

## **Acts 23:12-22**

12-15 "an oath" is the Greek word anathema. The Old Testament parallel is herem, something that was to be destroyed. Zeal for the Law was often expressed in violence toward those who broke the Law or defiled the land. They saw Paul as someone polluting Judaism and therefore should be physically destroyed.

The Sanhedrin met about a quarter-mile from the fortress of Antonia in a place Josephus calls the Xystos. The plotters would have sought out those who were Sadducees to make the arrangements. They were prepared to kill Roman soldiers to get to Paul.

16-22 This is the only information we have about Paul's family. His nephew heard about the plot and out of family affection or Christian concern (we don't know if he was a believer) went and told Paul. We can rest assured that when the enemy plans evil against us, God can make a way for us to escape if that is His will. Paul would have been held in a dark inner chamber with leg irons. As a Roman, he would be allowed to have visitors. Paul had the centurion take his nephew to the commander. The commander tells the boy to not let a soul know that he has been informed. He didn't want the conspirators watching for a chance to attack Paul while he was being moved.

23-26 The total number of soldiers is 470. That seems like overkill, but remember that it won't be long until the Jewish revolt. Tensions have been rising and this threat from the 40 men might recruit others to join them. Caesarea was the seat of the Roman government over Judea. Luke uses a term, *typos*, that indicates that he has the exact content of the letter that was sent. In verse 26 we learn the commander's name.

27-30 Lysias twists the truth to make himself look good. He didn't know about Paul's Roman citizenship until he was about to flog him. The only charge against Paul was the false claim that he took a Greek into the Temple. This was not brought up when he faced his accusers, probably because they had no evidence.

31-32 The whole group went 35 miles northwest of Jerusalem to Antipatris (Aphék in the Old Testament. Herod named the city on the plain after his father) It was another 27 miles to Caesarea but in predominantly Gentile occupied land, so the 400 soldiers returned while the cavalry took Paul to their destination.

33-35 Felix (procurator of Judea from 52-59 A.D.) first determined that Paul was from a town in his jurisdiction. The fact that Paul was kept at what was once Herod's palace does not mean he was comfortable. It would have had prison rooms like those in the Fortress of Antonia. The location of this palace has recently been discovered.

24:1 The presence of the High Priest showed how important this was to the Jewish people. Tertullus was a lawyer trained in Roman law and rhetoric. Hiring him showed the Sanhedrin's determination to win this case. They thought they had stopped Jesus, but now they knew they had to stop this rogue Pharisee from spreading what they thought was a perversion of Judaism.

2-4 It was common for lawyers to begin with flattery to try and win the judge's favor. In reality, Felix had done more to undermine the peace than to maintain it. Tacitus wrote that Felix "stimulated outbreaks by injudicious disciplinary measures."

5-9 "Troublemaker" literally is a plague. (1Samuel 2:12) Rome's goal was for there to be peace so "stirring up riots" was a serious charge and, in some sense, is true. This is the earliest use of the name "sect of the Nazarenes". He is trying to make Christianity sound like a deviant illegitimate form of Judaism. He also brought up the desecration of the Temple, a crime punishable by death. Without witnesses it could not be proven. He speaks as if instead of a mob, it was some kind of orderly arrest by the Temple guards and that Lysius was usurping their authority by taking Paul. The Sanhedrin would like to take Paul back into custody and stone him.

10-13 Paul also began with a polite introduction, but was more honest than the lawyer. His defense is truth. He was only in Jerusalem 12 days (not went there 12 days earlier as in NIV- see below). He refuted their statements and said they had no proof.

Day 1 arrived (21:18)

2 met leaders of Jerusalem church (21:18)

3-9 Seven day ritual purification (21:27)

10 Appeared before Sanhedrin (22:30)

11 Plot on his life uncovered (23:12)

12 Taken to Caesarea

13-17 Awaiting trial

When you've done nothing wrong, it's easy to defend yourself.

We'll continue with his defense next week the 12<sup>th</sup> - then have a study on prophetic markers on the 19<sup>th</sup>, and then break until after the Holidays.