testament): IT WAS POSSIBLE TO BE A CHRISTIAN AND STILL BE A PHARISEE – NOT SO A SADDUCCEE.
- v. 9 The Pharisees seek to free Paul, great dissension follows.
- v. 10 Paul is again rescued by the Roman Commander, Claudius Lysias.

(OVER)

### 23:11 The Lord Encourages Paul

- v. 11 The Lord says to Paul, “Cheer up, take courage; I will see to it that you testify of me in the capital city of Rome.”

NOTE: JESUS MAKES A PROMISE, BUT DOES NOT SPECIFY THE DETAILS.

### 23:12-22 The Jewish Conspiracy to Kill Paul: GOD USES UNBELIEVERS TO PROTECT HIM

- v. 12-15 The 40 conspirators appeal to their religious leaders! Kill Paul in the name of God! Treachery, lies, deceit, murder – by religious zealots!
- v. 16-22 Paul’s Nephew - God’s Means to Save Paul (another pagan)  
Paul’s sister’s son was most likely a rabbinical student in Jerusalem; both sister and nephew retained affection for Paul despite his Christian vows.  
Again, the Roman Commander secures Paul’s deliverance.

### 23:23-35 Paul Escorted to Governor Felix in Caesarea

- v. 23 The Military Escort: \_\_\_\_\_ foot soldiers; \_\_\_\_\_ cavalry; \_\_\_\_\_ spearmen. WOW! Was the Roman Commander realistic? Definitely, yes.
- v. 24 The Romans supply horses for safety and speed; Paul probably preferred to walk.  
FELIX, the Roman Procurator (“Governor”):
- Antonius Felix, Procurator of Judea, Ca. 52-59 AD;
  - Tacitus, the Roman historian, reports of him, “With all cruelty and lust, he exercised the power of a king with the mind of a slave” (which he once was);
  - ruthlessly put down every Jewish uprising;
  - married 3 times to various princesses, one a granddaughter of Anthony and Cleopatra;
  - through Emperor Claudius’ mother, Felix became a freeman; Emperor Claudius later made him Procurator.
- v. 25-30 Claudius Lysias explains the case in a letter to Felix.
- v. 31-32 They brought Paul to \_\_\_\_\_, a city between Joppa and Caesarea, slightly inland, and ca. 20 miles from Caesarea.
- v. 33-35 Felix asks, “What \_\_\_\_\_ are you from?” Why? Because Paul had a right to be tried in his home province. But Felix as a deputy of the legate of Syria-Cilicia qualified to hear the case. Felix sends for Paul’s accusers to come from Jerusalem.

MEANWHILE: PAUL IS GIVEN ACCOMMODATIONS IN HEROD’S PALACE!

### Regarding Luke’s Detailed Accounts of Paul’s Defenses in Jerusalem and Judaea

The space devoted by Luke to Paul’s arrest and various defenses in Judaea is significant. His style, usually brief and austere with very little embellishment, now becomes detailed.

### Why Does Luke Attach So Much Importance to the Events of Chapters 21-26?

1. To manifest Paul’s genuine concern that the Jews of Palestine hear the Gospel from him.
2. To reveal the constantly increasing enmity of perverted Judaism to Paul and the Gospel of Grace.  
- Acts begins in Jerusalem; it ends in Rome. The church in Jerusalem diminishes in importance.
3. To show that even though the Gospel began in the midst of perverted Judaism, it was not intended for just one people, one ethnic strain; rather, for the entire world.
4. To indicate that Paul had to rid himself of Judaistic hangovers and move on in the universality of the Gospel challenge (he will write *Ephesians* and *Colossians* about three years later).
5. To emphasize Paul’s use of his Roman citizenship and the benevolent treatment received by Roman officials.