

1/6/08

**Acts 23**

Paul the Apostle just had his life's dream shattered as his testimony regarding Jesus was rejected, despite of his confidence that they would receive him. Acts 22:18

The crowd nearly killed Paul and the Lord used a Centurion to deliver him.

Now Paul is brought before the Sanhedrin in an informal meeting in order to determine the charges against Paul.

**23:1:11    The address of Paul to the Sanhedrin.**

**23:1-5**    The testimony of Paul's life.

**23:1**    The opening words of Paul to the council.

- 1) The chapter division remember is unfortunate.
  - a) The last verse of chapter 22 is the better break.
  - b) It should have been verse one.
- 2) The council was the Sanhedrin. vs. 11-b

- a) The phrase looking earnest atenizo” means to look intently at, steadfastly. Acts 3:4; 12; 6:15; 10:4; 13:9; 14:9
  - b) This was the Jewish Supreme court, comprise of 70 members.
  - c) The court was made up of Pharisees and Sadducees.
- 3) The apostle addressed in the formal and respectfully. vs. 1c-d
- a) The word lived “politeuomai” means to live as a citizen, as a Jew before God. Phil. 1:27; 3:4-6, 20
  - b) All good “agathos” conscience before God, that which is salutary and useful.
    - 1) Paul was referring to his life in Christ and the accusations against him presently by the perfect tense. Acts 21:28
    - 2) Paul could not be including when he persecuted the church he thought he was doing God service while in unbelief. 1Tim.1:13
    - 3) Paul's conscience had now been calibrated to God's word to be absolutely correct and effective.

**23:2**    The authorities chastened Paul.

- 1) Paul's declaration was insulting to the High Priest, Ananias, and ordered him struck in the mouth.

- 2) Ananias was appointed by Herod Agrippa II. from 47A.D. to 59 A.D. and assassinated in 66 A.D.
- 3) He was cruel and evil, unworthy of the office.

**23:3** The reaction of Paul to the chastisement.

- 1) Paul lashed out to the High Priest calling him hypocrite, a whitewashed wall, appeared clean on the outside but corrupt on the inside.
  - a) Jesus declared this proverbial saying to the Scribes and Pharisees. Matt. 23:27
  - b) The key word is placed forward with the fullest emphasis: “Smite thee shall God, thou whitewashed wall!” Literally, “God is about to do that very thing to thee.” The perfect participle. Lenski
- 2) Paul’s reason was that he sat as a judge over him but broke the law himself by striking him without a just reason.
- 3) It was said of Ananias, the son of Nedebeus, that he was a, “glutton, a tyrant, a bigot and a murderer”, according to Josephus.

**23:4-5** The exchange between the council and Paul.

- 1) Paul’s actions were quickly checked by the council, charging him against the high priest. vs. 4  
\* He was God’s representative. Deut. 17:8-13
- 2) Paul apologized for not recognizing the high priest. vs. 5a-d  
s Some say Paul is speaking in irony but this is absurd for the tense indicates Paul did not recognize him.
- 3) Paul acknowledged his fault and gave the portion of the scripture prohibiting such a thing. vs. 5e-f  
\* Ex. 22:28
- 3) The explanation for Paul’s actions against the law could be many.
  - a) Paul’s eye sight was bad as indicated in Galatians but this is doubtful.
  - b) There was a new High Priest, Paul had been gone for 20 years.
  - c) The council came to the Antonia barracks and the High Priest was not wearing his official robe perhaps.
  - d) The fact that Paul was commanded to be struck by him, cause Paul to think it couldn’t be the priest.
  - e) Paul just lost his temper being a man of like passions.

**23:6-11** The wisdom of Paul before the Sanhedrin.

**23:6** The apostle Paul pitted the two religious parties.

- 1) Paul discerning the strange gathering of the Pharisees and Sadducees, he played up to his old party, the Pharisees. vs. 6a
- 2) Paul was once a member of the Sanhedrin and attested to Stephens's stoning.
- 3) Paul told the council he was being judge for his belief in the hope of the resurrection from the dead. vs. 6d-g
  - a) He identified himself as a Pharisee and son of a Pharisee. vs. 6b-e
  - b) He chose to declare the real reason for why the Jews from Asia accused him, rather than the mistaken notion that he had brought Gentiles into the Temple, it was the hope of the resurrection. vs. 6f

**23:7-8** The explosive result in the gathering.

- 1) The assembly became agitated and divided. vs. 7
  - a) The Pharisees were the religionist of the day but orthodox in their theology.
  - b) The Sadducees were the aristocrats and materialist.
  - c) Literally, there a joint strife or commotion.
- 2) The reason for their division. vs. 8

- a) The Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection, angels or spirits, denying eternal duration of the soul and eternal punishment. Matt. 22:34-44; Mk. 12:18-27; Lk. 20:27-40
- b) The Pharisees did believed in them.

**23:9** The strong cry in Paul's favor.

- 1) The scribes being the lawyers and interpreters of the law were the first to object to finding any fault with Paul.
- 2) They did not want to be part of it, lest they fight God.

**23:10** The tension at the council led to Paul's removal.

- 1) The dissension was great. vs. 10a
- 2) The commander fearing for Paul's life took Paul by force. vs. 10b-d
- 3) The soldiers took Paul to the barracks. vs. 10e

**23:11** The personal appearance of Jesus to Paul

- 1) The sharp contrast is marked by the word "But". vs. 11a-c
  - a) The council situation was divisive and dangerous, this being the third time. Acts 21:31; 22:22; 23:10

- b) The following night the Lord stood by Paul, to comfort and encourage him, “Be of good cheer, Paul”.
- 1)) The implication is obvious, Paul was discouraged and perhaps began to doubt?
    - \* The imperative, continue to be of good cheer.
  - 2)) That night must have been a long one!
    - \* He is the God of all comfort, who stands with us always. 2Cor. 1:3-7; 2Tim. 4:17-18
- 2) The Lord Jesus reminded Paul of what he already knew. vs. 11d-e
- a) As Paul had testified for Jesus in Jerusalem. vs. 11d
    - \* The Lord was telling Paul that he didn’t fail in his witness.
  - b) So, he must bear witness at Rome. vs. 11e
    - \* The Lord was saying, Paul you are not going to die!

### **23:12-22    The plot against the life of Paul.**

**23:12**    The plot was by the Jews.

- 1) The plot took place the next day in the morning. vs. 12a

- 2) A conspiracy of Jews took an oath to neither eat or drink, until they killed Paul. vs. 12b-c
- 3) More than forty men anathematized themselves in an oath to kill Paul.

**23:13-15** The plans to carry out the plot.

- 1) There were more than forty in the conspiracy. vs. 13
- 2) They revealed their oath to the chief priest and elders to end Paul’s life. vs. 14
  - a) These Jews knew the evil character of these priests and elders, of the Sadducees, and that they would play right into their plan.
- 3) They devised their plan for them and the council to call for Paul the following day, under the pretense of further inquiry, at which time they would murder him. vs. 15
  - \* The word inquiries “diagninokein” has a technical judicial sense to provide the commander with his request of charges against Paul.

**23:16-17** The plot was made known to Paul by his nephew.

- 1) Paul’s nephew heard about the plot and went and told Paul. vs. 16
  - a) His nephew was God’s instrument.
  - b) Paul’s sister lived in Jerusalem.

- c) Perhaps Paul's nephew was receiving his education as Paul?
  - d) We know nothing of Paul's family, most likely he was ostracized by them but his nephew came through.
- 3) Paul requested one of the centurions to take his nephew to the commander. vs. 17
- a) Perhaps the commander Lysius extended himself a bit more realizing his fault against Paul.
    - \* The term young man "meanias" means a teenager.
  - b) If so, it was self-serving but God used it for his purposes.
  - c) Paul had not heard anything from the church in Jerusalem or James.

**23:18-22** The nephew was taken to the commander.

- 1) The centurion related the message of Paul regarding his nephew. vs. 18
  - \* There were four types of custody.
    - a) Public custody.
    - b) Confinement to a public jail, which was the worst.
    - c) Free custody, confinement to men of higher rank.
    - d) Military custody, confinement to the charge of a soldier responsible for the life and safety of the prisoner.

- 2) The commander asked the boy privately what he had to say. vs. 19
- 3) The nephew of Paul revealed the plan of the Jews and council to request the presence of Paul. vs. 20
- 4) The nephew of Paul warned him not to concede, for they would attempt to kill his uncle Paul. vs. 21
- 5) The commander commanded the young man was to share it with no one else and departed. vs. 22
  - \* The word tell "eklaleo" means to divulge, or make know.

**23:23-35** **The commander sent Paul to Felix.**

**23:23-30** The preparations for the transport of Paul to Caesarea.

- 1) He called for the necessary armed guard. vs. 23
  - a) He called two centurions to prepare 200 infantry soldiers, 70 horsemen and 200 spearmen. vs. 23a-e
    - 1)) 470 men were prepared to protect Paul to insure his safety, which included heavy infantry cavalry and light-armed troops.
    - 2)) He would of paid with his own life if Paul was assassinated.
- b) The destiny was Caesarea on the Mediterranean, 37 miles from Jerusalem. vs. 23e

- 1)) The Roman governments headquarters were stationed at Caesarea, not Jerusalem.
- 2)) The time was 9:00 P.M.
- 2) He provided the necessary transport for Paul. vs. 24
  - a) Mounts to set Paul on. vs. 24a
  - b) To get him safely to the governor, Felix. vs. 24b

**23:25-30** The letter written to Felix to explain the arrival of Paul at Caesarea.

- 1) The letter was written by the commander. vs. 25-26
  - a) The manner “tupos” the wording to explain all the events regarding Paul. vs. 25
  - b) The commander identified himself as Claudius Lysias. vs. 26a
  - c) The title is one of high respect when addressing prominent ranks, excellent “kratistos”, mightiest, and noblest.
    - 1)) He obtained his governor ship through the influence of his brother Pallas who was a friend of Nero and was a former slave.
    - 2)) He was cruel and wicked, “A master of cruelty”, Tacitus.
    - 3)) Felix was once a slave of the emperor Claudius and the Roman historian Tacitus said of him,

“Antonius Felix, indulging in every kind of barbarity and he, exercised the power of a king in the spirit of a slave.”

- 2) The commander Lysias portrays himself in the best light through the letter, as the rescuer. vs. 27-30

**23:31-35** The journey of Paul to Felix in Caesarea.

**23:31-32** *The partial armed escort.*

- 1) The entire armed guard went as far as Antipatris. vs. 31
  - a) Antipatris was 37 miles out from Jerusalem.
  - b) Caesarea was 22 miles further.
- 2) The next day the greater part of the contingency returned to Jerusalem. vs. 32
  - a) The seventy horsemen alone accompanied Paul the remainder of the way.
  - b) The armed escort had secured the most dangerous part of the journey, between Jerusalem and Antipatris.
  - c) Antipatris was rebuilt by Herod the Great and named after his father, Antipater.

**23:33-35** The remaining armed escort.

- 1) The soldiers arrived at Caesarea and handed over to the custody of Felix. vs. 33
- 2) Felix read the letter and inquired from Paul his province. vs. 34a-b
- 3) Finding out it was Cilicia, he told Paul he would hear him when his accuser came. vs. 34c-35a-b
  - \* Felix governed from A.D. 52-59.
- 4) Felix ordered Paul to be placed in the Praetorium. vs. 35c
  - \* Built by Herod the Great.