Acts 21:17-26:32

Acts 21:17-26:32

- Acts 21-28 → last part of Paul's life, describing his imprisonment in 3 cities:
  - Jerusalem (21:18-23:35)
  - Caesarea (24:1-26:32)
  - Rome (27:1-28:31)

Acts 21:17-26: Jerusalem

- Paul visits the leaders, and gives report of his gentile ministry
- James & leaders share their concerns that Paul encourages Jewish diaspora:
  1. To abandon the Law of Moses
  2. To abolish circumcision
  3. To forsake Jewish customs
- Hence they suggest Paul purifies himself and brings along and pays for 4 Jewish men under Nazarite vows (Num 6?) in the temple
- Purpose: to show Paul still conforms to the Law of Moses

Acts 21:17-26: Jerusalem

- The Jerusalem elders then refer to the decision of Jerusalem Council about gentiles abstaining from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality
- Luke is quick to point out that gentiles should not be made "Jews" to be saved
- Ethnicity issue

Acts 21:17-26: Jerusalem

- Paul has no choice but to agree to the elders' proposal
- Paul purifies himself along with the 4 Jewish men, most likely at the Pool of Siloam – possibly to maintain the unity of the church

Acts 21:17-26: Reflection

- Why do you think Paul agrees to carry out the purification process? Is this process necessary for him? Does this contradict Paul and his message of the gospel? Is this a compromise?
- What message is Paul sending out by accepting the proposal of the Jerusalem elders?
- Should Paul have gone that far in order to maintain the unity of the church?

Acts 21:17-26: Reflection

- One of the reasons Paul visits Jerusalem is to present the collection he organises from the gentile churches (see 24:17; cf. 1 Cor 16:1-2; 2 Cor 8-9; Rom 15:25-31). Strangely, Luke omits this incident in his narrative.

1. Why do you think Luke omits the collection?
2. Do you think the Jerusalem elders accept or refuse to accept the collection from the gentiles? Why do you say so?

Acts 21:27-22:21: Jerusalem

- Paul's arrest → Luke narrative from here on till end of Acts focusses on Paul as a prisoner with opportunity to defend himself and speak to the crowd (21:40-22:21); Felix (24:10-21); Festus (25:1-11); and Agrippa (26:2-32) before taken to Rome

Acts 21:27-22:21: Jerusalem

- Jerusalem Riot - events
  - Instigated by the Jews from Asia Minor
  - Attempted killing of Paul
  - Intervention of Claudius Lysia, Roman Commander
  - Paul's speech to the Jewish audience

Acts 21:27-22:21: Jerusalem

- Riot stirred by the Jews from Asia Minor after the purification is over
  - Why the emphasis on the Jews from Asia Minor?
  - Are they on pilgrimage to Jerusalem during the Feast of Pentecost?
  - Same group of people who spread rumours about Paul teaching the abolishment of the Jewish Law and custom when Paul was in Ephesus earlier?
  - Those who evicted Paul from the synagogue in Ephesus and forced Paul to move to the Hall of Tyrannus?

Acts 21:27-22:21: Jerusalem

- The Asia Minor Jews accuse Paul of the following:
  1. Teaching against the Jews
  2. Teaching against the Law
  3. Teaching against the temple
  4. Bringing gentiles into the temple
  5. Defiling the temple
- They see Trophimus from Ephesus with Paul

Acts 21:27-22:21: Jerusalem

- Temple prohibition photo

Acts 21:27-22:21: Jerusalem

- The people want to kill Paul
- Claudius Lysias (23:26) is the commander of the Roman garrison stationed in the Antonia Fortress
- See photos of Antionia Fortress located next to the Jerusalem Temple

Acts 21:27-22:21: Jerusalem

- Claudius Lysias arrests Paul
- The crowd could not provide answers to the Commander (21:34)
- The Commander leads Paul away to Antonia Fortress
- Paul asks to address the crowd by giving his call/conversion account

Acts 21:27-22:21: Jerusalem

- The crowd listen until Paul mentions that he is sent to the gentiles (22:21)
- Paul tries to convince the Jews that his call to the gentiles is a divine revelation and commission

Acts 21:27-22:21: Questions

One would imagine that the elders of the Temple in Jerusalem would have known of the riot and the arrest of Paul.

1. Why does James and the rest of the pillars remain silent and not come to the defence of Paul?
2. Do you think James and the elders are trying to distance themselves from the Jewish believers from Asia Minor and from Paul?

Acts 22:22-23:22: Jerusalem Trial

3 episodes

- Paul's interrogation at Antonia Fortress
- Paul's interrogation before the Sanhedrin
- The plot to kill Paul

Acts 22:22-23:22: Jerusalem Trial

- The crowd react in a frenzy manner by shouting, removing their robes and kicking dust − collectively suggesting they want Paul to be executed
- The commander orders Paul to be taken into the fortress and whipped (*flagellum*) − obviously he does not understand Paul's message and why the strong reaction of the Jews.

Acts 22:22-23:22: Jerusalem Trial

- Claudius Lysias makes 2 mistakes:
  - He presumes Paul has committed a serious crime
  - He has earlier wrongly assumed Paul's identity as an Egyptian, and now he thinks Paul is a Jew deserving to be interrogated under torture
- Paul flashes his Roman citizenship
  - Why is it only NOW that Paul declares his Roma citizenship, but not earlier?

Acts 22:22-23:22: Jerusalem Trial

- Claudius' reacts in fear
  - *Lex Julia de vi publica*:
  - "anyone who, while holding *imperium* or office, puts to death or flogs a Roman citizen contrary to his right of appeal, or order any of the above mentioned things to be done, or puts (a yoke) on his necl so that he may be tortured" is liable for his action (see *Dig.* 48.6.7)
- He keeps Paul for a night and calls for the Sanhedrin the following day

Acts 22:22-23:22: Jerusalem Trial

- Paul before the Sanhedrin
  - The meeting is to allow Claudius Lysias to determine the charges against Paul
  - Paul opens by defending himself – stating that he does nothing wrong
  - Ananias the high priest orders someone to strike Paul on his mouth
  - Paul responds by calling a curse, and is rebuked

Acts 22:22-23:22: Jerusalem Trial

- Paul before the Sanhedrin
  - Paul claims he doesn't know the identity of Ananias as the high priest → an apology or an insult?
  - Paul then brings in a theological issue he is aware that will divide the Sanhedrin by referring to the resurrection → is Paul being cunning/political here?

Acts 22:22-23:22: Jerusalem Trial

- The disputes between the Pharisees and Sadducees are so intense that Claudius Lysias has to intervene
- No verdict but Paul remains a prisoner

Acts 22:22-23:22: Jerusalem Trial

- The vision from the Lord – Paul will witness for the Lord among the gentiles in Rome, the capital of the Empire
  - Cf Paul's earlier visions: Macedonian call and the vision in Corinth

Acts 22:22-23:22: Jerusalem Trial

- More threats from the Jews in wanting Paul killed
- Conspiracy to kill Paul, but plan fails after his nephew (who is he?, where is he from? Who is Paul's sister?) informs Paul about it
- Paul arranges for his nephew to inform Claudius Lysias about the conspiracy

Acts 22:22-23:22: Jerusalem Trial

- Claudius Lysias immediately decides to send Paul to Felix the governor in Caesarea, accompanied by a letter.
  - What does the letter reveal about the commander?
  - Does he tell the whole truth?

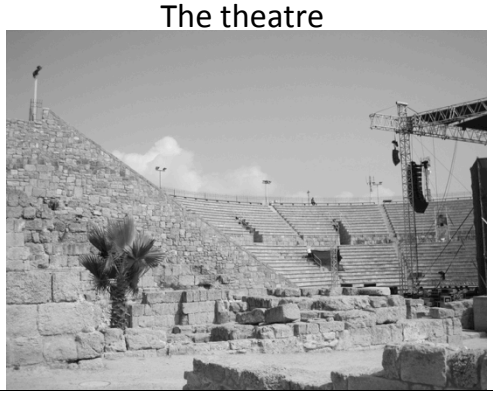
Acts 22:22-23:22: Jerusalem Trial

- Paul arrives in Caesarea, and is kept under guard in Herod's praetorium
- Caesarea Maritima is the link between Jerusalem and Rome, and it is the seat of the Roman governors in the province of Judea

The Aqueduct – Caesarea Maritima



The theatre



Place of Paul's trial before Agrippa, at the palace, Caesarea Maritima



The harbour, Caesarea Maritima





(Po)ntius Pilatus, the prefect of Judaea, (erected) a (building dedicated) to (the emperor) Tiberius. This stone, which was discovered in 1961 at Caesarea Maritima, is the only archaeological evidence that mentions Pilate who crucified Jesus.

Caesarea Maritima – built by Herod the Great around 25-13 BCE. The Palace at the background



The U-shape Hippodrome, 50m x 250m. 12 rows of seats that can accommodate 10,000 people



Another view of the Hippodrome



Acts 24-26: Trials in Caesarea

- 2 trails: Felix and Festus

Acts 24-26: Trial before Felix

- Ananias the high priest arrives in Caesarea, with Tertullus the lawyer to bring his case before the governor
- Jerusalem religious authorities
  - for death sentence, they need Roman's verdict.
  - Difficult to prove just based on religious issues
  - Hence need to include political/seditious charges for Rome to mete out death punishment

Acts 24-26: Trials in Caesarea

- Tertullus' (ῥήτορος − a lawyer. Note ESV − spokesman − too generic and misses the point) charge against Paul (24:1-8)
- Paul's defence (24:10-21)

Acts 24-26: Trials in Caesarea

- Read Tertullus' charge against Paul (24:1-8):
  1. What do you think of Tertullus' speech overall?
  2. What is Tertullus trying to say about the Roman rule?
  3. What are the charges against Paul that Tertullus presents to Felix? Is he being truthful or not?
  4. What are the evidences against Paul presented by Tertullus to Felix?

Acts 24-26: Trials in Caesarea

- Read Paul's defence against the charges brought by Tertullus (24:10-21)
  1. How does Paul defend himself against the charges brought by Tertullus? In what ways does Paul refute the charges against him?
  2. What is Paul trying to focus on in his defence?

Acts 24-26: Trials in Caesarea

- Felix decides to postpone the case, and keeps Paul in prison with some limited freedom.
- Felix's private conversations with Paul
- Felix's hope for bribe (see Joshphus, *Ant*. 20.163 − Felix bribed the best friend of Jonathan the high priest to arrange for the murder of Jonathan)
- 2 years − no decision on Paul's case

Acts 24-26: Trials in Caesarea

- Felix succeeded by Festus in 59CE
- Festus visits Jerusalem − and the Jewish leaders bring charges against Paul. They request that Paul be brought back to Jerusalem and they plan an ambush to kill Paul
- The temple leaders aim to take advantage of the situation by exploiting the new governor so that they could carry out their plans that failed 2 years ago in killing Paul.

Acts 24-26: Trials in Caesarea

- Festus promises to hear the case in Caesarea, thereby indirectly rejection the appeal to transfer Paul back to Jerusalem.
- Festus shows integrity on his part to grant Paul a fair hearing.

Acts 24-26: Trials in Caesarea

- Festus' trail proceedings in Caesarea
  - Hearing from the charges from representations from Jerusalem − most likely religious charges and not criminal charges (see 25:18: "When the accusers stood up, they did not charge him with any of the crimes that I was expecting."

Acts 24-26: Trials in Caesarea

- Festus' trail proceedings in Caesarea
  - Giving Paul a chance to defend himself
  - Paul clearly states that he has committed no offense against the Law, against the temple, and against Caesar
  - Festus gives Paul a choice of being tried in Caesarea or Jerusalem

Acts 24-26: Trials in Caesarea

- Paul defends himself by appealing to Caesar in Rome
  - Paul may not know why Festus wants to move the case to Jerusalem, knowing that if the case is moved to Jerusalem, he would not have survived the trials under the hands of the religious authorities
  - Note that all this while − James and the rest are not mentioned − are they silent?
- Festus grants the request

Acts 24-26: Trials in Caesarea

- Festus and King Agrippa discuss Paul's case
- Agrippa requests to hear Paul
- Paul is presented before Festus and Agrippa
  - Festus' speech
  - Paul's speech
- Both Festus and Agrippa believe Paul is innocent - 3rd declaration that Paul is innocent: see Claudius Lysias (23:29); Festus (25:25)