



## Acts

### Lesson 22, Chapter 23

*Paul was compelled to go to Jerusalem. Despite the warnings from many, he knew this is where he must go. Many questions arise when Paul's life is scrutinized. What prompted him to put himself in a potentially life threatening yet avoidable situation? What induced him to be so fearless of what the enemy could and would do to him? What caused him to be so single-minded in his obedience? What enabled him to remain undistracted from his goal? And most important, why are there not more who live that kind of faith filled life?*

*In chapter 22 Paul has been falsely accused, attacked and beaten by a mob, and arrested and almost scourged by the Roman authorities. Only his Roman citizenship enabled him to escape the latter. Now in chapter 23, since the Romans hands are somewhat legally tied, they turn Paul over to the Jewish authorities, the Sanhedrin, to deal with him. This religious ruling body is made up of both Pharisees and Sadducees, two sects of Judaism that didn't see eye to eye on many theological issues. After getting off to a bad start with the High Priest, Paul appeals to Pharisees for an understanding of his intentions. The Pharisees, the group of which Paul was once a*

*fellow member, believed in the resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees opposed this doctrine dogmatically. When Paul approached his defense from this angle, a heated debate ensued, and Paul was right in the middle of it. The uproar became so violent that the Roman commander decided to take Paul back to the barracks for his own protection.*

*During the night the somewhat discouraged Paul receives an encouraging visit from the Lord. He reassures Paul that he will carry the gospel to Rome, so he is not to fear the circumstances in which he now finds himself. The very next day a plot is uncovered in which several men have vowed to kill Paul. Once again the Romans are his rescuers, and they sneak him off during the night to Caesarea to appear before Governor Felix. God's promise regarding Paul's life was taking place in exact detail. "...This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings, and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." Acts 9:15-16.*

#### READ CHAPTER 23

1. *Considering his past, how could Paul say in vs.1 "I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day"?*

2. *Why do you think this statement offended the High Priest enough to have Paul struck?*
  
3. *What did Paul mean when he called Ananias a “whitewashed wall?” See also Matthew 23:27-28.*



*Many theologians struggle with the idea that Paul didn't know he had spoken to Ananias the High Priest. Being a Pharisee himself, it is not likely that Paul would not have been familiar with the High Priest. Several possible answers to this dilemma have been suggested as stated by John Stott in his book The Spirit the Church and the World.*

*“Some think that this was an informal meeting of the Sanhedrin and that in consequence Ananias was neither robed, nor presiding, so that he could easily have escaped recognition. Others guess that in the babel of voices in court Paul was not able to identify who it was who had ordered him to be struck. A third interpretation is that Paul was speaking in sarcasm, as if to say, ‘I did not realize that a man such as you could be the high priest.’ But to me the most likely explanation lies in the poor eyesight which Paul is known to have had. In this case ‘you white-washed wall’ may have been not so much a reference to hypocrisy as to an uncouth allusion to a white-robed figure across the court whom Paul could only dimly perceive.”*

4. *What did Paul mean when he said, “I am on trial for my hope in the resurrection of the dead”?*
  
5. *What caused the Pharisee's to suddenly begin to take Paul's defense in vs. 9?*
  
6. *List some Old Testament Scriptures that would counter the belief of the Sadducees which Luke expounds on in verse 8.*

7. *What do verses 11-15 tell you about the character of the Jews and the religious leaders that opposed Paul?*
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. *Why would killing Paul be so important to these men?*
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. *Did Paul consider himself a prisoner of the Romans? Explain. See Ephesians 3:1 and 4:1 & 12-14.*
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. *According to his letter to Felix, how did Claudius Lysias feel about Paul's case?*
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. *From the details of this chapter it appears that Paul safety is at risk at all times. One might even think that if the Romans hadn't stepped in and arrested Paul and then secretly gotten him out of the city that the Jews would have killed him. Why, according to vs. 11, could that not have happened?*
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
12. *It's said that "the safest place to be is in God's will." What does that mean to you? Are you there now? If not, what will it take for you to be safe in God's will?*

***Prayer requests:***

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***Group time notes:***

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