

Acts 23: The Plot to Kill Paul in Jerusalem

- Paul's defense before the Sanhedrin
 - "I have lived in good conscience before God until this day."
 - He seeks to divide the Council (some Pharisees and some Sadducees) over the question of the resurrection of the dead.
 - They quarrel so much that Paul had to be rescued from the mob by the Roman soldiers.
 - Paul said that he had lived before God until this day with a good conscience. He was saying that he had lived according to what he *thought* was right. The conscience guides according to the extent that it has been taught.
 - Paul called the high priest a "whitewashed wall."
 - See Ezek. 13. 10-16; Matt. 23.37.
 - The High Priest was assassinated in A.D. 66 by Jewish Zealots.
- V.11: That night Jesus stood before him and said to be of good cheer because he was going to travel to Rome and preach Him there too.
 - The Jews (40 men) banded together and vowed to neither eat nor drink until they killed Paul.
 - Paul's nephew hears of the plot and tells the Roman commander about the planned ambush.
 - Acts 20. 22-23: The Spirit said that "Bonds and afflictions await you in Jerusalem.
 - See similar plots in 1Sam.14.24; 2 Sam.3.35; 1 Kings 19.2;
 - We can certainly see the stark contrast between the pagan Roman commander, Claudius Lysias, who tried to discover the truth, and the religious leaders, who dealt in deceit and destruction.
 - The commander prepared 200 soldiers, 70 horsemen, and 200 spearmen to escort Paul out of the city and take him down to Caesarea by night to insure Paul's safety.
 - The Roman officials sent a letter to Governor Felix regarding the charges against Paul.

- Ch. 23 shows the final rejection of the Gospel of Christ by the Jews in Jerusalem.
 - Jesus foretold of this and Jerusalem's final destruction in Matt. 24; Mark 13; and Luke 21.
 - See also Matt. 23.31-32.
 - Jehovah is a patient God, but there is a limit to His patience.
 - In less than 8 years, the city of Jerusalem will be totally destroyed by the Roman army and not even one stone would be left on top of another stone.
- Applications for you and me:
 - It is tragic to lose hope. Sometimes individuals lose hope that their health would improve, that a loved one would recover, that a mate would return.
 - Like Paul, faithful Christians need to realize that God's providence will see us through and give us new hope.
 - Providence in Latin means "seeing ahead." God sees ahead for us and as Romans 8.28 says, "all things work together for good to those that love the Lord."
 - Providence is God working through the natural order of things rather than through miracles. God is in control and makes things happen for us in our favor if we but trust and obey Him.
 - Augustine, early philosopher, said, "Trust the past to the mercy of God, the present to His love, and the future to His providence."
 - Psa. 27.14: "Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage."
 - See 1 John 5.14.