
Book of Acts – Course B

Instructions:

Please take all courses in order as listed on our home page (the computer will ask!). If you have not done all the lessons of previous courses, please [click here to go to the beginning](#).

If you have not already done so, save this lesson to your computer using the "save" feature of your browser or PDF reader. Then print out the lesson (or at least open it in your browser or PDF reader **offline** – not on the Internet). Read the lesson and **study in your Bible the passages indicated >>> Scripture <<<**. Following each passage, study each question that has a number enclosed in asterisks (*1*, *2*, etc.), and **write down your answers on paper**. Some questions include more than one number because they have more than one blank to fill in. ("Think" questions should be carefully considered for your own benefit, but your answers will not be submitted to us.) Please take your time, study each passage carefully, answer the questions honestly, and consider the applications to your own life (John 12:48; 2 Tim. 2:15).

When you have studied the whole lesson and written down answers to all the indicated questions, return to the menu for this course on our web site at www.BibleStudyLessons.com and click on the link for the **answer quiz** for this lesson (or simply click on the link at the end of this lesson). Follow the directions to submit your answers and receive your grade. You will then be given an opportunity to see the correct answers to the questions. Please save this lesson and the correct answers for future reference.

Then move on to the next lesson or the next course in order. **Please study all lessons in all courses in order as listed in the menus on our web site.**

Thank you for your interest, and God bless your study of His word.

Paul's Court Hearings – Acts 23:11–26:32

Lesson 6

Introduction:

Our last lesson concluded with Paul still a prisoner in Jerusalem. His hearing before the Jewish council had ended with tumult. This lesson will examine the series of trials that followed.

I. A Plot against Paul – Acts 23:11–35

The Plot Discovered

>>> Please read Acts 23:11–22. <<<

1 Forty Jews vowed not to eat or drink till they did what? (a) became Christians, (b) killed Paul, (c) destroyed the Bible, (d) all of these. Answer: _____.

2 Who discovered the plot and warned Paul and the commander? Answer: The plot was revealed by Paul's _____.

Comments: At this difficult time in Paul's life, God comforted him by appearing to him and assuring him that he would go to Rome to bear witness for Jesus. The Judean Jews would not succeed in killing him.

Meanwhile, however, a group of forty Jews had taken an oath to do just that. They vowed not to eat or drink till they killed Paul. They asked the Jewish rulers to call for another hearing with Paul, but they planned to kill Paul on the way to the hearing. Note the incredible corruption of these supposedly devout religious leaders, that they would even agree to be party to such a proposal!

The plot, however, became known to Paul's nephew, who told it to Paul and eventually to the Roman commander.

Escape to Caesarea

>>> Please read Acts 23:23–35. <<<

3 How did the commander plan to save Paul? Answer: He sent Paul with an escort to the governor at _____.

4 How did he inform the governor about Paul's case? (a) he sent a letter, (b) he sent Paul's nephew, (c) he sent an e-mail, (d) none of these. Answer: _____.

Comments: Having learned of the plot, the commander Claudius Lysias determined to protect Paul by sending him by night with an armed guard to the Roman governor Felix at Caesarea. He sent a letter explaining Paul's case, saying that the Jews' charges involved nothing worthy of death or chains.

Note the lie that he told. He said he rescued Paul from the Jews, because he had learned Paul was a Roman. He failed to say that he did not learn this fact until after he had rescued Paul, had illegally bound him, and had made full preparations to illegally beat him!

Felix determined to hear the Jews' case against Paul.

II. Paul's Defense before Felix – Acts 24:1–27

Accusations by the Jews

>>> Please read Acts 24:1–9. <<<

5 Who spoke for the Jews to state their case against Paul. Answer: The Jews' case was presented by _____.

6 What accusations did he make? He said Paul was guilty of (a) causing dissension, (b) ringleader of the Nazarene sect, (c) profaning the temple, (d) all of these. Answer: _____.

Comments: The Jews then had to travel to Caesarea to accuse Paul before the Roman governor Felix. An orator named Tertullus stated their case. He accused Paul of causing dissension, and being a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes, implying he was plotting against the government. Such accusations would concern the Romans. Then he said Paul tried to profane the temple, and the Jews

wanted to judge him for that, but Lysias had interfered. Of course, he neglected to mention that a mob was trying to murder Paul without any trial at all. He then said Felix could confirm these charges simply by cross-examining Paul.

Paul's Defense

>>> Please read Acts 24:10–15. <<<

7 What did Paul say about the evidence against him (v13)? Answer: The Jews could not _____ their accusations against him.

8 What did he believe (v14)? (a) the Koran, (b) the Nicene Creed, (c) the law and the prophets, (d) all the preceding. Answer: _____.

9 What hope did he share in common with the Jews (v15)? Answer: He hoped for a _____ of the just and the unjust.

Comments: The Jews had offered no proof, so Paul simply denied their charges and pointed out that they had no evidence against him. Justice is one of the weightier matters of the law (Matt. 23:23; John 7:24), and this is an important principle of justice. Anyone can make accusations against someone else. Proving them is another matter. Without evidence, the accusation is just one person's word against another's. People should not be considered guilty until proved guilty.

Paul did acknowledge that he was a member of the group they called a "sect," but this did not prove he had done any wrong. He even believed the law and the prophets. Of course, he believed they were fulfilled in Christ and the gospel, but that was completely in harmony with the law and the prophets. His faith did not contradict them, but was the fulfillment of them.

He also believed, as the Jews did, in the hope of the resurrection of the dead. These comments showed that the real problems the Jews had with him were religious issues, which the Romans would not care about.

Note that Paul affirmed one resurrection of both good people and bad people. This contradicts modern premillennial theories, which usually teach separate resurrections, one for the wicked and another for the righteous, separated by many years. Like Paul, Jesus said the good and bad will all be raised the same hour (John 5:28,29).

>>> Please read Acts 24:16–21. <<<

10 What kind of conscience did Paul have? Answer: He said he had a conscience _____ before God and man.

11 What one thing might the Jewish council have against him (v21)? Answer: He said he was on trial because of the _____ of the dead.

Comments: Paul continued his defense by claiming his conscience was without offense. Despite the accusations, he knew of no wrong he had done. Christians should have good consciences, though we learned earlier that a good conscience does not of itself prove we are right (23:1).

Paul said he had come to Jerusalem to bring gifts and alms to his nation. This referred to the contributions he brought from churches to the Jerusalem church (see on 20:4). This was surely nothing to punish him for. He concluded that his conduct in the Jewish temple involved no tumult or

disturbance. And the Jewish council itself had found nothing wrong, except that he had confessed his faith in the resurrection.

The focus of Paul's defense was that the Jews could not prove any charges of tumult or rebellion. Their real problem with him was that they disagreed with his religious views.

Further Meetings with Felix

>>> Please read Acts 24:22–27. <<<

12,13&14 What did Paul teach Felix about? Answer: He taught about _____, _____, and _____ to come.

15 How did Felix respond to Paul's message. (a) he was baptized immediately, (b) he ridiculed the message, (c) he was afraid but postponed acting. Answer: _____.

Comments: Felix decided to postpone a verdict till after he had spoken to Lysias. But he gave Paul freedom to receive visitors.

He also listened from time to time to Paul's message. Paul taught him about righteousness, self-control, and judgment. This is what Felix needed to hear, for history records he was a corrupt, immoral man. Preachers should tell people what they need to hear. People in immorality need to be taught to repent and live morally upright lives. Paul also taught about judgment to come. The reason people should live good lives is that judgment is coming (see Acts 17:30,31).

Felix responded like many do today. He postponed obedience, saying he would consider further when it was convenient. When the record ends two years later, he still had not obeyed. If people want to serve God conveniently, they will never serve God. Service to God is based on self-sacrifice and self-denial, not on convenience (Rom. 12:1,2; Matt. 16:24–27). If you are waiting for a time when it will be easy to be a Christian, Satan will make sure that such a time never occurs!

Sure enough, two years later, Felix left office leaving Paul in prison, despite the fact there was no proof against him. He had hoped Paul would offer a bribe for his freedom, and he wanted to please the Jews.

III. Paul's Defense before Festus – Acts 25:1–12

>>> Please read Acts 25:1–12. <<<

16 Why did the Jews want Paul brought to Jerusalem for trial? Answer: The Jews intended to _____ Paul on the way to Jerusalem.

17 When Festus wanted to send him there, what did Paul do? Answer: Seeing that he received no justice, Paul appealed to _____.

Comments: The new Roman governor was Festus. The Jews wanted Paul brought to Jerusalem, so they could kill him as he was en route. Festus asked first for a hearing at Caesarea. There the Jews just made unfounded accusations and Paul denied that they could prove them.

Festus wanted to please the Jews, however, so he suggested that Paul go to Jerusalem for trial. At this point Paul had been in prison for over two years. He knew the Jews could not prove their case

against him; and he knew the governors were aware that this was so, yet they continued to hold him (see v10). He also knew the plots the Jews had made against him when he had previously been in Jerusalem. Seeing that justice was not done in Palestine, and knowing that God had promised that he would go to Rome (Acts 23:11), Paul appealed to Caesar.

Any Roman citizen had the privilege of appealing his case to Caesar. In doing so, Paul showed once again that Christians have the right to use their privileges as citizens for their own protection in time of persecution.

IV. A Defense before Agrippa – Acts 25:13–26:32

Arrangements for the Hearing

>>> Please read Acts 25:13–27. <<<

18 Who came to Caesarea to visit with Festus? (a) Jesus, (b) Agrippa and Bernice, (c) John the Baptist, (d) Mohammed and Buddha. Answer: _____.

19 What did Festus say was the purpose of the hearing (vv 26,27)? Answer: He needed to write to Caesar stating the _____ against Paul.

Comments: Festus received a visit from Agrippa and Bernice. Agrippa was probably a son of the Herod who had killed James (Acts 12), and Bernice was his sister. Festus discussed Paul's case with them, saying that the accusations against Paul were entirely religious in nature, relating to the fact Paul believed Jesus had been raised from the dead (v19). This, of course, meant Paul had committed no crime against Rome.

Agrippa wanted an interview with Paul, so a hearing was arranged for the next day. Festus explained that all the Jews wanted Paul killed, yet his own examination had found nothing in Paul worthy of death. But since Paul had appealed to Caesar, Festus had to send him. He hoped the hearing would find some charges that he could make against Paul to explain to Caesar why Paul was being held in custody. This all amounts to a virtual admission that Paul should have been released. The governor himself could not even think of a reasonable statement of charges against him, let alone could he find evidence to convict him!

The result, however, was an excellent opportunity for Paul to preach the gospel to Festus, Agrippa, and many other prominent people.

Paul's Speech

>>> Please read Acts 26:1–8. <<<

20 What sect was Paul a member of before his conversion (v5)? Answer: He lived as a _____, the strictest sect of their religion.

21 What issue did Paul raise in v8? (a) the resurrection, (b) baptism, (c) the Book of Mormon, (d) predestination, (e) all the preceding. Answer: _____.

Comments: Given the opportunity to speak freely, Paul acknowledged that Agrippa knew Jewish customs. In his speeches to Romans he had restricted himself mostly to legal issues. But with one who understood Jewish thinking he could freely discuss religious issues.

He began by describing his early upbringing as a strict Pharisee. The Jews knew this had been his background. He claimed he was on trial because of the hope of God's promise to the fathers. This referred to the blessing on all nations that had been promised to come through the descendants of Abraham. That blessing was salvation through Christ (Acts 3:25,26). All Jews anticipated this blessing. Paul knew it had come, but when he tried to tell Jews how to receive it, they persecuted him!

Paul then introduced the idea of the resurrection. He asked what would be incredible about it. He intended to tell about a person who had been raised, and that fact was the foundation of his whole belief.

>>> Please read Acts 26:9–16. <<<

22 What had been Paul's original attitude toward Jesus (v9)? Answer: Paul believed he should do things contrary to the name of _____.

23&24 Why did Jesus appear to Paul on the road to Damascus (v16)? Answer: Jesus appeared to make Paul a _____ and a _____.

Comments: As in Acts 23:1, Paul affirmed his sincerity in opposing Christ. Many people claim that God will accept the service of all sincere religious people. If so, Paul should have been acceptable before his conversion, but really he had been the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:13–15). He persecuted Christians, even voting to put them to death and trying to make them blaspheme. Sincerity alone did not make him right.

Paul then described the appearance of Jesus to him on the road to Damascus, as we have previously studied in Acts 9 and Acts 22. Note that Jesus did not appear to Paul just to convert him, but to qualify him to serve as an eyewitness of what he had seen. Remember that an apostle had to be an eyewitness that Christ was alive again (cf. Acts 1:21,22; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:3–8). Apostles also had to be personally and directly called by Jesus Himself. This account records how Paul was called by Jesus to be an apostle.

>>> Please read Acts 26:17–23. <<<

25 What did Paul teach people to do (v20)? Answer: He taught them to repent and do works suitable to or that would prove their _____.

26&27 What had the prophets said about the Christ? Answer: They said the Christ must _____ and then rise from the _____.

Comments: Paul was to use his testimony to open people's eyes, turning them from Satan to God, so they could be forgiven and receive the inheritance Jesus offers. So Paul obeyed Jesus and preached to Jews and to Gentiles that they should repent and do works befitting repentance. Repentance requires people to decide to turn from sin and instead obey God. But the decision alone is not enough. To please God people must actually quit their sinful practices and serve God obediently.

Paul then claimed that it was this preaching that the Jews opposed. Really he was only teaching what the Jews' Scriptures had predicted: that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead. This directly stated the conclusion that had been implied by the story of the appearance of Jesus. If Jesus had appeared to Paul, then He must be alive, which means He must have risen from the dead. This agreed with the predictions of the Old Testament prophets. So again Paul had presented the main proofs of the gospel: the resurrection and fulfilled prophecy.

The Conclusion of Paul's Defense

>>> Please read Acts 26:24–32. <<<

28 How did Festus react to Paul's message? (a) he was baptized, (b) he ignored it, (c) he called Paul mad, (d) he prayed for forgiveness. Answer: _____.

29 What did Agrippa say Paul was trying to do? Answer: Paul was trying to persuade Agrippa to be a _____.

30 What did Festus and Agrippa conclude about Paul's guilt? Answer: Paul had done nothing worthy of _____ or chains.

Comments: In response to Paul's teaching, probably especially about the resurrection, Festus interrupted to say that Paul's learning had driven him crazy! Paul claimed instead that his speech was both true and reasonable. He was convinced that Agrippa could appreciate the message, because Agrippa knew the Old Testament prophets.

He then asked whether Agrippa believed the prophets. Agrippa's response indicated that he realized that Paul was trying to convince him to become a Christian, but he was not yet ready. Unfortunately, like Felix, there is no indication in the record that Agrippa ever obeyed. Like him, too many people "almost" become Christians, but are never saved because they are not willing to make the commitment. Note that this is just the second time that the Scriptures have used the word "Christian" (see Acts 11:26; 1 Peter. 4:16).

After Paul's defense, Agrippa and Festus agreed that Paul had done nothing worthy of being imprisoned, let alone of dying. This was an admission that his imprisonment was unjust.

Our next lesson will follow the journey of Paul to Rome.

Personal application questions:

(These questions are for you to ponder. Your answers will help us understand your thinking, however they will not affect your "score.")

31 Are you ready for the judgment to come? _____

32 Will all sincere religious people be saved? _____

33 Are you almost or altogether a Christian? _____

When you have carefully studied this lesson and written down answers to all the questions, [click on this link to submit your answers.](#)

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