

A SEVEN-WEEK CHALLENGE FOR THE BOOK OF ACTS WEEK SIX

Chapter Twenty-one of the Book of Acts – A Matter of Life and Death

Section One: Vocabulary Activities (including a little story and a rhyming game) for these words: resume, escort, evangelist, weep, plead, zealous, purify, adhere, offering, throng, tumult, detain, disturbance, barracks, and assassin.

Section Two: Questions to Investigate in Chapter Twenty-one—

Why did the Christians in two cities beg Paul not to set foot in Jerusalem?

What problem did the Christian Jews in Jerusalem bring up?

Why did a throng in Jerusalem attack Paul?

Who saved Paul's life, but arrested him?

Chapter Twenty-two of the Book of Acts – Paul's Testimony

Section One: Vocabulary Activities (including an analogy game, a crossword puzzle, and a spelling challenge) for these words: defense, bear witness, en route, designate, brilliance, shed blood, fit, mob, interrogate, scourge, intensely, lawful, acquire, and sum.

Section Two: Questions to Investigate in Chapter Twenty-two—

How did Paul connect his defense to the angry crowd?

How can we be certain Paul's testimony was true?

What one word turned the crowd into a half-crazy, howling mob?

How did Paul avoid the Roman scourging with whips?



Chapter Twenty-three of the Book of Acts – Before the Supreme Court

Section One: Vocabulary Activities (including a little story and an analogy game) for these words: conscience, whitewashed, violation, dissension, clamor, acknowledge, faction, erupt, band together, conspiracy, case, ambush, lie in wait, and prosecute.

Section Two: Questions to Investigate in Chapter Twenty-three —

Why did the Sanhedrin (Supreme Court) break into a huge argument?

How did God encourage Paul?

What plot did Paul's nephew discover?

What did the commander say about Paul in his letter to the governor?

Chapter Twenty-four of the Book of Acts – Living in the Light of Eternity

Section One: Vocabulary Activities (including the Odd Man Out Game and a crossword puzzle) for these words: spokesman, reform, foresight, gratitude, entreat, insurrection, ringleader, desecrate, verify, offense, commotion, defer, leniency, converse, and succeed (follow).

Section Two: Questions to Investigate in Chapter Twenty-four—

How did Paul answer the Chief Priest's accusations at the governor's hearing?

What was Governor Felix's terrible choice?

How did Paul's imprisonment become God's opportunities?

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1. **Hidden Treasure: Mark the fifteen vocabulary words listed in #2.** Also note these previous words: *bind, deliver, glorify, abandon, vow, conclude, idol, strangled, immorality, defile, uproar, drag, centurion, wilderness, and implore.*

Acts 21:4-6, ⁴ After locating the disciples, we stayed in Tyre seven days. They told Paul through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem. ⁵ At the end of these days, we left to resume our journey. All of them, with their wives and children, escorted us to outside the city. Kneeling down on the beach, we prayed and said farewell. ⁶ Then we boarded the ship, and they returned to their homes. ⁷ After sailing from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, where we greeted the brothers and stayed with them for one day.

Acts 21:8-16, ⁸ The next day, we left and came to Caesarea. Entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the Seven, we stayed with him. ⁹ Now this man had four virgin daughters, who prophesied. ¹⁰ While we were visiting there for a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹ He came to us and taking Paul's belt, he tied his own feet and hands with it and said, "The Holy Spirit declares, 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and will deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" ¹² When we heard these words, both we and those living there begged Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. ¹³ Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." ¹⁴ When he would not be persuaded, we stopped our pleading, saying, "The will of the Lord be done."

¹⁵ After these days, we continued our trip up to Jerusalem. ¹⁶ We were accompanied by some of the disciples from Caesarea, who brought us to Mnason of Cyprus, a very early disciple, with whom we planned to stay.

Acts 21:17-26, ¹⁷ When we arrived in Jerusalem, the brothers received us gladly. ¹⁸ The following day, Paul went with us to see James, and all the elders were present. ¹⁹ After Paul had greeted them, he reported what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry from first to last. ²⁰ When those present heard it, they glorified God and said to Paul, "You see, brother, how many thousands have believed from among the Jews, and they are all zealous for the Law. ²¹ They have been told about you, that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to abandon Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to follow the customs. ²² Therefore, what is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. ²³ So do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow. ²⁴ Take these men, purify yourself with them, and pay for them so that they may shave their heads. Then everyone will know that there is no truth in the things they heard about you, but that you yourself adhere to keeping the Law. ²⁵ But concerning the Gentiles who have believed, we wrote a letter, having concluded that they should avoid meat sacrificed to idols, and blood, and what has been strangled, and sexual immorality."

²⁶ Then Paul took the men the next day, and after purifying himself along with them, he entered the temple to give notice of when the days of purification would be fulfilled and the offering given for each of them.

Acts 21:27-29, ²⁷ When the seven days were almost completed, Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul in the temple. They stirred up the people and seized him, ²⁸ crying out, "Men

of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against our people, the Law, and this place. Moreover, he brought Greeks into the temple's inner courts and has defiled this holy place.”²⁹ For they had seen Trophimus, the Ephesian, with Paul in the city, and they thought that Paul had brought him into the temple's inner courts.

Acts 21:30-40,³⁰ All the city was in an uproar, and a large throng of people came running. They dragged Paul out of the temple, and immediately the gates [to the inner courts] were shut.³¹ As they were trying to kill him, the news reached the commander of the Roman troops that all Jerusalem was in a tumult.³² Without delay, he took soldiers and centurions and ran down to the crowd. When the people saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.³³ Then the commander approached Paul and detained him. After ordering that he be bound with two chains, he asked who he was and what he had done.³⁴ Some of the crowd shouted one thing, and some another. When he could not be certain of the facts because of the disturbance, he commanded that Paul be brought into the barracks.³⁵ When Paul came to the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the crowd's violence,³⁶ for the throng of people were following and crying out, “Away with him!”

³⁷ When Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he asked the commander, “May I say something to you?” The commander replied, “Do you know Greek?³⁸ Then, is it incorrect that you are the Egyptian, who a while back stirred up a rebellion and led the 4000 men of the Assassins [a band of terrorists] out into the wilderness?”³⁹ But Paul said, “I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of an important city, and I implore you to allow me to speak to the people.”⁴⁰ When the commander had given him permission, Paul, standing on the stairs, beckoned with his hand to the people. When a great silence resulted, he spoke to them in Aramaic . . .

2. **Read Acts 21 in your own language. Then play this quick matching game.** Time yourself. Can you do it within three minutes?

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| _____ 1. resume | A. A murderer of an official or other important person |
| _____ 2. escort | B. A large crowd of people, a mass of people |
| _____ 3. evangelist | C. A person or group accompanying someone |
| _____ 4. weep | D. A troubling interruption; commotion |
| _____ 5. plead | E. A person whose calling is to share the Christian faith |
| _____ 6. zealous | F. To begin again after having paused |
| _____ 7. purify | G. A building for soldiers to live in |
| _____ 8. adhere | H. To beg, implore; to ask for something with emotion |
| _____ 9. offering | I. An object sacrificed or given to God; a gift to be taken or refused |
| _____ 10. throng | J. To cleanse from dirt, contaminants, or sins |
| _____ 11. tumult | K. To closely stay with something; to believe in and follow. |
| _____ 12. detain | L. To prevent someone from going forward or leaving |
| _____ 13. disturbance | M. To cry |
| _____ 14. barracks | N. Having great enthusiasm or commitment for a cause or goal |
| _____ 15. assassin | O. Disorderly, noisy behavior, especially by a crowd |

(Answers are at the end.)

3. **Try to use the new words to fill in the blanks without looking at #2 above.**

a. After spending seven days in Tyre, Paul and his companions _____ their journey.

- b. The Christians in Tyre _____ Paul and his companions to the beach.
 - c. Philip was known as an _____ because he spread the good news of Jesus.
 - d. The Christians in Caesarea _____ when they heard the prophecy of Paul's imprisonment.
 - e. They _____ with Paul not to go to Jerusalem, but they could not change his plan.
 - f. The Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were _____ in following the Law of Moses.
 - g. Paul had journeyed outside of Israel for several years, so he needed to observe the Jewish rites that would _____ him.
 - h. To show he _____ to the Law, Paul agreed to pay the expenses for four men's vows.
 - i. He went to the temple to give notice of when _____ would be given for the men.
 - j. When people spread wrong information about Paul, an angry _____ rushed to the temple.
 - k. The city of Jerusalem was filled with a noisy and angry _____.
 - l. The Roman commander interrupted the attack on Paul and then _____ him.
 - m. The commander was unable to learn the facts because of the _____.
 - n. The crowd was so violent, the soldiers had to carry Paul on the steps to the _____.
 - o. At first, the commander thought Paul was an Egyptian who had led a band of _____.
- (Answers are at the end.)*

4. **See if you can use all of the vocabulary words in this little tale.** One word is used twice.
- a. An _____ named Ed stalked the opponent of the nation's dictatorial president, but every time he drew close enough to stab the man, the guards _____ the opponent got in the way. Ed was _____ about keeping the president in power for another ten years so that any rebellion would be put down. He _____ to the belief that the people could only be controlled by military power.
 - b. Ed's mother had listened to an _____ talk about Jesus Christ and had accepted him as her Savior, thankful for his _____ of forgiveness. When she learned about her son's beliefs, she _____ with him to abandon his wrong ideas. She said he needed to _____ his mind of his evil thoughts. When Ed argued with her and cursed her, she _____. Ed stomped out of their home and began sleeping in the _____ for the president's soldiers.
 - c. One day Ed saw the opponent he was stalking in the middle of a noisy t _____. He asked a bystander what was causing such an unusual d _____ in the street. To his horror, he learned his mother had been _____ by the soldiers for telling her neighbors about Jesus. His heart was in a _____ because he truly loved his mother. Then he listened to the opponent speak about the president's wrongdoing in arresting an innocent widow and many other citizens for talking about Jesus.
 - d. Ed changed political sides right then. He never _____ stalking anyone and urged his friends to vote against the president. When the president's military deserted him and he lost the election, the charges against Ed's mother were dropped. Ed apologized to her and was grateful he had not become a successful _____.

(Answers are at the end.)

5. **Here's a rhyming challenge: Try to remember a vocabulary word that rhymes with one or two of the words hiding in the sentence.** The meanings will not be related, but the final sounds will be the same or almost the same. The harder clues are underlined>.

- a. We learned a new praise song in church yesterday. _____
- b. With enough practice, I can retain the new vocabulary. _____

- c. Tom's neighbor was jealous of his new car. _____
- d. I love to read historical novels. _____
- e. We bought a new couch for the living room. _____
- f. The shepherd hunted all day for his lost sheep. _____
- g. The hot sunshine was softening the surface of the road. _____
- h. Her boyfriend felt bad after she complained about his insult. _____
- i. The boy's father said there was nothing to fear in the woods. _____
- j. We hung our clothes on the closet's spare racks. _____

(Answers are at the end.)

Answers for the Matching Game: 1-F, 2-C, 3-E, 4-M, 5-H, 6-N, 7-J, 8-K, 9-I, 10-B, 11-O, 12-L, 13-D, 14-G, 15-A (If you matched the words in three minutes, these words won't detain you in your progress!)

Answers for the first fill-in-the-blank exercise: a.) resumed b.) escorted c.) evangelist d.) wept e.) pled f.) zealous g.) purify h.) adhered i.) offerings j.) throng k.) tumult l.) detained m.) disturbance or tumult n.) barracks o.) assassins

Answers for the little tale: a.) assassin, escorting, zealous, adhered. b.) evangelist, offering, pled, purify, wept, barracks. c.) throng, disturbance, detained, tumult. d.) resumed, assassin.

Answers for the Rhyming Challenge: a.) throng b.) detain c.) zealous d.) plead e.) resume f.) weep g.) offering h.) tumult i.) adhere j.) barracks.

Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version, with the English updated to modern usage. The NET Bible® was consulted from time to time to confirm or adopt apt words or phrases.

Investigating Acts 21 A Matter of Life and Death

In **Acts 21:1-3**, Luke gives his eyewitness account of the group's progress toward Jerusalem.

I. The Stopovers in Tyre and Ptolemais

Acts 21:4-6, ⁴ After locating the disciples [in Tyre], we stayed there seven days. They told Paul through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem. ⁵ At the end of these days, we left to resume our journey. All of them, with their wives and children, escorted us to outside the city. Kneeling down on the beach, we prayed and said farewell. ⁶ Then we boarded the ship, and they returned to their homes. ⁷ After sailing from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, where we greeted the brothers and stayed with them for one day.

II. A Further Warning in Caesarea

Acts 21:8-16, ⁸ The next day, we left and came to Caesarea. Entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the Seven, we stayed with him. ⁹ Now this man had four virgin daughters, who prophesied.

¹⁰ While we were visiting there for a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹ He came to us and taking Paul's belt, he tied his own feet and hands with it and said, "The Holy Spirit declares, 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and will deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'" ¹² When we heard these words, both we and those living there begged Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. ¹³ Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." ¹⁴ When he would not be persuaded, we stopped our pleading, saying, "The will of the Lord be done." ¹⁵ After these days, we continued our trip up to Jerusalem. ¹⁶ We were accompanied by some of the disciples from Caesarea, who brought us to Mnason of Cyprus, a very early disciple, with whom we planned to stay.

A. We see another glimpse of Paul as a real individual who felt heartbreak. What was causing his heartbreak? Can you imagine the scene involving these people who loved each other?

B. We read about Philip in Acts 6 and Acts 8.

1. Philip and Stephen were among the "Seven," chosen to help serve the earliest Christian community. What happened to Stephen, Philip's close associate? Who oversaw Stephen's death? What shows that Philip had no bad feelings toward Paul? Why is this possible? Notice the tremendous contrast between Paul's former desire to wipe out the name of Jesus and his willingness now to die for Jesus.
2. When Philip was having a successful evangelistic ministry in Samaria, God sent him to a desert road. Then he ended up in Caesarea, where we see him over twenty years later.

C. Agabus was previously mentioned in Acts 11:28 when he correctly prophesied that a severe famine would affect the whole Roman world.

What shows that the gift of telling God's special messages was not limited to men?

D. How do you think these visits helped Luke in writing his records of Jesus and the early church?

III. Paul's Relationship to the Christians in Jerusalem (57 A.D.)

Acts 21:17-26, ¹⁷ When we arrived in Jerusalem, the brothers received us gladly. ¹⁸ The following day, Paul went with us to see James [Jesus' half-brother, who was a leader of the Jerusalem church], and all the elders were present. ¹⁹ After Paul had greeted them, he reported what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry from first to last. ²⁰ When those present heard it, they glorified God. Then they said to Paul, "You see, brother, how many thousands have believed from among the Jews, and they are all zealous for the Law. ²¹ They have been told about you, that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to abandon Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to follow the customs. ²² Therefore, what is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. ²³ So do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow. ²⁴ Take these men, purify yourself with them, and pay for them so that they may shave their heads. Then everyone will know that there is no truth in the things they heard about you, but that you yourself adhere to keeping the Law. ²⁵ But concerning the Gentiles who have believed, we wrote a letter, having concluded that they should avoid meat sacrificed to idols, and blood, and what has been strangled, and sexual immorality."

²⁶ Then Paul took the men the next day, and after purifying himself along with them, he entered the temple to give notice of when the days of purification would be fulfilled and the offering given for each of them.

A. Paul had been preaching for about 22 years. He had already written Galatians (49 A.D.), I and II Thessalonians (51-52 A.D.), I and II Corinthians (55-56 A.D.) and Romans (57 A.D.). His teaching about Jesus was very clear. What does Acts 21:17–20 tell us about the truth of Paul's message? (Hint: How did the very first Christian leaders feel about it?)

B. The church leaders, who were Christian Jews, had only one problem about Paul. What was it?

Paul was obeying the Old Testament law himself. We previously read Paul's words in **I Corinthians 9:20-22:** ²⁰ **To the Jews I became as a Jew so that I might win Jews. To those who are under the [Mosaic] law, I became as though I were under the law—not being myself under the law—in order to win those under the law.**

IV. Paul's Arrest

A. Acts 21:27-29, ²⁷ When the seven days were almost completed, Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul in the temple. They stirred up the people and seized him, ²⁸ crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against our people, the Law, and this place. Moreover, he brought Greeks [i.e., Gentiles] into the temple's inner courts and has defiled this holy place." ²⁹ For they had seen Trophimus, the Ephesian, with Paul in the city, and they thought that Paul had brought him into the temple's inner courts.

The Jews from the province of Asia not only recognized Paul but also Trophimus from Ephesus. Most likely these Jews are some of the ones who caused Paul and the Christians so much trouble in Ephesus. What in their accusation shows how widespread the Christian message was?

B. Acts 21:30-40, ³⁰ All the city was in an uproar, and a large throng of people came running. They dragged Paul out of the temple, and immediately the gates [to the inner courts] were shut. ³¹ As they were trying to kill him, the news reached the commander of

the Roman troops that all Jerusalem was in a tumult.³² Without delay, he took soldiers and centurions and ran down to the crowd. When the people saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.³³ Then the commander approached Paul and detained him. After ordering that he be bound with two chains, he asked who he was and what he had done.³⁴ Some of the crowd shouted one thing, and some another. When he could not be certain of the facts because of the disturbance, he commanded that Paul be brought into the [Roman] barracks.³⁵ When Paul came to the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the crowd's violence,³⁶ for the throng of people were following and crying out, "Away with him!"

³⁷ When Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he asked the commander, "May I say something to you?" The commander replied, "Do you know Greek?"³⁸ Then, is it incorrect that you are the Egyptian, who a while back stirred up a rebellion and led the 4000 men of the Assassins [a band of terrorists] out into the wilderness?"³⁹ But Paul said, "I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of an important city, and I implore you to allow me to speak to the people."⁴⁰ When the commander had given him permission, Paul, standing on the stairs, beckoned with his hand to the people. When a great silence resulted, he spoke to them in Aramaic . . .

1. Aramaic was the common language of the Jewish people at that time. It was closely related to the Hebrew language. (Some translations say that Paul spoke in Hebrew.)
2. Let's think about why the Jews from a distant place could cause so much trouble for Paul:
 - a. Thousands of Jews in Jerusalem were either for Jesus or against him. The opponents were influenced by their leaders' condemnation of Jesus and by their belief that only by obeying the Old Testament Law could one please God and be saved.
 - b. The people from Asia (Turkey) spread _____ information about what Paul was doing in the Jewish temple. The temple was sacred to the Jews, and they were zealous to protect it.
3. The soldiers came just in time to save Paul's life. Paul's mission on earth was not yet finished, so God prevented his death.
4. Paul had been plotted against and forced out of cities, beaten, stoned, and imprisoned. He had made three long, dangerous journeys. But he didn't give up because he **knew** he was telling people the truth. He knew that he was giving them the best news in the world: that they could be forgiven, have a relationship with God, and gain eternal life!

V. Making Memories

What is a key truth from Acts 21 that you want to remember?

Underline or highlight one important verse in Acts 21 that will help you remember what took place in this chapter.

Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version, with the English updated to modern usage. The NET Bible® was consulted from time to time to confirm or adopt apt words or phrases.

1. **Hidden Treasure: Mark the fourteen words listed in #2.** Notice these previous words: *strict, zealous, persecute, deliver, devout, witness, trance, consent, garment, throng, uncondemned (not condemned).*

Acts 22:1-5, ¹ “Brothers and fathers, hear the defense I now make.” ² When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became even quieter. He said, ³ “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, instructed under Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our forefathers, being zealous for God, even as all of you are today. ⁴ I persecuted this Way even to death, tying up both men and women and delivering them to prison. ⁵ The high priest and all the elders can bear witness to this. I also received letters from them to the brothers in Damascus. I journeyed to that city to bring these people from there to Jerusalem, bound as prisoners to be punished.”

Acts 22:6-16, ⁶ “As I was en route and close to Damascus at about noon, a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me. ⁷ I fell to the ground and heard a voice say, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’

⁸ I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’

He said, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.’ ⁹ The men who were with me did see the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who spoke to me.

¹⁰ I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’

The Lord told me, ‘Get up and enter Damascus. There you will be told about everything you have been designated to do.’ ¹¹ When I could not see because of the brilliance of that light, the men who were with me led me by the hand into Damascus.

¹² A person named Ananias, a devout man according to the law and well-spoken of by all the Jews living there, ¹³ came to meet me. Standing next to me, he said, ‘Brother Saul, regain your sight.’ At that exact time, I received my sight and looked at him.

¹⁴ Then he said, ‘The God of our forefathers has chosen you to know his will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear his voice. ¹⁵ For you will be his witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ Now why are you waiting? Get up; be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.’”

Acts 22:17-22, ¹⁷ “When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance ¹⁸ and saw Jesus speaking to me: ‘Hurry and get out of Jerusalem quickly because they will not receive your testimony about me.’

¹⁹ I replied, ‘Lord, they themselves know that I imprisoned and beat the ones in every synagogue who believed in you. ²⁰ They know too that when the blood of your witness Stephen was shed, I was standing by, consenting and keeping the garments of those who killed him.’

²¹ Then he said to me, ‘Go, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.’”

²² The throng gave him their attention until this word. Then they shouted, “Away with such a fellow from the earth! It is not fit that he live!”

Acts 22:23-30, ²³ As the mob cried out and threw off their garments while tossing dust into the air, ²⁴ the commander ordered that Paul be brought into the barracks and interrogated by scourging so that he might learn why the people shouted so intensely against him. ²⁵ When they stretched Paul out for the whip, Paul said to the centurion who stood by,

“Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman citizen and uncondemned?” ²⁶ When the centurion heard this, he went to the commander, saying, **“What are you about to do? This man is a Roman citizen.”**

²⁷ The commander came to Paul and said, **“Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?”** He answered, **“Yes.”**

²⁸ The commander said, **“I acquired this citizenship with a great sum [of money].”** Paul said, **“But I was born a Roman citizen.”**

²⁹ The men who were about to interrogate him immediately withdrew from him. The commander was also afraid when he learned that he was a Roman citizen, whom he had ordered tied up. ³⁰ On the following day, desiring to know with certainty why Paul was accused by the Jews, the commander released him and ordered the chief priests and all the council to come together. Then he brought Paul down and had him stand before them.

2. **Read Acts 22 in your own language. Then play this quick matching game.** Time yourself. Can you do it in two minutes?

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| _____ 1. defense | A. On the way; on the journey |
| _____ 2. bear witness | B. To whip severely |
| _____ 3. en route | C. To kill |
| _____ 4. designate | D. An amount of money; a totaled amount |
| _____ 5. brilliance | E. To choose one for a purpose; to appoint; to assign |
| _____ 6. shed blood | F. Extreme brightness |
| _____ 7. fit | G. Allowed by the law or a rule; legal |
| _____ 8. mob | H. A large crowd, especially one out-of-control or violent |
| _____ 9. interrogate | I. To act in a high or extreme degree |
| _____ 10. scourge | J. To get, to obtain, to gain |
| _____ 11. intensely | K. Statements giving the rightful reason for an action |
| _____ 12. lawful | L. To tell what a person knows to be true; testify |
| _____ 13. acquire | M. To question thoroughly, often to decide guilt or innocence |
| _____ 14. sum | N. Suitable, right, acceptable |

3. **Try to use the new words to fill in the blanks without looking at #2 above.**

- Paul used the language of his listeners while giving his _____ of his innocence.
- The Jewish leaders could be asked to _____ to Paul’s persecution of Christians.
- He told how he encountered Jesus when he was _____ to Damascus.
- Jesus said Paul would learn in Damascus everything he had been _____ to do.
- The _____ of the light that had surrounded Paul blinded him.
- Paul told how he had helped _____ the _____ of Stephen.
- The word *Gentiles* caused the crowd to shout that it was not _____ for Paul to live.
- The enraged _____ stripped off some of their own clothing and tossed dust into the air.
- The commander thought Paul must be a violent criminal since the crowd shouted _____.
- He ordered his men to _____ Paul with a whip.
- To discover Paul’s crime, he planned to have him _____ while he was scourged.
- Paul asked if it was _____ to scourge a Roman citizen.
- The commander had _____ his citizenship by paying for it.
- He had paid a large _____ to get it, but Paul had been born a citizen.

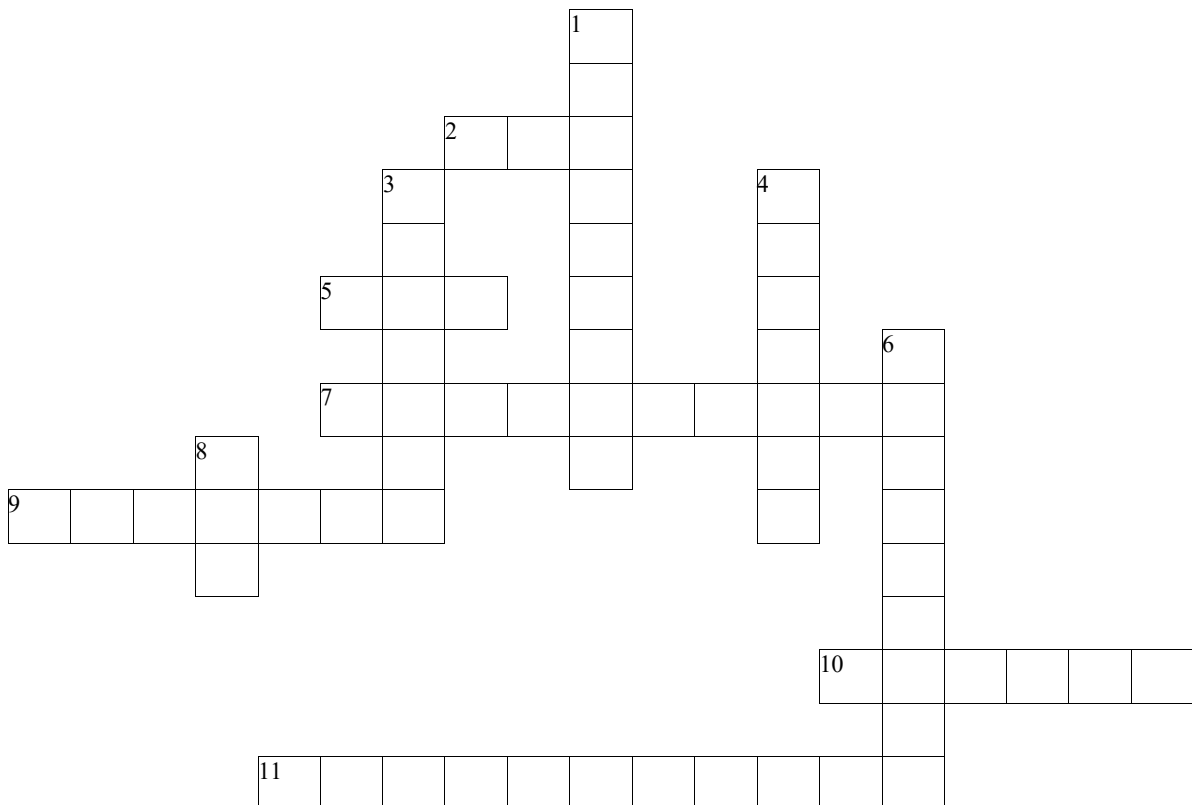
(Answers are at the end.)

4. **Analogy Game:** Think about how the first pair of words are related, and then fill in the blank with the best vocabulary word to relate the last pair in the same way.

- a. Heroism is to award as wrongdoing is to _____ (in the first century).
- b. Detective is to investigate as prosecutor (against the accused) is to _____.
- c. Salesman is to sales pitch as accused person is to _____.
- d. Rich is to wealthy as legal is to _____.
- e. Pen is to write as sword is to _____.
- f. Announcer is to announce as eyewitness is to _____.
- g. A king is to rule as an official is to _____.
- h. Hurricane is to destruction as _____ is to violence.
- i. Mileage is to distance as _____ is to money.
- j. Release is to let loose as obtain is to _____.

(Answers are at the end.)

5. **Use some of the new words to complete the crossword puzzle. Try not to look back at #2.**



Across

- 2. Suitable; right
- 5. An unruly crowd
- 7. Extreme brightness
- 9. To get; to obtain
- 10. Allowed by the law
- 11. To question thoroughly

Down

- 1. To act in a high or extreme degree
- 3. To whip severely
- 4. Statements of the rightful reason for an action
- 6. Choose for a specific purpose
- 8. An amount that has been totaled

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5. **Spelling Challenge:** Without looking at the other exercises, can you fill in the missing letters?

- a. __ qu __ e = To get; to obtain
- b. ____ = An amount of money; a totaled amount
- c. i _ t _ _ sl _ = To act in a high or extreme degree
- d. d _ f _ _ _ _ = Statement of the rightful reason for an action
- e. sh _ _ b _ oo _ = To kill
- f. _ _ _ _ rge = To whip severely, usually with lashes
- g. d _ s _ _ n _ e = To choose for a task or purpose
- h. _ _ t = Suitable, right, acceptable
- i. _ ea _ _ it _ _ ss = To tell what a person knows to be true; testify
- j. e _ r _ _ _ e = On the way
- k. _ _ _ _ = A large crowd, especially one out-of-control or violent
- l. l _ _ f _ _ = Allowed by the law or permitted by a rule
- m. in _ _ _ ro _ _ _ _ = To question thoroughly
- n. _ _ _ _ li _ _ ce = Extreme brightness

Answers for the Matching Game: 1-K, 2-L, 3-A, 4-E, 5-F, 6-C, 7-N, 8-H, 9-M, 10-B, 11-I, 12-G, 13-J, 14-D (If you matched the words in three minutes, you have acquired more fluency.) ☺

Answers for the fill-in-the-blank exercise: a.) defense b.) bear witness c.) en route d.) designated e.) brilliance f.) shed blood g.) fit h.) mob i.) intensely j.) scourge k.) interrogated l.) lawful m.) acquired n.) sum

Answers for the Analogy Game: a.) scourge b.) interrogate c.) defense d.) lawful e.) shed blood f.) bear witness g.) designate h.) mob i.) sum j.) acquire

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Investigating Acts 22 Paul's Testimony

Here's the defense Paul made when he was allowed to speak to the Jews after being detained.

I. Paul's Testimony

A. His Connection to the Crowd

Acts 22:1-5, ¹“Brothers and fathers, hear the defense I now make.” ²When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became even quieter. He said, ³“I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, instructed under Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our forefathers, being zealous for God, even as all of you are today. ⁴I persecuted this Way even to death, tying up both men and women and delivering them to prison. ⁵The high priest and all the elders can bear witness to this. I also received letters from them to the brothers [fellow Jews] in Damascus. I journeyed to that city to bring these people from there to Jerusalem, bound as prisoners to be punished.”

Here are some ways that Paul related to his audience:

1. When he addressed the crowd as brothers and fathers, what did that indicate about Paul?
2. He used their language of Aramaic, not Greek or Latin.
3. He grew up in _____, the crowd's hometown and the center for their worship.
4. His teacher was _____, one of the most highly respected Jewish teachers. This was like saying that he had studied at the best university—academically and culturally.
5. Mentioning the chief priest and elders and their letters helped show that Paul was speaking the truth about his former life. What else did it show?

B. Paul's Testimony about Becoming a Christian

Acts 22:6-16, ⁶“As I was en route and close to Damascus at about noon, a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me. ⁷I fell to the ground and heard a voice say, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’

⁸I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’

He said, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.’ ⁹The men who were with me did see the light, but they did not understand¹ the voice of him who spoke to me.

¹⁰I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’

The Lord told me, ‘Get up and enter Damascus. There you will be told about everything you have been designated to do.’ ¹¹When I could not see because of the brilliance of that light, the men who were with me led me by the hand into Damascus.

¹²A person named Ananias, a devout man according to the law and well-spoken of by all the Jews living there, ¹³came to meet me. Standing next to me, he said, ‘Brother Saul, regain your sight.’ At that exact time, I received my sight and looked at him.

¹⁴Then he said, ‘The God of our forefathers has chosen you to know his will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear his voice. ¹⁵For you will be his witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶Now why are you waiting? Get up; be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.’

1. Notice how Paul emphasized Ananias' Jewish devotion, a detail not included in Acts 9.

¹ Geisler, Norman L. *A Popular Survey of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007, pp.134-135. The author explains this translation of the Greek word *akouō*, which includes meanings of *hear* and *understand*.

2. “The Righteous One” refers to **Isaiah 53:11**, a reminder for Paul and now for the Jews of the prophecy that the Messiah would suffer and die as a sacrifice for mankind’s sin.
3. Let’s consider whether Paul could have been mistaken about what happened on the road.
 - a. In addition to Paul’s persecution of Christians, what are some clues from this account that Paul had not been expecting to hear from Jesus?
 - b. Do the companions Paul had at the time of the encounter add additional evidence?
 - c. Paul’s blindness was _____ at the exact time that Ananias spoke. Acts 9 tells us that something like scales came off his eyes. What do these facts tell us about the nature of Paul’s experience?
 - d. Acts 9 also tells us that Ananias had a vision that caused him to risk meeting Paul.

II. Support from Paul’s Own Writings

A. As we read when we studied Paul’s first missionary journey into Galatia, Paul himself wrote about the effects of this encounter. **Galatians 1:13-16 and 20** (49 A.D.) ¹³ **You have heard of my former manner of life in the Jews’ religion, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and caused havoc.** ¹⁴ **I advanced in the Jews’ religion beyond many countrymen of my age, being more highly zealous for the traditions of my ancestors.** ¹⁵ **But when it was the good pleasure of God . . .** ¹⁶ **to reveal his Son to me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I immediately . . . went away into Arabia and then returned to Damascus.** ²⁰ **I declare before God that I am not lying about what I am writing to you.**

Either Paul really saw and heard Jesus or he was lying. It was not a dream, a myth, or a mistake. Notice that according to Acts 22, he was still telling the same experience years later before an angry mob and in a place where his early actions could be investigated.

B. Paul also wrote in **I Corinthians 15:14-15**, ¹⁴ **If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, and your faith also is useless.** ¹⁵ **Yes, and we are found to be false witnesses about God because we have testified that God raised Christ up . . .**

1. What was the reason Saul/Paul zealously persecuted Christians before he became one himself? Can you imagine Paul’s shudder as he wrote “false witnesses”? That is the WORST thing Paul could think of becoming—what he had considered worthy of death!
2. In **I Corinthians 15:32**, Paul gave a reason to pity Christians **if** the basis for faith is false: ³² **If from a human viewpoint, I fought with beasts at Ephesus [suffered great danger], how would that be of value for me? If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.**
 - a. Sometimes Christians tell unbelievers that the Christian life would be worthwhile even if it turned out that God didn’t exist. Is there any sense in which this is a good argument? In what ways is it not valid?
 - b. However, Paul proclaimed with full confidence: **I Corinthians 15:20, But Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.**

Does this sound like Paul would tell a lie about having met Jesus on the road to Damascus? Remember the three possibilities: Paul was mistaken about the encounter, or lying, or telling what truly happened. Those are the only options. What is your conclusion?

III. Paul’s Explanation of His Ministry and the Crowd’s Response

Acts 22:17-22, ¹⁷ When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance ¹⁸ and saw Jesus speaking to me: ‘Hurry and get out of Jerusalem quickly because they will not receive your testimony about me.’

¹⁹ I replied, ‘Lord, they themselves know that I imprisoned and beat the ones in every synagogue who believed in you. ²⁰ They know too that when the blood of your witness Stephen was shed, I was standing by, consenting and keeping the garments of those who killed him.’

²¹ Then he said to me, ‘Go, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.’”

²² The throng gave him their attention until this word. Then they shouted, “Away with such a fellow from the earth! It is not fit that he live!”

What word caused the crowd to stop listening to Paul?

The Jews were God’s chosen people. However, many of them did not understand the most important reason for having been chosen. When God chose Abraham, he made a promise to Abraham that included both the Jews and the Gentiles: **Genesis 12:3**, “. . . and through you, all the families of the earth will be blessed.” Jesus, who descended from Abraham, fulfilled this promise for he is the Savior for the whole world.

IV. Paul’s Protection as a Roman Citizen

Acts 22:23-30, ²³ As the mob cried out and threw off their garments while tossing dust into the air, ²⁴ the commander ordered that Paul be brought into the barracks and interrogated by scourging so that he might learn why the people shouted so intensely against him. ²⁵ When they stretched Paul out for the whip, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, “Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman citizen and uncondemned?” ²⁶ When the centurion heard this, he went to the commander, saying, “What are you about to do? This man is a Roman citizen.”

²⁷ The commander came to Paul and said, “Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?”

He answered, “Yes.”

²⁸ The commander said, “I acquired this citizenship with a great sum [of money].”

Paul said, “But I was born a Roman citizen.”

²⁹ The men who were about to interrogate him immediately withdrew from him. The commander was also afraid when he learned that he was a Roman citizen, whom he had ordered tied up. ³⁰ On the following day, desiring to know with certainty why Paul was accused by the Jews, the commander released him and ordered the chief priests and all the council to come together. Then he brought Paul down and had him stand before them.

What in Paul’s testimony do you think gives the strongest evidence for the Christian faith?

V. Making Memories

What is a key truth from Acts 22 that you want to remember?

Mark one important verse that will help you remember what took place in this chapter.

Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version, with the English updated to modern usage. The NET Bible® was consulted from time to time to confirm or adopt apt words or phrases.

Vocabulary Activities in Acts 23
Paul Before Israel's Supreme Court

1. **Hidden Treasure: Mark the fourteen vocabulary words listed in #2.** Note also these previous words: *steadfastly, strike, revile, perceive, Sadducee, Pharisee, scribe, dispute, barracks, bear witness, oath, inquire, charge, and summon.*

Acts 23:1-11, Paul, looking steadfastly at the council, said, "Brothers, I have lived with a good conscience before God to this day."² Hearing this, the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood next to Paul to strike him on the mouth.³ Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! Do you sit to judge me according to the law, yet command that I be struck in violation of the law?"

⁴ Those standing close by said, "Do you revile God's high priest?"

⁵ Paul answered, "I did not know, brothers, that he was high priest, for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'" ⁶ But when Paul perceived that one part of them were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. I am being examined concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead!" ⁷ After he said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. ⁸ For the Sadducees say there is no resurrection, nor any angel, nor spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge all of these. ⁹ A great clamor resulted. Some of the scribes of the Pharisees' faction stood up and argued: "We find nothing wrong with this man. What if a spirit has spoken to him or an angel?" ¹⁰ When a great dispute erupted, the commander, fearing that Paul would be torn to pieces by them, ordered the soldiers to go down and take him from among them by force and bring him into the barracks.

¹¹ During the following night, the Lord stood beside him and said, "Be of good courage. For as you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must bear witness also in Rome."

Acts 23:12-35, ¹² When it was day, the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. ¹³ More than forty joined this conspiracy. ¹⁴ They went to the chief priests and the elders, and said, "We have bound ourselves under a solemn oath to taste nothing until we have killed Paul. ¹⁵ Now, therefore, you and the council should ask the commander to bring Paul down to you, as though you would judge his case more exactly. We will be ready to kill him before he arrives."

¹⁶ But the son of Paul's sister heard of their planned ambush. He entered into the barracks and told Paul. ¹⁷ Then Paul called one of the centurions to him, and said, "Take this young man to the commander, for he has something to tell him." ¹⁸ So he took him to the commander and said, "The prisoner Paul asked me to bring this young man to you, who has something to say to you." ¹⁹ The commander took him by the hand, and going aside, asked him privately, "What is it that you have to tell me?"

²⁰ He answered, "The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though to inquire somewhat more exactly concerning him. ²¹ Do not yield to them, for more than forty men lie in wait for him. They have bound themselves under an oath to neither eat nor drink until they have killed him, and now they are ready, waiting for your agreeable response."

²² So the commander sent the young man away, charging him, "Tell no man that you have notified me of these things."

²³ The commander summoned two of the centurions and said, “Prepare 200 soldiers to go to Caesarea along with 70 horsemen and 200 spearmen by nine o’clock tonight,²⁴ and provide horses for Paul to ride so that he may be taken safely to Felix, the governor.”²⁵ The commander wrote a letter as follows:

²⁶ Claudius Lysias to the most excellent Governor Felix, greetings. ²⁷ This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them when I came upon them with the soldiers and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman citizen. ²⁸ Desiring to know the cause of their accusation against him, I took him down to their council. ²⁹ I found he was accused about questions of their law, and that there was no charge against him worthy of death or imprisonment. ³⁰ Then when I was informed of a plot against the man, I immediately sent him to you, also charging his accusers to prosecute him before you.

³¹ So the soldiers, as commanded, took Paul by night to Antipatris. ³² The next day, the soldiers returned to the barracks, leaving the horsemen to go on with Paul. ³³ When they reached Caesarea, they delivered the letter to the governor and also presented Paul before him. ³⁴ When Felix had read the letter, he asked what province Paul was from. When he understood that he was from Cilicia,³⁵ he said, “I will hear your case fully when your accusers also have arrived.” He commanded for Paul to be kept under guard in Herod’s palace.

2. **Read Acts 23 in your own language. Then play this quick matching game.** Time yourself.

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| _____ 1. conscience | A. Disagreement, dispute, argument, conflict |
| _____ 2. whitewashed | B. A legal proceeding carried out in a court of law; a trial |
| _____ 3. violation | C. Having covered up something that has a bad or lacking quality |
| _____ 4. dissension | D. To hide and wait with a plan to attack someone |
| _____ 5. clamor | E. To admit or recognize something as being true |
| _____ 6. acknowledge | F. An inner guide about what is good or bad |
| _____ 7. faction | G. Loud noise caused by shouting; uproar; racket |
| _____ 8. erupt | H. To join together, unite |
| _____ 9. band together | I. To carry out legal proceedings against someone |
| _____ 10. conspiracy | J. A surprise attack by an enemy that has been hiding and waiting |
| _____ 11. case | K. To become violently active, flare up |
| _____ 12. ambush | L. A plot, a scheme, a secret plan to do harm. |
| _____ 13. lie in wait | M. The act of not keeping a rule or agreement |
| _____ 14. prosecute | N. A group formed within a larger group; a clique, section, part |

(Answers are at the end.)

3. **Try to use the new words to fill in the blanks without looking at #2 above.**

- Paul could say he had a good _____ because he had honestly tried to serve God.
- Ananias was like a _____ wall because he hid his sins under a show of righteousness.
- Paul rebuked Ananias for giving an order in _____ of the law.
- _____ broke out between the Pharisees and Sadducees over belief in resurrections.
- The Pharisaeic _____ believed in the resurrection of the dead, but the Sadducees did not.
- The Pharisees also _____ the existence of angels and spirits.
- The arguments in the Council resulted in a loud _____ of voices.
- When some men said Paul was innocent, the dispute that _____ endangered Paul’s life.

- i. Forty men _____ and took an oath to kill Paul.
- j. They asked _____ members of the Council to join their _____.
- k. The conspirators planned to _____ for Paul so they could attack him.
- l. Paul's nephew reported the danger of the _____.
- m. Governor Felix planned to hear the _____ against Paul in Caesarea.
- n. The hearing would take place when Paul's accusers arrived to _____ him.

(Answers are at the end.)

4. Use each new word one time to complete this little tale. One word will be used twice.

- a. Tom's _____ told him not to join a gang of thieves. However, the gang's leader promised him that he would make a lot of money. If Tom and the gang members _____, they could easily rob unsuspecting victims. For example, they might _____ in a dark alley near a shopping center. Tom decided to join the _____ of the gang who operated near his neighborhood. Their pledge of nonviolence caused _____ among the gang members, but Tom liked it.
- b. Tom's heart beat faster as he lay in wait to _____ a passerby for the first time. Right away, three girls came down the nearby sidewalk, carrying full shopping bags. Tom snatched one of the bags, but the girls' loud _____ scared him. He dropped the bag and ran. He wished he'd never joined the thieves' _____.
- c. When Tom's parents found out about his attempt to rob someone, their fury _____. Tom didn't try to _____ his actions. He _____ his guilt to the investigator. Since Tom hadn't kept any of the goods, he was allowed to do volunteer work. The other boys who had kept the stolen goods were _____. When their _____ came before the judge, he sentenced them to six months in jail.
- d. Tom listened to his conscience after that. He didn't want to be in _____ of the law ever again. *(Answers are at the end.)*

5. A Short Analogy Game: Think about how the first pair of words are related, and then fill in the blank with the best vocabulary word to relate the last pair in the same way.

- a. Bird is to fly as volcano is to _____.
- b. Mind is to think as _____ is to guide.
- c. Agreement is to unity as _____ is to division.
- d. Moderate Democrats is to the Democratic Party as a _____ is to a larger group.
- e. Varnished is to furniture as _____ is to a wall.
- f. Judge is to sentence as lawyer is to _____. *(Answers are at the end.)*

Answers for the Matching Game: 1-F, 2-C, 3-M, 4-A, 5-G, 6-E, 7-N, 8-K, 9-H, 10-L, 11-B, 12-J, 13-D, 14-I (If you matched the words in three minutes, people should acknowledge your fluency.)

Answers for the fill-in-the-blank exercise: a.) conscience b.) whitewashed c.) violation. d.) Dissension e.) faction f.) acknowledged g.) clamor h.) erupted i.) banded together j.) conspiracy k.) lie in wait l.) ambush m.) case n.) prosecute

Answers for the tale: a.) conscience, banded together, lie in wait, faction, dissension. b.) ambush, clamor, conspiracy. c.) erupted, whitewash, acknowledged, prosecuted, case. d.) violation.

Answers for the Analogy Game: a.) erupt b.) conscience c.) dissension d.) faction e.) whitewashed f.) prosecute

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Investigating Acts 23 Before the Supreme Court

I. Paul's Appearance Before the Sanhedrin (Israel's Supreme Court)

Acts 22:30, ³⁰ On the following day, desiring to know with certainty why Paul was accused by the Jews, the commander released him and ordered the chief priests and all the council to come together. Then he brought Paul down and had him stand before them.

Acts 23:1-10, ¹ Paul, looking steadfastly at the council, said, "Brothers, I have lived with a good conscience before God to this day." ² Hearing this, the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood next to Paul to strike him on the mouth. ³ Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! Do you sit to judge me according to the law, yet command that I be struck in violation of the law?"

⁴ Those standing close by said, "Do you revile God's high priest?"

⁵ Paul answered, "I did not know, brothers, that he was high priest, for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'" ⁶ But when Paul perceived that one part of them were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. I am being examined concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead!" ⁷ After he said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. ⁸ For the Sadducees say there is no resurrection, nor any angel, nor spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge all of these. ⁹ A great clamor resulted. Some of the scribes of the Pharisees' faction stood up and argued: "We find nothing wrong with this man. What if a spirit has spoken to him or an angel?" ¹⁰ When a great dispute erupted, the commander, fearing that Paul would be torn to pieces by them, ordered the soldiers to go down and take him from among them by force and bring him into the barracks.

A. The conflict with the high priest

1. Imagine that you are on trial for a crime you did not commit. You are standing before the judge. At the very beginning of the trial, you say, "I'm innocent." Then the judge orders the guard to strike you. Would there be any chance that judge would be fair?
2. Paul was obviously angry at being struck. Anger is not always wrong. Paul wrote in **Ephesians 4:26-27**, ²⁶ **When angry, do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while still provoked,** ²⁷ **and do not give an entry to the devil.**
3. When Paul was told the high priest had given the order, he quoted the Old Testament Law. How did this indirectly correct Ananias? What did it tell the council about Paul?
4. Paul may not have recognized Ananias. After becoming a Christian, Paul had visited Jerusalem only a few times and would not have gotten close to Ananias. Also, the order to strike Paul would not have been made by anyone fit for the office of high priest. Finally, Paul may have responded before he had time to realize the order's source.

B. The dispute between the council's members

1. What does verse 6 tell us about Paul's belief and core message? Do you think all the council members connected the "hope and resurrection" to belief in Jesus?
2. Notice that Paul still called himself a Jew and a Pharisee. From the first century until the present time, Jews who have become Christians often call themselves "Messianic Jews." Many of them choose to follow the Jewish traditions.

3. Paul caused the dissension in the council on purpose. Why was this wise?
How did this dispute help Paul's case in the commander's eyes? (See Acts 23:29.)

II. Jesus' Appearance

Acts 23:11, ¹¹ During the following night, the Lord stood beside Paul and said, "Be of good courage. For as you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must bear witness also in Rome."

A. Notice the command to "take courage." What does this tell us about Paul's feelings after facing the council? Why might this have been more upsetting than even facing the mob? How might his previous associations before becoming a Christian have affected him?

B. Of course, Jesus' appearance itself gave Paul much hope. Let's look at why the words Jesus spoke would also have comforted and encouraged Paul:

1. "As you have testified about me" implies the Lord's _____ of what Paul had said. Satan could have tempted Paul to feel like a failure since so many people hated him.
2. "As you have testified about me" also shows the Lord knew exactly what had happened and had been right there with Paul all the time.
3. What does "you must bear witness in Rome" promise about Paul's future?

C. Why do you think the Lord allowed this trouble in Jerusalem to happen to Paul?

Does God allow things to happen in our lives for the same reason?

Can you think of a time that God encouraged you by Scripture, answered prayer, or some other way when you were afraid or discouraged? Did this enable you to share your faith?

III. Another Plot Against Paul

Acts 23:12-35, ¹² When it was day, the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. ¹³ More than forty joined this conspiracy. ¹⁴ They went to the chief priests and the elders, and said, "We have bound ourselves under a solemn oath to taste nothing until we have killed Paul. ¹⁵ Now, therefore, you and the council should ask the commander to bring Paul down to you, as though you would judge his case more exactly. We will be ready to kill him before he arrives."

¹⁶ But the son of Paul's sister heard of their planned ambush. He entered into the barracks and told Paul. ¹⁷ Then Paul called one of the centurions to him, and said, "Take this young man to the commander, for he has something to tell him." ¹⁸ So he took him to the commander and said, "The prisoner Paul asked me to bring this young man to you, who has something to say to you." ¹⁹ The commander took him by the hand, and going aside, asked him privately, "What is it that you have to tell me?"

²⁰ He answered, "The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though to inquire somewhat more exactly concerning him. ²¹ Do not yield to them, for more than forty men lie in wait for him. They have bound themselves under an oath to neither eat nor drink until they have killed him, and now they are ready, waiting for your agreeable response."

²² So the commander sent the young man away, charging him, "Tell no man that you have notified me of these things."

²³ The commander summoned two of the centurions and said, "Prepare 200 soldiers to go to Caesarea along with 70 horsemen and 200 spearmen by nine o'clock tonight, ²⁴ and

provide horses for Paul to ride so that he may be taken safely to Felix, the governor. ²⁵ The commander wrote a letter as follows:

²⁶ Claudius Lysias to the most excellent Governor Felix, greetings. ²⁷ This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them when I came upon them with the soldiers and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman citizen. ²⁸ Desiring to know the cause of their accusation against him, I took him down to their council. ²⁹ I found he was accused about questions of their law, and that there was no charge against him worthy of death or imprisonment. ³⁰ Then when I was informed of a plot against the man, I immediately sent him to you, also charging his accusers to prosecute him before you.

³¹ So the soldiers, as commanded, took Paul by night to Antipatris [a city about 35 miles from Jerusalem]. ³² The next day, the soldiers returned to the barracks, leaving the horsemen to go on with Paul. ³³ When they reached Caesarea, they delivered the letter to the governor and also presented Paul before him. ³⁴ When Felix had read the letter, he asked what province Paul was from. When he understood that he was from Cilicia, ³⁵ he said, "I will hear your case fully when your accusers also have arrived." He commanded for Paul to be kept under guard in Herod's palace.

A. What event did the commander omit in his letter (Acts 22) and what half-truth did he include?

B. God rescued Paul again, this time using his nephew's awareness of the plot. Looking through Chapter 23, what obvious help from God and also hidden (providential) help do you see?

If we have received Jesus as Savior and Lord, he is our Good Shepherd, and he does not leave us alone in good times or in difficult times. **I Peter 5:7, Cast all your anxieties on God because he cares for you.**

IV. Making Memories

What is a key truth from Acts 23 that you want to remember?

Underline or highlight one important verse in Acts 23 that will help you remember what took place in this chapter.

Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version, with the English updated to modern usage. The NET Bible® was consulted from time to time to confirm or adopt apt words or phrases.

1. **Hidden Treasure: Mark the fifteen words listed in #2.** Notice also: *case, acknowledge, affirm, defense, sect, dispute, conscience, charitable, offering, purified, and minister (ministry).*

Acts 24:1-21, ¹ After five days, the high priest Ananias went down with some elders and a spokesman named Tertullus in order to inform the governor of their case against Paul. ² So when Paul was summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying the following:

“As you have enabled us to enjoy much peace, most excellent Felix, and as reforms are carried out for this nation by your foresight, ³ we acknowledge this in every way and in all places with much gratitude. ⁴ But so that I do not tire you further, I entreat you to be so kind as to hear our few words. ⁵ For we have found this man a troublemaker, a motivator of insurrections among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes [the Christian faith]. ⁶ Moreover, he was in the process of desecrating the temple, so we seized him. ⁸ By examining him yourself, you will be able to verify all these accusations we are making.”

⁹ The Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that these things were true.

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²⁷ But when two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, and desiring to gain favor with the Jews, Felix left Paul in prison.

2. **Read Acts 24 in your own language. Then play this quick matching game.**

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| _____ 1. spokesman | A. A leader of an illegal act or group |
| _____ 2. reform (noun) | B. A violent uprising, a revolt against an authority |
| _____ 3. foresight | C. Thankfulness |
| _____ 4. gratitude | D. A change making something better; an improvement |
| _____ 5. entreat | E. More kindness, tolerance, or gentleness than required |
| _____ 6. insurrection | F. To come after someone; replace (in context) |
| _____ 7. ringleader | G. A person representing others, who speaks for them |
| _____ 8. desecrate | H. A noisy disturbance; uproar |
| _____ 9. verify | I. To mistreat a holy place or thing |
| _____ 10. offense | J. To request with strong feeling for someone to do something |
| _____ 11. commotion | K. To postpone, delay |
| _____ 12. defer | L. To talk with someone, discuss |
| _____ 13. leniency | M. To find evidence something is true; to confirm the correctness |
| _____ 14. converse | N. A sin, a wrongdoing; also an illegal act |
| _____ 15. succeed (follow) | O. The ability to understand what will be needed in the future |

(Answers are at the end.)

3. **Try to use the new words to fill in the blanks without looking at #2 above.**

- a. Tertullus, who was the _____ for the accusers, did not provide good evidence.
- b. He praised Governor Felix for his _____.
- c. He said the governor's improvements took place because of his _____.
- d. He also said that he and those with him felt much _____ for the governor's deeds.
- e. Then Tertullus _____ Governor Felix to listen to his brief presentation.
- f. Paul was accused of motivating _____ among the Jews throughout the world.
- g. Tertullus said Paul was a _____ in the sect of the Nazarenes.
- h. The third accusation was that Paul had been in the process of _____ the temple.
- i. Tertullus claimed Governor Felix could _____ the accusations by examining Paul.
- j. Paul said he tried not to commit _____ because of his hope of the resurrection.
- k. Before a mob formed, Paul had not been guilty of causing any _____ in the city.
- l. Governor Felix _____ the trial to a later time so that the commander could join them.
- m. The centurion was ordered to show _____ toward Paul while guarding him.
- n. Felix often _____ with Paul during the two years that he held Paul as a prisoner.
- o. Festus _____ Felix as governor of the Roman province of Judea.

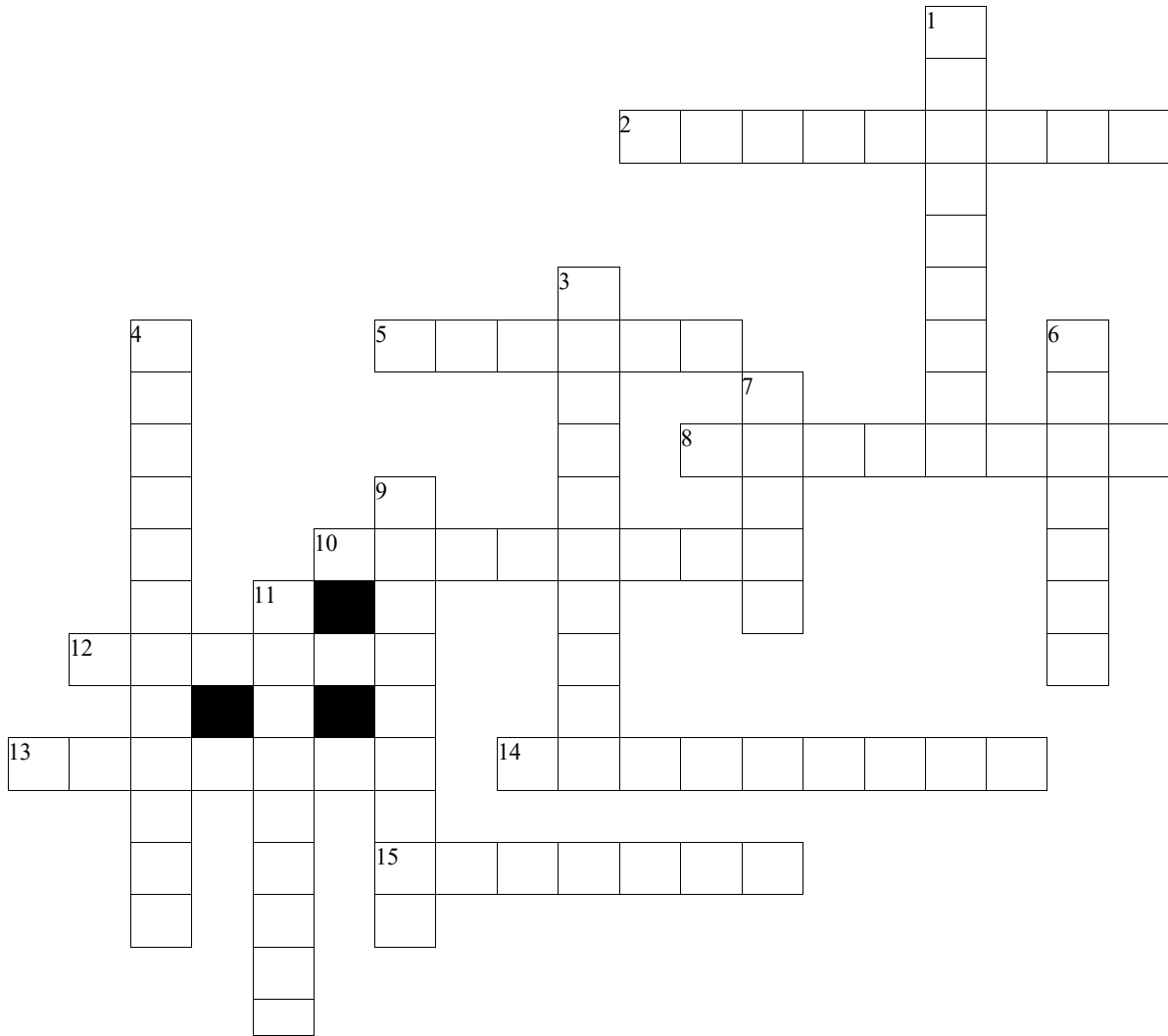
(Answers are at the end.)

5. **Odd Man Out Game** Three words in each set have almost the same meaning. Find all the words that are Odd Men Out without looking at #2. You may use your dictionary if needed.

- | | |
|--|--|
| a. Entreat, beg, challenge, plead with | g. Defer, delay, postpone, infer |
| b. Insurrection, rebellion, uproar, uprising | h. Converse, reminisce, talk, chat |
| c. Desecrate, defile, profane, disgrace | i. Leniency, mercy, tendency, gentleness |
| d. Verify, investigate, confirm, validate | j. Ringleader, instigator, inciter, builder |
| e. Offense, gangster, wrongdoing, sin | k. Gratitude, care, thankfulness, appreciation |
| f. Commotion, uproar, passion, disturbance | l. Reform, change, improvement, expansion |

(Answers are at the end.)

4. **Use all of the new words in the crossword puzzle. Try not to look at #2 above.**



Across

- 2. A person who speaks for others
- 5. To confirm a statement is correct
- 8. More kindness than expected
- 10. To talk with someone
- 12. A change for the better
- 13. To request with strong feeling, plead with
- 14. Thankfulness
- 15. A sin, a wrongdoing

Down

- 1. To mistreat a holy place or thing
- 3. A leader of an illegal group
- 4. An uprising, a rebellion
- 6. Come after, replace
- 7. To postpone, to delay
- 9. A noisy disturbance, an uproar
- 11. The ability to understand future needs

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Answers for the Matching Game: 1-G, 2-D, 3-O, 4-C, 5-J, 6-B, 7-A, 8-I, 9-M, 10-N, 11-H, 12-K, 13-E, 14-L, 15-F (Matching the words within three minutes verifies your progress.) ☺

Answers for the fill-in-the-blank exercise: a.) spokesman b.) reforms c.) foresight d.) gratitude e.) entreated f.) insurrections g.) ringleader h.) desecrating i.) verify j.) offenses k.) commotion l.) deferred m.) leniency n.) conversed o.) succeeded

Answers for the Odd Man Out Game: a.) challenge b.) uproar c.) disgrace d.) investigate e.) gangster f.) passion g.) infer h.) reminisce i.) tendency j.) builder k.) care l.) expansion

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Investigating Acts 24 Living in the Light of Eternity

Background: While Paul was being held prisoner in Jerusalem, there was a plot to kill him. The commander ordered his soldiers to take Paul safely to Caesarea, the Roman headquarters for Israel, and sent a letter to Governor Felix explaining why Paul had become a prisoner.

I. Paul's First Roman Trial

Acts 24:1-21, ¹ After five days, the high priest Ananias went down with some elders and a spokesman named Tertullus in order to inform the governor of their case against Paul. ² So when Paul was summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying the following:

“As you have enabled us to enjoy much peace, most excellent Felix, and as reforms are carried out for this nation by your foresight, ³ we acknowledge this in every way and in all places with much gratitude. ⁴ But so that I do not tire you further, I entreat you to be so kind as to hear our few words. ⁵ For we have found this man a troublemaker, a motivator of insurrections among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes [the Christian faith]. ⁶ Moreover, he was in the process of desecrating the temple, so we seized him. ⁸ By examining him yourself, you will be able to verify all these accusations we are making.”

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A. Notice the poor accusation:

1. Paul was a “troublemaker” and stirred up insurrections everywhere – no witnesses there.
2. Paul was a ringleader in the Nazarene sect – Christianity was still considered a legal part of Judaism. (Jesus had grown up in Nazareth. People in Jerusalem looked down on Nazareth, so this term for Christianity was used as an insult.)
3. Paul was in the process of desecrating the temple – See #4 in Paul's defense below.

B. Notice the good logic in Paul's defense:

1. What did Paul say as a Christian that agreed with the Jews' beliefs?

Judaism was legal under Roman law. It was vital for the Roman officials to continue to recognize the Christian faith as a part of Judaism—of course, with belief in Jesus as the Messiah and acknowledgment of the new covenant. The belief in the resurrection is clearly stated in the Old Testament. **Daniel 12:2-3, ²Many who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. ³And those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.**

2. Why should believing in the resurrection cause someone to keep a good conscience?

3. What good deeds was Paul doing when he was seized by the Jews?

4. Desecrating the temple was considered worthy of death. But were there any witnesses present? Had the council accused him of desecrating the temple or any other crime?

5. What conclusion should be drawn?

II. A Terrible Choice

Acts 24:22–27, ²²Then Felix, having a more exact knowledge concerning the Way, deferred the case saying, “When Lysias the commander comes down, I will rule on this matter.”

²³He ordered the centurion to guard Paul, but to show leniency toward him and not to forbid any of his friends from ministering to him.

²⁴After some days, Felix, coming with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jewess, sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁵As Paul reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was frightened and responded, “Go your way for now, and when I have a convenient time, I will summon you.” ²⁶Because he also hoped Paul would give him money [as a bribe], he often sent for him and conversed with him. ²⁷But when two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, and desiring to gain favor with the Jews, Felix left Paul in prison.

A. What are some good things about Felix?

1. He allowed Paul some _____ while being guarded and allowed his friends to help him. However, Paul was still a prisoner.

2. He frequently _____ with Paul and feared God's judgment.

3. He did not find Paul guilty or turn him over to Paul's enemies.

B. However, Felix missed his supreme opportunity to be a just judge and to be a great help in making Christianity legal by itself. As far as we know, he also missed being forgiven and having a relationship with God even though he was able to meet with Paul in one-to-one conversations for two years. Let's look at possible reasons for his failure:

1. He had a wrong life-style and didn't want to repent. He had taken another man's wife and had governed Judea with an unjust hand. The truth in **John 3:19** could apply to him:

¹⁹And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil.

2. He cared a lot about _____. He was waiting for Paul to give him a bribe.

3. He wanted to please the _____ to help his position.

4. He didn't seek God wholeheartedly, but listened to Paul when it was _____.

Felix was blind to the trial's true importance, how his name would be remembered in history, and even his chance for salvation! How important it is for us to seek God's will in what we do, for what can seem to be a small choice may actually be very significant!

C. How did Paul show kindness to his judge despite the danger of punishment or death?

III. Man's Problem, But God's Opportunity

A. The letter Paul wrote later during his second imprisonment in Rome and before his execution provides some insights into how he dealt with being falsely accused and being held in prison.

II Timothy 4:7-8, ⁷I have fought the good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith. ⁸Hereafter, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not to me only, but also to all those who have loved his appearing.

Paul lived his life in the "light of eternity."

Problems come to us all. When our world seems topsy turvy, here are some useful questions:

1. How much does this problem matter in the light of eternity?
2. How can I bring God's truth and love to the people involved in my problem?
3. How may God be using this problem as a witness to people not directly involved?
4. How else may God be using this for good (Romans 8:28)?
5. Also, thinking about Paul's message in Ephesians 6, who may be the real enemy?

B. Luke had accompanied Paul from Philippi to Jerusalem, and Acts 27:1 shows he was with Paul at the end of Paul's time in Caesarea. Luke most likely used these years to continue his valuable investigations and to organize his information in the process of writing Luke and Acts.

C. The religious leaders falsely accused Paul of evil, and Felix was unjust; BUT God had used the Roman army to rescue Paul and to bring him before the nation's most powerful men.

D. Paul longed to visit Rome, the center of the Western world, and to help the Christians there. He wrote these words to the Christians in Rome in 57 A.D. before he traveled to Jerusalem.

Romans 1:9-10, ⁹God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in declaring the gospel of his Son, how unceasingly I mention you in my prayers, ¹⁰making the request that now at last I may be enabled by the will of God to come to you.

In 59 A.D. God would use the Roman army to take Paul to Rome. Paul's trial before Felix was one of the first steps. God opened the way through Paul's problems!

IV. Making Memories

What is a key truth from Acts 24 that you want to remember?

Mark one important verse that will help you remember what took place in this chapter.

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