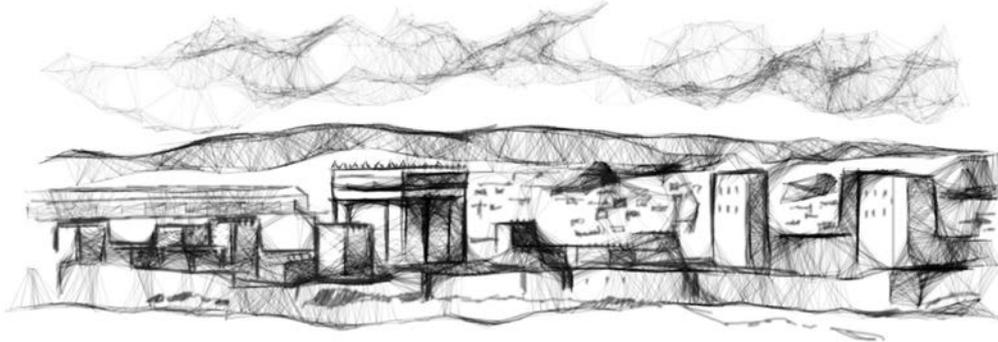


# Paul's Arrest in Jerusalem



## SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 8

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Acts 21:23–26; Romans 2:28, 29; Galatians 5:6; Acts 22; Acts 23:1–30.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “The next night the Lord Jesus came and stood by Paul. He said, ‘Be brave! You have told people in Jerusalem about me. You must do the same in Rome’ ” (Acts 23:11, ERV).



Paul invites the non-Jewish churches to give money to help the believers in Judea (1 Corinthians 16:1). Paul hopes that this gift of money will help stop the fuss.

**A FIGHT STARTS IN THE CHURCH** soon after Paul makes his first trip to share the Good News about Jesus with other people. We learned about this fight in an earlier lesson. The fight is about the things that non-Jews need to do first before they join the church (Acts 15:1–5). Maybe by the time Paul finishes his third trip, he already knows about the trouble in the future. So, he makes a plan to keep peace in the church. He also invites the non-Jewish churches to give money to help the believers in Judea (1 Corinthians 16:1). Paul hopes that this gift will help stop the fuss.

Danger waits for Paul in Jerusalem. But Paul wants to bring peace to the church. This fact may help explain why Paul goes to Jerusalem anyway. Paul also has a real love for his people, the Jews (Romans 9:1–5). He wants church members to get along with each other (Galatians 3:28; Galatians 5:6). Both Jews and non-Jews are saved in the same way. They are saved by faith, not by obeying the law (Romans 3:28–30). So, Paul is against any teaching that goes against the truth of the Good News about Jesus (Ephesians 2:11–22). This week, let us follow Paul as he enters this new time in his life and his work for God.

## PAUL MEETS WITH THE LEADERS OF THE JERUSALEM CHURCH (Acts 21:23–26)

Paul arrived in Jerusalem. There Paul stayed with a believer named Mnason. The Christians who were friends with Mnason gave Paul a warm welcome (Acts 21:16, 17).

In Acts 21:18–22, James and the Jerusalem church leaders said they were worried about how the strict Jews felt about Paul. These strict Jews followed the law of Moses very carefully. The Jerusalem church leaders were told that Paul taught Jewish believers to stop following the law of Moses and the “religious act of becoming a Jew and not to follow old religious ways of worship” (Acts 21:21, NRSV).

Of course, these stories about Paul were not true. Paul always taught that we can do nothing to earn the gift of being saved. Paul said both Jews and non-Jews were saved only by faith in Jesus (Romans 2:28, 29; Galatians 5:6; Colossians 3:11). Paul never taught Jews to stop obeying the law. Paul did not teach the Jews to stop doing what the law asked them to do. Obeying the law does not mean we are saved by our own good works. But some people twist the reason for why we need to obey the law. How? They say we should obey the law because good behavior will save us.

**Read Acts 21:23–26. As these verses show us, how does Paul show that he continues to be a loyal Jew?**

The church leaders told Paul to do something to prove that he was a loyal Jew. They told him to show his support for some Jews who wanted to take the Nazarite oath. The Nazarite oath is a special promise that a Jewish male said to show that he gave his whole life to God.

Sadly, Paul followed their advice. Heroes, even in the Bible, have their weaknesses. We can see this sad fact in the lives of Abraham, Moses, Peter, and other people. Someone may say that Paul was just following his normal rule of acting the same as a Jew when working with other Jews (1 Corinthians 9:19–23). But Paul gave in more than he should have. His behavior made people think the Good News for the Jews was different than the Good News for the non-Jews. Paul’s behavior made people think non-Jews were saved by faith, but Jews were saved by their works. “God did not give Paul permission to do as much as the Jews asked him to do.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles [leaders and teachers]*, page 405, adapted.



**In Jerusalem, Paul stayed with a believer named Mnason. The Christians who were friends with Mnason gave Paul a warm welcome (Acts 21:16, 17).**

**TROUBLE IN THE TEMPLE (Acts 21:27–36)**

Paul accepts the church leaders' advice. He agrees to show support for the group of Jews who take the Nazarite oath. The Nazarite oath is a special promise a Jewish male says to show that he gives his whole life to God. What does Paul need to do to show his support? Paul will need to be made "clean." What does it mean to be made "clean"? It means that Paul will need to follow certain Jewish religious rules. This part will last seven days. Paul must follow these special Jewish rules for seven days before he can help the men say their Nazarite oath (Numbers 19:11–13). Jewish laws say that any person who comes from non-Jewish lands is not clean and cannot enter the temple. So, Paul must make himself clean first before he can go to the holy leaders. Then he can tell them that he made himself clean so that he can help the men finish their oath (Acts 21:26).

**Read Acts 21:27–36. As these verses show us, what happens to Paul at the end of this seven-day period?**

A big fight breaks out. Some men in the crowd blame Paul for trying to destroy the Jewish religion and for not respecting the temple. Trophimus from Ephesus travels with Paul at this time. Trophimus is one of Paul's friends. Trophimus is also a non-Jewish believer (Acts 21:29). The angry Jews beating Paul think that Paul invited Trophimus into the temple where only Jews can enter. If Paul really did do that, then Paul is guilty of an awful crime. A wall separates the inside of the temple from the outside part. There are signs with words in both the Greek and Latin languages on this wall. These signs warn non-Jewish visitors not to enter or they will be put to death.

The Roman army leader in the city hears the news about the wild fight. The Roman army leader's name is Claudius Lysias (Acts 21:31, 32; Acts 23:26). Claudius Lysias comes to the temple with troops. The troops save Paul before the crowd kills him. The troops arrest Paul and put him in chains while Claudius Lysias tries to understand what is going on. The crowd shouts wildly against Paul. So, the army leader takes Paul to the Roman war building in Jerusalem.

**False stories help start this wild fight. Why must we take care not to believe false stories or tell them to other people?**



**The army leader takes Paul to the Roman war building in Jerusalem.**

**PAUL STANDS IN FRONT OF THE CROWD  
(Acts 22:22–29)**

Acts 21:37–40 tells us what happens next to Paul. The Roman troops take Paul back to the Roman war building to ask him questions. Paul asks Claudius Lysias, who is the Roman army leader, to let him speak to the crowd of people who want him to die.

Paul speaks to the Roman army leader in the Greek language. So, Claudius Lysias thinks that Paul is a certain Jew from Egypt. In the past, this Jew from Egypt started a war in Jerusalem against the Roman rulers. The Roman army stopped this war. The Jew from Egypt escaped, but many of his followers were arrested or killed.

Paul tells the Roman army leader that he is from Tarsus, not from Egypt. So, the Roman army leader allows Paul to speak. Paul does not talk about the crimes that the crowd says Paul did (Acts 21:28). Paul tells the crowd his story about how he becomes a Christian. He talks about how he is a loyal Jew who killed believers in Jesus in the past. But then the Lord showed Himself to Paul. Paul cannot turn away from this truth. Paul's belief in Jesus changes his whole life. That is why Paul preaches the Good News about Jesus to non-Jews. Paul does not argue with the angry crowd about Bible teachings. But Paul tells the crowd about his own experience and why he preaches to the non-Jews.

**Read Acts 22:22–29. What does the angry crowd do when Paul says that God chose him to preach to the non-Jews?**

The Roman army leader's choice to let Paul speak does not have a good ending. When Paul says that God sent him to work with the non-Jews, the crowd judges Paul guilty of the crimes they say he did (Acts 21:28). They get very angry.

Maybe the Roman army leader does not understand everything Paul says. So, he decides to punish Paul. Paul is a Jew by birth (Philippians 3:5). But he is also a Roman citizen. When Paul tells the Roman army leader that he is a Roman citizen, the Roman army leader does not beat him. That is because Roman soldiers were not allowed to hurt or beat Roman citizens.

**Why does Paul tell his story in Acts 22:1–22 about how he became a Christian? What makes our stories so powerful about how we gave our lives to Jesus?**



**Paul asks Claudius Lysias, who is the Roman army leader, to let him speak to the crowd of people who want him to die.**

### PAUL STANDS IN COURT IN FRONT OF THE JEWISH RELIGIOUS LEADERS (Acts 23:1–5)

The Roman army leader saw that Paul was not dangerous to the Roman Kingdom. So, the Roman army leader sent Paul to the Sanhedrin (Acts 22:30; Acts 23:29). The Sanhedrin was the ruling group of religious leaders for the Jews in Jerusalem. They understood Jewish law and acted as judges.

**Read Acts 23:1–5. How does Paul start his sermon to the Sanhedrin?**

Paul's first sentence earned him a slap on the mouth. Maybe Paul got slapped because what he said about God did not sound loyal. What Paul said next shows us exactly who he is. Paul said the top religious leader in the Sanhedrin was a " 'white-washed wall!' " (Acts 23:3, NLV). These words were a copy of Jesus' words to the religious leaders in Matthew 23:27. But Paul had no idea that he was talking to the top religious leader in the Sanhedrin. So, it is true that he really did have bad eyesight.

**Read Acts 23:6–10. What clever words does Paul use to try to break up the trial?**

The Sanhedrin is made up of two groups: the Pharisees and Sadducees. These groups often argue with each other about Jewish teachings. Pharisees believe in obeying the law very carefully. Sadducees do not believe that the dead will wake up and come back to life (Matthew 22:23–32).

Paul's smart words (Acts 23:6) are more than just a way to break up his time in court. The Sanhedrin is really judging Paul for teaching that the dead will come back to life (Acts 24:20, 21; Acts 26:6–8). Nothing else explains how Paul changed from chasing and killing Christians to preaching about Jesus. What if Jesus never came back from the dead? Then Paul's work means nothing at all, and he knows it (1 Corinthians 14:15–17).

That night, the Lord comes to Paul with this message of hope: " 'Paul, do not be afraid! You will tell about Me in the city of Rome the same as you have told about Me in Jerusalem' " (Acts 23:11, NLV). This promise must mean a lot to Paul. For a long time, he wanted to preach in Rome (Acts 19:21; Romans 1:13–15; Romans 15:22–29). Finally, he will get that chance.



Paul's first sentence earned him a slap on the mouth.

**PAUL IS SENT TO CAESAREA (Acts 23:12–17)**

A group of men tried to get rid of Paul by taking him to court. But that plan did not work. So, the group decided to kill Paul on their own.

**Read Acts 23:12–17. As these verses show us, what does the group plan to do? How does God make their plan fail? People can have strong feelings that lead them to support wrong ideas. How do these verses show us this truth?**

More than 40 Jews made a secret plan to hurt Paul. They took an oath to kill him. This oath shows us just how much they hated Paul. Luke does not tell us who the men were. But they were willing to do anything to protect the Jewish faith from its enemies. Sadly, this story is only one of many examples at this time of stubborn men with hard hearts who wanted to “protect” the Jewish religion.

But God allowed the news about the secret plan to reach Paul’s nephew. It is sad that we know almost nothing about Paul’s family. But it seems that Paul and his sister grew up in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3). Paul’s sister married and had one son. Paul’s nephew was a teenager. How do we know? Did you see that, in Acts 23:19, Captain Lysias “took [Paul’s nephew] by the hand” (NLV)? Captain Lysias’s action shows us that Paul’s nephew was young. So does the Greek word “neaniskos” (Acts 23:18, 22). “Neaniskos” is written as “young man” in the ERV. Paul’s nephew visited the war building and told Paul about the secret plan to kill Paul.

**Read Acts 23:26–30. What message does Captain Lysias send to governor Felix about Paul?**

Lysias’s letter tells Felix about Paul. The letter also shows how good it is for Paul to be a Roman citizen. The Roman law fully protects its citizens. By law, citizens are allowed to stand in front of a judge and explain their behavior in a court of law. They also can go before the King of Rome to complain that the judge was not fair to them in court (Acts 25:10, 11). So, Felix is fair to Paul. Felix asks Paul many questions. Then Felix orders soldiers to guard Paul until his accusers arrive.

**Think about everything God does for Paul. How often do you thank God for all the good things in your life?**



**Paul’s nephew visited the Roman war building and told Paul about the secret plan the Jews made to kill Paul.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** “At this time, Paul and his friends take the money that the non-Jewish churches collect and give it to the leaders of the work in Jerusalem. This money helps support the poor Jewish believers. . . .

“The non-Jewish believers give these gifts of money because they want to help. The gifts show that the non-Jewish Christians believe God’s work must be done all over the earth. The leaders in Jerusalem should accept the gifts with thankful hearts. But Paul and his friends see that many leaders in Jerusalem do not see the love in the hearts of their non-Jewish brothers who give the gifts.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles [leaders and teachers]*, pages 399, 400, adapted.

“What will happen if the church leaders stop being unkind to Paul? What if the leaders accept Paul as God’s messenger to the non-Jews? Then the Lord will save Paul’s life. God does not plan for Paul’s work to end so soon. The church leaders do nothing to stop Paul’s death. They start many of the problems that lead to Paul being killed. But God does not work a miracle to stop Paul’s death.

“Today the same unkind spirit is leading people to do the same things that happened in Paul’s day. When we do not thank God for the gifts He gives us, we turn away from many good things that God wants to give us. Many times, God wants to let a pastor work more and for a longer time than the pastor works for. But God does not let him continue to work, because nobody gives thanks to God for this pastor’s work. The church must not allow Satan to twist their thinking so that they do not understand the words and acts of God’s worker. The church must not get in this worker’s way or stop him from helping people. When the church does these wrong things, then God sometimes takes away from the church the many good things that He gave them.”—Pages 417, 418, adapted.



“When we do not thank God for the gifts He gives us, we turn away from many good things that God wants to give us.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles [leaders and teachers]*, pages 417, 418 adapted.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Paul knew he would not be welcome in Jerusalem, but he went anyway. He made the needs of the church more important than his own. How much should we copy Paul’s behavior?
- ② As church members, we need to get along with each other and have peace. How can we learn to work together when we have different ideas about things?