

# Learn to Read Acts Effectively

Distance Learning Programme

Session 11



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## Session 11

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## Session 11 - Paul's journey to Jerusalem

### Acts 21 and 22

### Paul the prisoner Acts 23 and 24

#### Introduction

In this session we follow Paul to Jerusalem and see how he was arrested. He addressed the Jewish crowd and the Jewish rulers. Following further Jewish plots, Paul was taken to Caesarea, where he appeared before Roman officials.

You will find it helpful to read Acts 21 and 22 before you look at the notes.

#### Summary of Acts 21 and 22

The church spreads through the Roman Empire

Paul's third missionary journey

Paul's journey to Jerusalem

21 v 1 to 17

Paul arrested in Jerusalem

Paul urged to pacify the Jews

21 v 18 to 25

Paul arrested in the temple

21 v 26 to 40

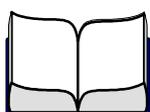
Paul addresses the Jerusalem crowd

22 v 1 to 21

Reactions to Paul's speech

22 v 22 to 30

#### Acts 21 v 1 to 17 - Paul's journey to Jerusalem



Read Acts 21 v 1 to 17

Verses 1 to 8 record Paul's journey from Miletus to Jerusalem as far as Caesarea. Map 6 in the *Additional Notes* booklet shows this to be a journey of over 500 miles. On the way Paul stayed at Tyre for seven days and Ptolemais for one day. It is clear that Luke accompanied Paul on this journey because the narrative says "we" throughout.

*Acts 21 v 7 ... we came to Ptolemais, greeted the brethren ...*

The term “the brethren” is an interesting one to look at. The echoes show that the term “brethren” was used by Jews to fellow Jews:

**Echoes -  
Brethren  
(Jews)** → Acts 1 v 16; 2 v 29 and 37; 22 v 1; 23 v 1; 28 v 17.

More echoes show that the term also came to be used by believers of fellow believers:

**Echoes -  
Brethren  
(Believers)** → Acts 9 v 30; 11 v 29; 16 v 2; 17 v 10 and 14.

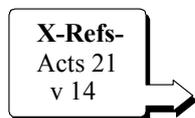
There are many more echoes in Acts and in the letters which follow the Acts. The term “the brethren” came to be used of all those who became part of God’s family by being baptised into Christ.

When Paul and his companions reached Caesarea they stayed with Philip the evangelist. We saw in Acts 8 v 40 (Session 5, page 6) that Philip made his way north to Caesarea after converting the Ethiopian eunuch.

Verses 10 to 12 record the prediction by a prophet called Agabus that Paul would be bound by the Jews at Jerusalem and handed over to the Gentiles. Everyone tried to persuade him not to go to Jerusalem, but Paul, in his determination and zeal, refused to be persuaded.

*Acts 21 v 14 So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, "The will of the Lord be done."*

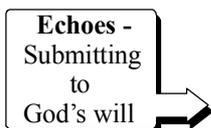
The cross-references from verse 14 show that Paul in his attitude was following a good example previously shown by others in the Bible:



1 Samuel 3 v 18; 2 Samuel 15 v 25 and 26; Matthew 6 v 10; 26 v 39 and 42.

- Eli was prepared to accept all that God had in store for his family
- David recognised that he was in God's hands
- Jesus told us that we should pray, "Your will be done"
- Jesus submitted to God's will, which required his death

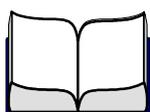
Other echoes make it clear that we should all submit to God's will:



Ephesians 6 v 5 and 6; 1 Peter 4 v 19.

Verses 15 to 17 tell how Paul and his companions completed their journey to Jerusalem and were well received by the brethren.

## Acts 21 v 18 to 25 - Paul urged to pacify the Jews



Read Acts 21 v 18 to 25

In verses 18 to 25 we see Paul attempting to put into practice the principle that we have already seen in Session 8 (page 9) and Session 9 (page 6) that he would "become all things to all men" to enable him to preach God's message.

Verses 18 and 19 tell of Paul meeting with James and the elders of the Jerusalem church. This was the same group of elders that we met in chapter 15. He told them all that he had done in his work of preaching to the Gentiles.

*Acts 21 v 20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law"*

The elders glorified and praised God for extending His plan to the Gentiles, but the second half of the verse brings up the problem that faced Paul wherever he went - the Jews did not want to change their habits of a lifetime observing the law. We can appreciate this because, as we have seen, Paul was persuading the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah promised in their Scriptures. They wanted to accept Jesus but still keep their existing practices.

In verses 23 to 25 we see that the elders persuaded Paul to make a public show of the fact that he still kept the law of Moses. A cross-reference from verse 24 gives us hints of what Paul was doing:

**X-Ref-**  
Acts  
21 v 24

Numbers 6 v 13 and 18.

Paul was probably taking a Nazarite vow as described in Numbers 6.

Numbers 6 v 13 to 18 gives details of the offerings required, and verse 18 also mentions shaving the head. This is a point mentioned by the elders in Acts 21 v 24.

*Acts 21 v 25 "But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality."*

The cross-reference reminds us of the agreement that was reached earlier regarding Gentiles:

**X-Ref-**  
Acts  
21 v 25

Acts 15 v 20 and 29.

## Acts 21 v 26 to 40 - Paul arrested in the temple



Read Acts 21 v 26 to 40

*Acts 21 v 26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them.*

Verse 26 tells of Paul's demonstration that he was not opposed to the law of Moses.

Despite Paul's efforts, the Jews were still determined to make trouble. The rest of the chapter describes how they stirred up the people and dragged Paul out of the temple and attempted to kill him.

Verses 31 to 35 describe the intervention of the Roman commander, who rescued Paul from the Jews and attempted to find out what Paul had done to cause this trouble.

*Acts 21 v 36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, "Away with him!"*

**X-Refs-**  
Acts  
21 v 36

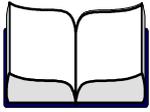


Luke 23 v 18; John 19 v 15.

The cross-references show us that the Jews called for Paul's death in the same manner that they called for Jesus' death before him.

In verse 38 we are told that the commander had mistaken Paul for an Egyptian who had recently been causing trouble. When the commander realised his mistake he allowed Paul to speak to the crowd.

## Acts 22 v 1 to 21 - Paul addresses the Jerusalem crowd



Read Acts 22 v 1 to 21

Verses 1 to 21 are the record of the address that Paul gave to the crowd from the steps of the barracks at Jerusalem, during which he related his conversion and Christ's instruction to him to go to the Gentiles. Paul was giving details of what happened to him as recorded in Acts chapter 9. Verse 1 gives the start of Paul's speech, which was in Hebrew. This made the Jews keep very quiet.

*Acts 22 v 3 "I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today.*

*4 "I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women"*

Paul attempted to start on common ground with the Jews. He said that he used to think just the same as they did, and he made the following points which he had in common with them:

- He was a Jew
- He was educated by Gamaliel, one of their most respected elders
- He was strict about keeping the law
- He was prepared to persecute those who accepted Jesus as their Messiah
- He was even arranging systematic killing of believers

By this means he seems to be trying to tell them that he had been even more determined to stamp out belief in Jesus Christ than they were.

Then in verses 6 to 16 Paul related his conversion. There were probably still some people around who were with Paul on the Damascus road and who could confirm that Paul was speaking the truth.

*Acts 22 v 14 "Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth.' "*

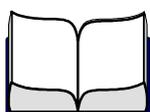
Here again Paul was trying to relate to the Jews. He was telling them that it was the God of their fathers, the same God that they worshipped, who had chosen Paul to see and hear Jesus Christ.

Verses 17 to 21 tell how he returned from Damascus to Jerusalem and saw a vision in the temple in which he was told to leave Jerusalem quickly because the Jews wouldn't listen to his preaching. Paul hoped that the Jews would listen to him because they knew that he had once persecuted the believers. He was in an ideal position to be able to understand their position and to explain why he had changed.

*Acts 22 v 21 "Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.' "*

Paul then explained how Jesus again told him to leave Jerusalem because he had work for him to do elsewhere.

## Acts 22 v 22 to 30 - Reactions to Paul's speech



Read Acts 22 v 22 to 30

*Acts 22 v 22 And they listened to him until this word, and then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!"*

The Jews listened up to this point. Their reaction showed that they still would not accept that Gentiles could be included in God's plan. They listened until Gentiles were mentioned, and would then listen no more. As in Acts 21 v 36, we have echoes from the trial of Jesus when the Jews demanded the death penalty.

Verses 23 to 29 record that Paul began to be bound ready for scourging, but he escaped this terrible ordeal because it was against Roman law for an uncondemned Roman citizen to be treated in this way.

*Acts 22 v 30 The next day, because he wanted to know for certain why he was accused by the Jews, he released him from his bonds, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down and set him before them.*

The commander wanted to sort out this problem between Paul and the Jews, so he commanded that the priests and the Jewish rulers should appear with Paul in an attempt to find out why Paul was the cause of trouble in Jerusalem.

# Acts 23 and 24 - Paul the prisoner

## Introduction

At the end of chapter 22 we left Paul standing before the chief priests and the whole Jewish council so that the commander could find out why Paul was the cause of so much trouble. In this section we will look at Paul's comments to the Jewish council and the resulting plot to kill him. The commander heard of the plot against Paul and sent him with a heavy guard to Felix the governor so that he could hear Paul's case.

It would be helpful to read Acts 23 and 24 before looking at the notes.

## Summary of Acts 23 and 24

The church spreads through the Roman Empire

Paul witnesses to the rulers

Paul addresses the Jewish council	23 v 1 to 11
Jewish plot - Paul sent to Felix the governor	23 v 12 to 35
Paul before Felix	24 v 1 to 27

## Acts 23 v 1 to 11 - Paul addresses the Jewish council



Read Acts 23 v 1 to 11

*Acts 23 v 1 Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."*

Paul again seems to be trying to put forward ideas that the Jews would relate to:

Have a look at the cross-references and see more of what Paul was talking about. Compare your findings with the notes on page 16.

**X-Refs-**  
Acts 23  
v 1

Acts 24 v 16; 1 Corinthians 4 v 4; 2 Corinthians 4 v 2.

Paul tried not to go against the God the Jews worshipped or have a bad conscience. He wanted to tell others about His message in an honest way.

*Acts 23 v 2 And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth.*

The high priest obviously disagreed with and objected to Paul's comments, and showed his disapproval by having Paul struck on the mouth.

The cross-reference shows that Paul was again receiving similar treatment to that which Jesus received at his trial:

**X-Ref-**  
Acts 23  
v 2 → Matthew 26 v 67.

*Acts 23 v 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?"*

The notes in *The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge* indicate that Paul's words came remarkably true:

"God did smite him in a remarkable manner; for about five years after this, after his house had been reduced to ashes, in a tumult raised by his own son, he was besieged and taken in the royal palace; where having attempted in vain to hide himself, he was dragged out and slain."

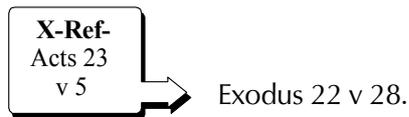
The cross-reference leads us to one of the passages that Paul was maybe thinking about:

**X-Ref-**  
Acts 23  
v 3 → Deuteronomy 25 v 1 and 2.

- They were to ascertain who was right and who was wrong *before* they administered punishment

In verse 5 Paul immediately apologised because he had not realised that it was the high priest who had ordered him to be struck on the mouth. Some commentaries suggest that there had been a recent change of high priest, so that Paul was perhaps unaware of the change and did not recognise the new high priest.

The cross-reference leads us to the passage that was referred to:



This incident shows Paul's respect for the Old Testament, as he immediately apologised for breaking a command in the Old Testament, even though the circumstances were very questionable.

*Acts 23 v 6 But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!"*

Paul very cleverly picked out one of the fundamentals of the gospel message that he knew would cause disagreement.

Verses 7 to 10 record that there was then considerable dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees. The commander feared so much for Paul's safety that he commanded his soldiers to return him to the barracks.

Paul would probably not know what was going to happen next. He had in effect made a mockery of the Jewish council and he would not know what action they would take. His past experience of opposition from the Jews would tell him that they would not let the matter rest.

*Acts 23 v 11 But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome."*

Paul would have been greatly encouraged by this message. He would be comforted to know that Jesus approved of his testimony in Jerusalem. This would have been his testimony to the crowd from the barracks steps which we looked at in Acts 22. This message also told him that he would witness for the Lord Jesus in Rome.

## Acts 23 v 12 to 35 - Jewish plot - Paul sent to Felix the governor



Read Acts 23 v 12 to 35

*Acts 23 v 12 And when it was day, some of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.*

*13 Now there were more than forty who had formed this conspiracy.*

These verses show us the reaction of the Jews. It was the typical reaction of people who couldn't get their way by any other means - they planned to resort to violence. They asked the Jewish council to arrange for Paul to appear before them again so that they could kill him on the way.

*Acts 23 v 16 So when Paul's sister's son heard of their ambush, he went and entered the barracks and told Paul.*

Here we see God's hand at work. Paul's sister's son heard of the plan, so the plot to kill Paul was thwarted, as we read in verses 17 to 22.

Verses 23 to 35 relate how Paul was taken from Jerusalem to Caesarea out of harm's way.

*Acts 23 v 23 And he called for two centurions, saying, "Prepare two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at the third hour of the night"*

The commander made arrangements to send Paul to Caesarea immediately. He was possibly nervous about Paul being a Roman citizen and almost having had him scourged. Roman citizenship gave rights to people which were regarded as important. Anyone ignoring them could be punished severely. The commander was also conscious that he must defend Paul against the Jews, over forty of whom were out to kill him. This would explain why he sent an escort of 470 men with Paul.

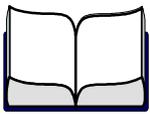
The letter to Felix the governor from the commander contains an interesting point.

*Acts 23 v 27 "This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them. Coming with the troops I rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman."*

He wished to convey the idea that he rescued Paul because he was a Roman citizen. As we have seen, this was not actually the case - he didn't find out that Paul was a Roman citizen until he was about to have him scourged.

Paul was safely taken to Caesarea and handed over to the governor Felix. He was then kept in the Praetorium - a guard room in Herod's palace - until such time as his accusers could come.

## Acts 24 v 1 to 27 - Paul before Felix



Read Acts 24 v 1 to 27

Felix, or Antonius Felix, to give him his full name, was the Roman governor over the nation of Israel. We can get a flavour of the kind of man he was from the commentary of *\*Ellicott* quoting the historian Tacitus:

"... he governed as one who thought ... that he could commit any crime with impunity and wielded 'the power of a tyrant in the temper of a slave'".

The commentator *Ellicott* also says:

"His career was infamous alike for lust and cruelty."

*Acts 24 v 1 Now after five days Ananias the high priest came down with the elders and a certain orator named Tertullus. These gave evidence to the governor against Paul.*

Tertullus was the spokesman for the Jews against Paul. Notice the following points in his speech from verses 2 to 8:

- He spent almost half his speech flattering Felix
- Paul was accused of creating trouble among the Jews - as we have seen several times, it was the Jews themselves who followed Paul around stirring up trouble
- He also accused the commander of using violence - Acts 21 v 27 to 32 would imply that the Jews themselves started the violence

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However, the high priest and elders who came with Tertullus backed up what he said.

In verses 10 to 21 Paul put his side of the story to Felix. Notice Paul's simple introduction in verse 10, in contrast to the flattery of Tertullus.

In verses 11 to 13 Paul refuted the accusation that he stirred up trouble with the Jews.

In verses 14 and 15 Paul summarised his beliefs:

- He worshipped the God of his Jewish fathers
- He believed all that was in the law and the prophets
- He trusted in God
- He believed in the resurrection from the dead
- He tried not to offend either God or other people

We have already seen aspects of all of these beliefs mentioned by both Peter and Paul in their preaching.

Verse 17 may explain why Paul was so anxious to get to Jerusalem - he was bringing alms and offerings from the Gentile converts to the Jews.

In verses 19 to 21 Paul challenged the Jews to substantiate their accusations.

In verses 22 and 23 Felix said he would decide what to do when the commander came. Meanwhile he allowed Paul's friends to visit him.

Then in verse 24 he heard Paul again in the company of his Jewish wife Drusilla.

*Acts 24 v 25 Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you."*

Have a look at the cross-references and see what you can learn about "righteousness, self-control and the judgement to come".  
Compare your findings with the notes on page 16.



Psalm 58 v 1 and 2; 72 v 1 to 3; 82 v 1 to 4; Ecclesiastes 3 v 16;  
Hosea 10 v 12.

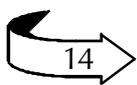


Proverbs 31 v 3 to 5; Isaiah 28 v 7.



Daniel 12 v 2; Romans 2 v 16; 2 Corinthians 5 v 10; 2 Timothy 4 v 1.

As we have seen from the comments of the historian Tacitus and the commentator Ellicott, Felix's life showed no sign of either righteousness or self-control, and so he would be afraid at the thought of judgement. So we can understand his reluctance to think about these embarrassing subjects.



Unlike Felix, we should be aware of the judgement and be prepared for it. We look at the Bible principles a little more in the *Additional Notes* booklet.



Are we like Felix in being afraid to think about death and judgement?



Bible teaching on judgement

*Acts 24 v 26 Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him.*

The character of Felix again comes out here. He wanted Paul to bribe him to release him. He was more interested in money than in thinking about the judgement.

Verse 27 also shows the character of Felix. When he was succeeded by Porcius Festus, Felix wanted to do the Jews a favour, so he left Paul a prisoner.

In our final session we shall see what happened when Porcius Festus took over as governor of Judea. We shall also follow Paul to Rome.

## Summary of Session 11

- Paul has reminded us that we must submit to God's will
- We have seen Paul arrested and receiving similar treatment to that which Jesus received at his trial
- Paul was still preaching even though he was in prison
- We have seen Paul's straightforward honest preaching, in contrast to the Jews, who resorted to flattery and underhand plots

We have been challenged:



We should think about our lives in relation to the judgement to come.

## Questions

1. What have you learned from Paul about what our attitudes should be?
2. How do Paul's comments in Acts 24 v 25 affect your life?

## Self-study notes

Cross-references from Acts 23 v 1 (page 8)

Paul:

- Tried to have a clear conscience in the sight of both God and man (Acts 24 v 16)
- Knew of nothing he had done wrong, but Christ will be the ultimate judge (1 Corinthians 4 v 4)
- Avoided anything that was deceitful, both in his preaching and in his life (2 Corinthians 4 v 2)

Cross-references Acts 24 v 25 (page 14)

Righteousness:

- Righteousness is contrasted with wickedness which results in violence (Psalm 58 v 1 and 2)
- God's king will judge with fairness and justice (Psalm 72 v 1 to 3)
- God is concerned about justice for those who often do not receive justice (Psalm 82 v 1 to 4)
- Man's judgement usually has aspects of wickedness in it (Ecclesiastes 3 v 16)
- If we try to be righteous and show mercy to others, God will show us His righteousness (Hosea 10 v 12)

God's righteous ways which result in justice are contrasted with human wickedness which results in violence.

Self-control:

- We should avoid becoming wrongly entangled with the opposite sex. Rulers should not become intoxicated because they will then be liable to pervert justice (Proverbs 31 v 3 to 5)
- The priests in Isaiah's time were perverting judgement through being drunk (Isaiah 28 v 7)

Lack of self control leads us in wrong directions.

Judgement to come:

- The judgement occurs when the dead are raised (Daniel 12 v 2)
- God has appointed Jesus to be the judge of all believers (Romans 2 v 16)
- All believers must appear before Christ's judgement seat (2 Corinthians 5 v 10)
- Jesus will act as judge when he returns (2 Timothy 4 v 1)

Jesus will be judge on God's behalf at the resurrection when he returns.