

# Lesson 19: Paul in Jerusalem

## Acts 21:17-23:11

In spite of the warnings, Paul marched boldly on to Jerusalem, “ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21:13). He didn’t walk naively or defiantly. He went willingly. He went courageously. Words of the Lord from Joshua 1:9 ring in my ears: “Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” Here we have an example of that. Wherever you walk this week, whatever you encounter, I pray you know the presence of the One who goes with you. I pray the Lord makes Himself particularly tangible to you and to me. He did it for Joshua. He did it for Paul. He loves us no less.

*“After he had greeted them, he began to relate one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.”*

*Acts 21:19*

### Paul’s Arrival in Jerusalem

Read Acts 21:17-40. After a two-day journey from Caesarea Maritima, Paul and his companions arrived in Jerusalem.

1. What testimony did Paul give in Acts 21:18-19? Who did Paul credit with having done the work?
2. How did the disciples at Jerusalem initially respond according to Acts 21:20? What was their concern in Acts 21:20-22?
3. As with Paul, sometimes what God does leads to trouble with the religious people around us. Have you experienced any work of the Lord that led to your being misunderstood or even rejected by the religious (Christian or otherwise) around you? How did you respond?
4. What did the Jewish believers at Jerusalem suggest that Paul do in Acts 21:23-25?

5. How did Paul respond to their suggestion in verse 26? What insight does 1 Corinthians 9:20-23 give in helping us to understand Paul's cooperation?
6. How did the plan work out for Paul? See Acts 21:27-31.

Acts 21:31 echoes of the Ephesian mob: the city of Jerusalem was "in confusion."

7. Read 1 Corinthians 14:33. Although the statement is found amid Paul's discourse on spiritual gifts and orderly worship, what truth is stated about the Lord?

Confusion is never of the Lord. Are you experiencing confusion in any specific area of your life today? If so, ask the Lord to come in and restore His order to the situation.

When word of the confused mob got back to the commander of the Roman cohort – the leader of the Roman troops in Jerusalem, he took his soldiers and ran to diffuse the situation (Acts 21:32-36).

8. What did the Roman commander permit Paul to do in Acts 21:37-40?

### **Paul's Address to the Mob in Jerusalem**

Read Acts 22:1-21.

When Paul had opportunity to defend his ministry to the angry mob at Jerusalem, he did not present theological or philosophical arguments. He didn't argue law or religion. Instead, Paul told his story.

9. From Revelation 12:10-11, how will the saints ultimately overcome the "accuser of the brethren," the enemy of our souls?

The work of Christ, the blood of our Savior has rescued us from the evil one. The word of our testimony speaks of that redemption. In light of Paul's words, let's take a moment to consider our own testimonies.

10. In Acts 22:3-5, Paul presented his upbringing and his sinful past. What would you share about your life prior to knowing Christ as Lord and Savior?
  
11. In verses 6-16, Paul shared the story of his conversion. Though his is radical, yours is no less powerful. How did you come to know the Lord?
  
12. Paul encountered several different types of people after he met Christ on the road to Damascus.
  - ❖ Some of the men who had been traveling with him “saw the light, to be sure, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to [him]” (Acts 22:9). Consider those you had been walking through life with before your conversion. Who did not understand when you came to know the Lord?
  
  - ❖ When Paul met Ananias in Damascus, Ananias encouraged and spoke truth over his life. Who initially encouraged you in your walk with the Lord? How did they do that?
  
13. Paul then went on to share about his life after his conversion. Our testimonies do not end with our initial belief in Christ. Our stories keep going. The word of our testimony continues. What are some ways that your life has changed since you came to know the Lord?

I hope that we will continue to consider our own testimonies. The Lord has purposed our lives and our stories for this time in history. He shed His blood that He might redeem us, and He is glorified when we share with others what He has done for us.

14. From Acts 22:17-21, what directions did the Lord give to Paul?

### **Paul Appeals to Rome**

Read Acts 22:22-23:11.

15. What made the Jews in Jerusalem so angry at Paul? What did they want to do to him?
  
16. How did the Roman commander respond to the Jews’ rage in Acts 22:23-24?

17. From Acts 22:25-28, what was Paul's defense before the flogging began?

Only about 5% of the residents of Rome were actually Roman citizens. They had either been born citizens (as Paul had) or had purchased their citizenship at a price (as the commander had). The Roman soldiers would have accepted Paul's claim to citizenship immediately because had he falsely claimed to be a citizen, the punishment would have been death, which was even worse than the flogging that he faced.<sup>33</sup>

18. Still wanting to get to the bottom of Paul's identity, what did the Roman commander decide to do in Acts 22:29-30?

19. Facing the Jewish council, what was Paul's initial interaction with the high priest Ananias (Acts 23:1-3)?

20. How did Paul's tone change in Acts 23:4-5? Consider also Exodus 22:28, which Paul quotes in verse 5.

21. Paul appears to have at least respected the office of high priest, if not the individual Ananias. What are some examples today where we should obediently respect and honor the office even if we dislike or disagree with the individual?

22. How did Paul divert the attention from himself in Acts 23:6-8?

Again Paul's life was preserved by the Roman commander who led him away to the barracks when he worried that Paul would "be torn to pieces" by the councilmen (Acts 23:10).

23. What comfort did Paul receive in Acts 23:11?

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<sup>33</sup> Wong, John-Michael. *Opening Up Acts*. Opening Up Commentary. Leominster: Day One Publications, 2010. Page 141.

**Prepare for Life**

Turn back to Acts 22:6. It was noon when the great light shone around Paul on the road to Damascus. Twelve noon. Consider it. This wasn't a light that only shone in the darkness. This was a light that shone even in the brightest light of day. Even the noonday sun pales in comparison to the glorious light of the Lord.

24. Read 2 Corinthians 4:6. Where does the light of Christ shine?

25. What does John 1:4-5 tell you about that light?

Wherever you walk, whether the brightest of circumstances or the depths of despair, the light of Christ that shines in you is brighter is still. The noonday sun cannot rival it. The dark of night cannot extinguish it. And the world – well, the world is desperate for a glimpse of it.

**Lecture Notes: Lesson 19**