

# Week 38

## The Plot Thickens

### Paul's Arrest and Defense

After Paul finished his speech to the crowd in Jerusalem, they became enraged and shouted, "Away with him! He is not fit to live!" They threw off their cloaks and tossed dust into the air, showing their contempt for him. The Roman commander ordered Paul to be taken into the barracks and flogged, to find out why the people were so angry with him. As they stretched him out to whip him, Paul asked the centurion standing there, "Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn't even been found guilty?" When the centurion heard this, he went to the commander and reported it. The commander came to Paul and asked him, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?" Paul said, "Yes, I am." The commander was alarmed because he had put Paul in chains without due process. He immediately released him and ordered the chief priests and the Sanhedrin to assemble, so he could bring Paul before them. He needed to know more about who this man was and why so many hated him.

The next day, Paul was brought before the Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish council. He looked straight at them and said, "My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day." At this, the high priest Ananias, ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth. Paul rebuked him, saying, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!" Those who were standing near Paul said, "How dare you insult God's high priest!" Paul replied, "Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest; for it is written: 'Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.'" (Lev.

### Paul's Strategy and Escape

Paul knew that some of the members of the Sanhedrin were Sadducees, and some were Pharisees. He knew that the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, nor in angels or spirits, but the Pharisees (of which, he was himself) believed in all these things. So, he called out in the council, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, descended from Pharisees. I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead." When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. The Sadducees said that there was no resurrection, and that Paul was talking nonsense. Paul knew there was a good chance the Pharisees would be sympathetic to him on this account. Sure enough, the Pharisees said that they found nothing wrong with Paul, and that maybe a spirit or an angel had spoken to him. The argument became so violent that once again, the commander feared that Paul would be torn to pieces by them. He ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force and bring him into the barracks.

The following night, the Lord stood near Paul and said, "**Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.**" The next morning, some Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. More than forty men were involved in this plot. They went to the chief priests and elders and said, "We have taken a solemn oath not to eat anything until we have killed Paul. Now then, you and the Sanhedrin petition the commander to bring him before you on some pretext. We will be ready to kill him before he gets here." But Paul's nephew heard of this plot. He went into the barracks and told Paul. Paul called one of the centurions and said, "Take this young man to the

commander; he has something to tell him." He told him about the plot to kill Paul, and the commander dismissed the young man with this warning: "Don't tell anyone that you have reported this to me."

Then the Commander ordered that Paul be transferred immediately to Caesarea, where the Roman Governor, Felix could decide what to do with Paul, considering he did have rights as a Roman citizen. When the cavalry arrived with Paul in Caesarea, they delivered the letter of explanation to the governor and handed Paul over to him. The governor read the letter and wisely asked what province Paul was from. Learning that he was from Cilicia, indeed a Roman Province, Felix knew he should hear Paul's case, which meant that his accusers would be brought forward to present their case against him. Felix ordered that Paul be kept under guard in Herod's palace, until such time as his case could begin.

#### D. PAUL IN JERUSALEM (21:15-23:22)

1. Welcomed by Brethren (21:15-26)
2. Arrested by the Jews (21:27-40)
3. Paul's Defense (22:1-21)
4. The Response of the People (22:22-29)
5. Paul Before the Sanhedrin (23:1-10)
6. The Plot Against Paul (23:11-22)
7. Paul is transferred to Caesarea (23:23-35)

