

How to Read the Bible for All its Worth

Lesson 6i: Acts 21:17 – 24:27 – Paul Captivity – Part 1

Introduction

Paul was warned throughout his third missionary journey of what awaited him in Jerusalem. As with all of God's prophecies, this one was also fulfilled. In these last chapters of Acts, we see Paul transform from a traveling missionary to a prisoner. It is amazing that despite being bound in the flesh, the Lord allows opens new doors to be opened that enlarges Paul's ministry.

Acts 21:17-26 – Rumors abounding

Besides having Timothy and Luke traveling with him, Paul also brought Sopater of Berea, three men from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, and two men from Asia. Why did he bring these men along with him? What was the response to Paul's news of his travels?

Who did Paul give the credit to for the success of the ministry?

What was the rumor that was circulating about Paul?

Was the rumor true? (See also Romans 14:1-6)

What was the purpose of the advice given to Paul by the brethren in Jerusalem?

Should Paul have followed this advice? Why or why not? (See also 1 Corinthians 9:19-23)

Acts 21:27-36 – Paul attacked by the mob and arrested

Despite Paul's best efforts to keep the peace he still ran into trouble. Who were the people that recognized Paul? How did they recognize him and what were they doing in Jerusalem? (see Acts 19:8-10, and 20:16)

How to Read the Bible for All its Worth

Lesson 6i: Acts 21.17 – 24.27 – Paul Captivity – Part 1

What was the accusation made against Paul by the Asiatic Jews? Was it true?

Why would this accusation upset the other Jews to the point that they would attack Paul? (See Lamentations 1:10)

Why did they shut the temple doors after they drug Paul out?

Fort Antonia was the headquarters of the Roman occupation of Jerusalem and it was located upon a precipice overlooking the temple area, which was the gathering place of the Jews during their religious festivals and the most likely location of a riot. The soldiers standing watch over the temple grounds saw the riot and immediately told the ranking Roman official. The title, “chief captain” means “chiliarch” or “commander of one thousand troops”. He decided to send soldiers and at least two centurians (commanders of 100 men) down to break up the mob. This gives us a clear picture of the scene. Over 200 Roman soldiers rushed down and immediately those that were beating Paul stopped so that they wouldn’t be arrested.

Why is it important to note that Paul was bound with two chains? (See Acts 21:10-11)

Acts 21:37-22:30 – Paul’s address to the Jews

Who did the chief captain think that Paul was? What clarified this for him?

Why did Paul speak to them in the Hebrew dialect of Aramaic? What effect did it have?

Looking at the entirety of Paul’s speech, what was his main point?

How to Read the Bible for All its Worth

Lesson 6i: Acts 21.17 – 24.27 – Paul Captivity – Part 1

Where did Paul say he was raised? (see verse 3)

Paul said that he was taught “at the feet” of Gamaliel. Gamaliel was the most prominent rabbi (Jewish teacher) of that time and one of the most revered rabbis in Jewish history. He was the grandson of Hillel, another significant rabbi. He was also a leader of a more liberal wing of the Pharisees during his time. As a student of Gamaliel, Paul would have been respected among the Jews because of his teacher’s reputation. In fact, Gamaliel was present and spoke when Apostles were interrogated by the Jewish Sanhedrin in Acts 5:33-40.

Who did Paul appeal to as witnesses of his former life?

The denominations that believe baptism is a requirement for salvation use Ananias’ statement in verse 16 as a proof-text. How should we interpret this passage?

What was it about Paul’s testimony that caused the Jews to reject him?

Did the chief captain believe Paul’s story? Why or why not?

What was it that saved Paul from being scourged?

What did the chief captain decide to do with Paul and why?

Acts 23:1-11 – Paul appears before the Sanhedrin

This event marks the fifth time that the gospel and message of Jesus Christ was presented to the Sanhedrin. First, Christ himself stood before them; then Peter and John; then all the Apostles; then Stephen; and finally the Apostle Paul. At each juncture, they rejected the message of the gospel and in doing so, condemned themselves and brought judgment upon the whole nation, by virtue of being a representative body. Not many years later, we see God bring judgment and destruction upon the Jews and Jerusalem as the city and temple are destroyed by the Roman army. We see another extension of God’s mercy in this passage and another blatant rejection of the truth in favor of men’s lies.

How to Read the Bible for All its Worth

Lesson 6i: Acts 21.17 – 24.27 – Paul Captivity – Part 1

What did Paul mean when he said that he served God in a clear conscience up to this day?

The high priest, Ananias, was one of the most corrupt and evil high priests in recorded Jewish history. He reportedly stole money from other priests and had them beaten if they objected. He was very pro-Roman, which angered many of the Jews that were against the Roman occupation. Once the Jewish revolt began in 66 AD, he was promptly killed.

What did Paul mean when he referred to Ananias as a white-washed wall? (see Matt 23:27, and Ezekiel 13:8-16)

What was Paul's accusation against Ananias?

Should Paul have lashed out against Ananias like this (see 1 Corinthians 4:12 and 1 Peter 2:23)?
What does this teach us about Paul?

When Paul quoted from Exodus 22:28 after he was told that Ananias was the high priest, was he implying that the Jewish system was still in place and God recognized Ananias as a high priest?
(see also 1 Peter 2:13-14)

How did Paul ultimately disrupt the Sanhedrin council?

What consolation did the Lord provide to Paul that night in prison? (See Acts 19:21)

How to Read the Bible for All its Worth

Lesson 6i: Acts 21.17 – 24.27 – Paul Captivity – Part 1

Acts 23:12-35 – The plot against Paul

What vow did the forty Jews make and why would they go to this extreme?

What was the plan they devised to kill Paul?

How did the Lord work to thwart this plan?

Why did Felix, the governor, ask where Paul was from?

Why did Paul have to wait before speaking to Felix?

Acts 24:1-27 – Paul's trial before Felix

Who did the Jews bring with them to accuse Paul?

What does Tertullus do in his opening statement?

What are Tertullus' three charges against Paul?

What was the weakness in Tertullus' case?

What was Paul's defense?

What was Felix's response to the testimonies of both parties.

Why did Felix and Drusilla desire to hear Paul speak?

How to Read the Bible for All its Worth

Lesson 6i: Acts 21.17 – 24.27 – Paul Captivity – Part 1

Before we look at the message that Paul preached to Felix and Drusilla, it is helpful to understand their background. Felix was a brother of Pallas, the notorious favorite of the Roman emperor Claudius. Both had been slaves and were now freedmen. Felix was made procurator of Judea by Claudius A.D. 52. He held the position till Festus succeeded him after complaints by the Jews to Emperor Nero. He was one of the most depraved men of his time. The historian Tacitus says of him that "with all cruelty and lust he exercised the power of a king with the spirit of a slave."

Josephus, a Jewish historian that lived during this era said of Drusilla, "But for the marriage of Drusilla with Azizus, it was in no long time afterward dissolved, upon the following occasion: while Felix was procurator of Judea, he saw this Drusilla, and fell in love with her; for she did indeed exceed all other women in beauty, and he sent to her a person whose name was Simon, one of his friends; a Jew he was, and by birth a Cypriot, and one who pretended to be a magician; and endeavored to persuade her to forsake her present husband, and marry him; and promised, that if she would not refuse him, he would make her a happy woman." [Josephus, Antiquities, 20.7.2].

What was Paul's message to Felix and Drusilla? Why did he preach this message? (See John 16:5-11). Didn't they ask to hear about faith in Christ?

What was Felix's response to Paul's message? What is wrong with it?

What was Felix's motive for holding Paul captive?

Why did Felix ultimately leave Paul in prison?

Assignment:

Read Acts 25:1 – 26:32 in preparation for the next lesson