

Comments About Acts 23

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BIG SANDY, Texas—Recently, I began a series of brief articles to discuss chapters in the book of Acts. This week, we will talk about chapter 23.

May this project encourage you to review the valuable history found in the book of Acts.

Overview of Paul's travels

As we entered into Acts 13, we began reading about Paul's missionary journeys. According to some Bible commentaries, the trips can be categorized in the following manner.

- First missionary journey—Acts 13:1 until Acts 14:28
- Second missionary journey—Acts 15:36 until Acts 18:22
- Third missionary journey—Acts 18:23 until Acts 21:16
- Trip to Rome—Acts 21:17 until Acts 28:31

To the Council

Last week, in Acts 22, we read how the apostle Paul began his defense before his accusers. He continued his defense in chapter 23.

- Paul explained that he lived in good conscience before God (Acts 23:1).
- The high priest Ananias commanded people to strike Paul on the mouth (verse 2).
- Paul called Ananias a "whitewashed wall" and rebuked Ananias for striking him (verse 3).

Acts 23:3—"Then Paul said to him, 'God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?' "

- Someone asked Paul: "Do you revile God's high priest?" (verse 4).
- Paul acknowledged that he did not know that the person he had rebuked was the high priest and paraphrased Exodus 22:28 (verse 5).

Acts 23:5—"Then Paul said, 'I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, "You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people." ' "

■ Then, Paul used wisdom to divert attention away from himself and toward a historical conflict among the religious people of that time (verses 6-8). He reminded the audience of his background as a Pharisee and of his belief in a resurrection of the dead.

Acts 23:7-8—“And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection—and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.”

■ Because of Paul’s comment, the Pharisees showed support for him (verse 9), and the commander took him away from the conflict (verse 10).

■ The Lord communicated to Paul that, as he had testified for Him in Jerusalem, he was also going to bear witness of Him in Rome (verse 11).

Plot against Paul

■ Forty Jews took an oath (that included fasting) to kill Paul (verses 12-15).

■ Paul’s nephew overheard talk about the ambush and warned Paul (verse 16).

■ Paul sent his nephew to tell the commander about the plot (verses 17-21).

■ The commander assigned a large contingent of soldiers to protect Paul as he sent Paul to Felix the governor (verses 22-24).

■ The commander sent a letter to Felix, telling him about the plot to kill Paul (verses 25-30).

■ The soldiers delivered Paul and the letter to Felix in Caesarea (verses 31-33).

■ Felix announced that he would listen to Paul when his accusers also arrived at Caesarea (verses 34-35).