

Acts 21b-24

Luke now spends a quarter of the book of Acts explaining to Theophilus why Paul is not only innocent, but also why he is still a prisoner and not free. Luke spends a lot of time on this, but we can afford to be a little bit quicker and so study some larger passages than usual as we see Paul appearing before a series of people who judge him (or in most cases, actually fail to judge him).

We pick up the story with Paul arriving in Jerusalem with him trying to appear as a proper, legitimate Jew that is obeying the Law and is ceremonially clean. Unfortunately for Paul this strategy backfires and merely lands him in trouble. Difficult though this no doubt was for Paul (and at times quite frightening) God had not deserted him and is active in getting Paul where He wants him - in Rome, where Paul is going to testify at the highest level.

Read Acts 21.17-26

How is Paul received in Jerusalem and why is this important?
What do Paul & James do and why?
What does this re-affirm?

Read Acts 21.27-36

What mixture of truth and lies stirs up the crowd because of these Asian Jews?
What does this produce, and why do the Roman soldiers intervene so quickly?

Read Acts 21.37-22.21

What mistake does Paul quickly refute and by what means?
Why does Paul revert to Aramaic and what is he trying to do here?
Is there anything in this account of Paul's conversion that is different from previous accounts that you notice?

Read Acts 22.22-29

Why are the crowd so disturbed by the mention of Gentiles?
What mistake does the commander make and why did he?
How does Paul turn the situation round?

Read Acts 22.30-23.11

What is the substance of Paul's defence before the Sanhedrin?
Do you think that deliberately causing friction between different groupings on the Sanhedrin was wise by Paul and when might such a tactic be wise/useful or counterproductive?

Read Acts 23.12-35

How does God protect Paul?
Why do you think that the commander sent such a strong force to protect Paul?
What does the accompanying letter say and what does the commander leave out?

Read Acts 24.1-27

What is the substance of the Sanhedrin's accusation?
How does Paul go about defending himself?
Why does Felix like to listen to Paul and why does he not free him?

Reflect on how Paul constantly brings everything round to the resurrection and why this is so important - mentioning it many more times than the crucifixion.