

STUDY 3

Acts 23-25:12

Plots and Plans

Review

Paul's visit to Jerusalem has gone exactly the way the Holy Spirit warned him it would, with false accusations, beatings, abuse and arrest. Now he's about to appear before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council - and that's just the start.

Read Acts 23:1-11.

1. How would you describe the attitude of Ananias the High Priest?

Is it likely that Paul will get a fair hearing?

2. What strategy does Paul use as he speaks to the Sanhedrin?

3. What is the result?

Paul is taken back into protective custody by the Roman commander. That night, he is visited and encouraged by the Lord Jesus himself - and given instructions for the next stage of his mission. Read verse 11 carefully - it's a summary of everything that is going to happen in the final four chapters of Acts.

* What has Paul been doing so far?

* Where has he done it?

* What must Paul keep doing?

* Where must he do it now?

* What manner or attitude must Paul have?

From Paul's point of view, his visit to Jerusalem held no surprises. Just as he expected, he was beaten, imprisoned and abused. But Jesus says he's done a great job... and there's more of the same to come. No wonder Paul needs to be reminded to "have courage" - it's not easy work! But how will he get from Jerusalem to Rome, when he's in protective custody, surrounded by Jews who are howling for his blood? God has it all under control!

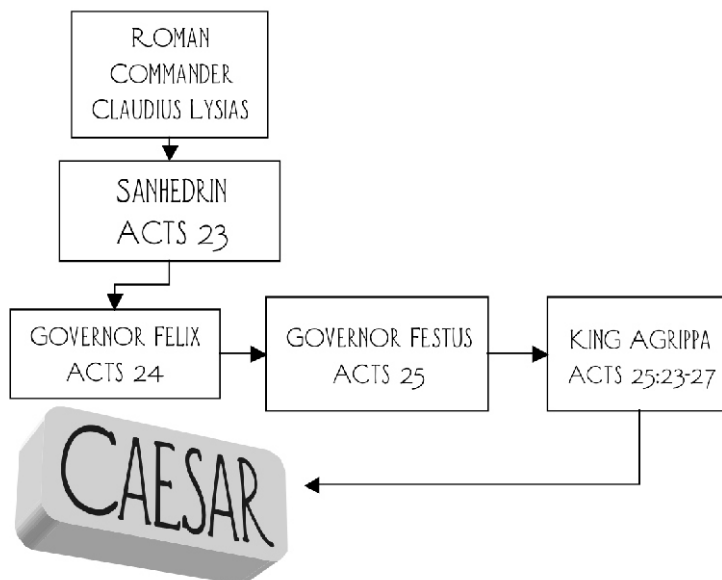
JEWISH PLOTS, GOD'S PLANS

Read about the Jewish plot in verses 12 to 22.

4. Who are the “good guys” and who are the “bad guys” in this section? Why is this *ironic*?
5. Read what happens next in verses 23 to 35. How does the Jewish assassination plot achieve stage 1 in Paul's new mission?
6. Look back at the words of Jesus in Mark 13:9-11. Why should these words be reassuring to Paul?
7. According to Jesus in Mark 13:9, what will the goal be when his followers stand before Governors and Kings?

A TRAIL OF TRIALS (Acts 24-26)

Paul is about to face a long string of trials, which are set out in the diagram below. After the Roman Commander has Paul grilled by the Jewish Sanhedrin in Acts 23, he sends him on to the court of Governor Felix in the city of Caesarea.



8. What are the charges laid against Paul in 24:5? Are they fair?
9. What reasons does Paul give for claiming that “the Way” (Christianity) is not out of step with what the Jews believe?

10. In Paul's private meeting with Felix and his wife (24:24-26), what does he talk about, what does it include, and what is the result?

Paul remains in prison for two years, and Felix is replaced by Porcius Festus. Amazingly, the first business put before Festus on his trip to Jerusalem is... Paul. The chief priests won't let the matter rest. In fact, they want Paul transferred to Jerusalem so they can ambush him and kill him.

11. From 25:7-8, what sort of false allegations were being made against Paul?

12. Think back to the mission Jesus gave Paul. Caesar was the ruler of the whole empire, and he was based in Rome. Why does Paul make the appeal in verse 10-11?

What is the result?

What opportunity will this give to Paul?

THINK IT OVER

Often we let opposition STOP US talking about Jesus. Perhaps we should look at opposition as opportunity! What prevents us from doing this?

Thinking back over the things you've seen in this study, what re-assurance is there that even in the middle of opposition and trouble, God's plans are being worked out.

How does this help you face hard times in your own life?

Romans 8:28 is a famous verse that makes the same point. Are there times when you've wondered whether this is really true? Are there times when, looking back, you can see it has been?

