

## Dr. Craig Keener, Acts, Session 22

### Acts 23-26

### Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

#### 1. Abstract of Keener, Acts, Session 22, Acts 23-26, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

**Dr. Craig Keener's lecture** analyzes Acts 23-26, focusing on Paul's trial before the Sanhedrin. **Key events** include Paul's sarcastic encounter with the high priest, a plot to assassinate Paul, and Lysias's decision to send Paul to Governor Felix. **Keener explores** the legal and rhetorical strategies Paul employed, highlighting his skillful manipulation of the situation to present his case as a religious matter rather than a political threat. **The lecture also** discusses the political motivations of various figures involved, such as Felix's corruption and Agrippa's role in the proceedings, and the subsequent appeal to Caesar. Finally, **Keener examines** the historical context and plausibility of the events described in Acts.

2. 20 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of  
Dr. Keener, Acts, Session 22 – Double click icon to play in  
Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL]  
Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament →  
Gospels – Acts → Acts).



Keener\_Acts\_Session  
22.mp3

### 3. Briefing Document

#### Briefing Document: Acts 23-26 (Dr. Craig Keener)

##### Main Themes:

- **Paul's legal savvy and rhetorical skill:** Paul expertly navigates the Roman legal system, utilizing rhetorical techniques to establish his ethos and cast doubt on his accusers' claims.
- **The power of religious conflict:** The tension between Pharisees and Sadducees is exploited by Paul, while also highlighting the limitations of Roman authority in religious matters.
- **Divine protection and purpose:** The narrative underscores God's protection of Paul amidst plots against his life, emphasizing that his imprisonment serves a greater purpose - spreading the Gospel to influential figures.

##### Key Ideas & Facts:

#### 1. The Sanhedrin Hearing (Acts 23:1-10):

- Claudius Lysias convenes the Sanhedrin to assess Paul's case.
- Ananias, the high priest, illegally orders Paul struck.
- Paul strategically identifies as a Pharisee, creating division within the council.
- The hearing erupts in chaos, prompting Lysias to extract Paul.

**Quote:** "Brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of Pharisees. I am on trial concerning the hope of the resurrection of the dead." (Acts 23:6)

#### 2. The Assassination Plot & Journey to Felix (Acts 23:12-35):

- A group plots to kill Paul, but his nephew reveals the plan.
- Lysias swiftly sends Paul to Governor Felix in Caesarea under heavy guard.
- The journey involves a forced overnight march, highlighting Roman military discipline.

**Quote:** "About forty men were involved in this conspiracy. They took an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul." (Acts 23:12-13)

### 3. Paul's Defense before Felix (Acts 24:1-27):

- Paul masterfully uses rhetorical techniques in his defense:
- Praises Felix's experience and knowledge of Jewish culture.
- Emphasizes his piety by mentioning his recent arrival for Pentecost and the bringing of alms.
- Shifts blame onto his accusers, highlighting their absence and instigation of the riot.
- Confirms that the Sanhedrin charge is purely religious, holding no weight in Roman law.
- Despite a compelling defense, Felix delays judgment, hoping for a bribe.

**Quote:** "Now this I confess to you, that according to this Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything that is written in the Law and the Prophets." (Acts 24:14)

### 4. Festus, Agrippa, & the Appeal to Caesar (Acts 25-26):

- Festus, the new governor, faces pressure to try Paul in Jerusalem.
- Paul, sensing danger, appeals to Caesar, guaranteeing a trial in Rome.
- King Agrippa II, visiting Festus, requests to hear Paul.
- Paul seizes the opportunity to preach the Gospel, aiming to convert Agrippa.
- Festus deems Paul insane, highlighting the clash between worldly logic and spiritual truth.

**Quote:** "King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do." (Acts 26:27)

### 5. Outcomes & Significance:

- Though deemed innocent, Paul remains imprisoned due to political maneuvering.
- His journey to Rome fulfills God's purpose of bringing the Gospel before kings.
- The narrative underscores the limitations of human justice in the face of God's plan.

**Dr. Keener's Perspective:**

Keener emphasizes Paul's intelligence and strategic use of Roman law and Jewish custom. He also highlights Paul's commitment to spreading the Gospel, even using his imprisonment as an opportunity for evangelism. The narrative, as analyzed by Keener, reveals the complexity of early Christian interactions with both Jewish and Roman authorities.

## 4. Acts Study Guide: Session 22, Acts 23-26

### Acts Chapters 23-26 Study Guide

#### Short Answer Questions

**Instructions:** Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. Why did Claudius Lysias call the Sanhedrin to meet about Paul? What was he hoping to achieve?
2. What was the significance of Paul identifying himself as a Pharisee during the Sanhedrin hearing? How did this impact the proceedings?
3. Describe the plot to kill Paul. Who was involved and what was their plan?
4. How did Paul's nephew learn about the plot against his uncle? What actions did he take to protect Paul?
5. Why did Lysias send Paul to Felix under a heavy guard and in a forced overnight march?
6. How did Paul use rhetorical techniques in his defense before Felix? Provide at least two examples.
7. What reasons did Felix have for keeping Paul in custody despite the weakness of the accusations against him?
8. Why did Festus agree to hear Paul's case in Caesarea, even though the Jewish authorities requested a trial in Jerusalem?
9. What role did King Agrippa II play in Paul's hearing before Festus? Why was Agrippa's perspective important to Festus?
10. Why did Paul appeal to Caesar? What were the consequences of this decision for his case?

#### Short Answer Key

1. Claudius Lysias called the Sanhedrin to get an official Jewish assessment of the charges against Paul. He needed this assessment before sending Paul to the Roman governor, Felix, and hoped for a clear verdict to clarify the confused situation.

2. By identifying as a Pharisee and highlighting the resurrection as the central issue of his trial, Paul strategically divided the Sanhedrin along theological lines. This caused conflict between the Pharisees and Sadducees, ultimately working in his favor as it highlighted the religious nature of the accusations.
3. Around 40 Jewish zealots plotted to assassinate Paul. They planned to ambush him while he was being transported from the Fortress Antonia to the Sanhedrin, relying on a swift attack to overwhelm the guards in the narrow passage.
4. Paul's nephew, likely through connections within Jerusalem, learned of the assassination plot. He bravely informed Paul, who instructed him to alert Claudius Lysias, ensuring the tribune could take protective measures.
5. Lysias opted for a forced overnight march to Antipatris with heavy cavalry and infantry escort to safeguard Paul from the assassination plot. The increased security also aimed to deter ambushes, which were prevalent in the Judean hills due to widespread corruption.
6. Paul skillfully employed rhetorical techniques in his defense, praising Felix's experience (though sparingly and accurately) to establish goodwill and emphasizing his piety by mentioning his recent pilgrimage to Jerusalem for religious observance. He also challenged the burden of proof by stating his accusers could not substantiate their claims, highlighting the lack of evidence against him.
7. Felix kept Paul imprisoned for political reasons. While recognizing the weakness of the accusations, he sought to appease the influential Jewish authorities without alienating Paul's own significant following. Additionally, Felix hoped to extract a bribe from Paul for his release, motivated by the rampant corruption that characterized his governorship.
8. Festus agreed to hear Paul's case in Caesarea, the governor's official seat of power, as per standard Roman legal procedures. This decision demonstrated his commitment to Roman law and contrasted with the politically motivated desire of the Jewish authorities for a trial in Jerusalem, where they held more sway.
9. King Agrippa II, a Roman ally and expert in Jewish affairs, attended Paul's hearing at Festus's request. Festus sought Agrippa's advice on the case, particularly regarding the religious disputes at its core, which were beyond Festus's own understanding. Agrippa's perspective held weight due to his shared cultural background and political allegiance with Festus.

10. Paul appealed to Caesar, exercising his right as a Roman citizen, to avoid a trial in Jerusalem where he feared a biased judgment and potential violence. This strategic maneuver, though leading to a lengthy and uncertain process, ultimately ensured a fair hearing before the highest Roman authority and further removed his case from the influence of the Jewish authorities.

## Essay Questions

1. Analyze the character of Claudius Lysias as portrayed in Acts 23-26. To what extent does he act justly and honorably? Consider his motivations and the pressures he faced.
2. Discuss the effectiveness of Paul's defense strategies throughout his various trials in Acts 23-26. How does he adapt his arguments to different audiences and contexts?
3. Examine the significance of Paul's collection for the poor in Jerusalem. How does this act contribute to his defense and illuminate his character?
4. Compare and contrast the portrayals of Felix and Festus as Roman governors in Acts 23-26. How do their respective actions and motivations impact Paul's case?
5. Discuss the role of divine intervention and providence in Paul's journey as depicted in Acts 23-26. How do supernatural events and divine guidance shape the course of events?

## Key Term Glossary

- **Sanhedrin:** The highest Jewish council in Jerusalem, responsible for religious and legal matters.
- **Pharisees:** A Jewish sect known for their strict adherence to the Mosaic Law and oral traditions.
- **Sadducees:** A Jewish sect comprising mainly the priestly aristocracy, known for their rejection of the resurrection and oral traditions.
- **Fortress Antonia:** A Roman military barracks in Jerusalem, adjacent to the Temple Mount, where Paul was held prisoner.
- **Felix:** The Roman governor of Judea, known for his corruption and desire for bribes.
- **Drusilla:** The wife of Felix and a Jewish princess, known for her controversial relationship with the governor.
- **Festus:** The Roman governor who succeeded Felix, known for his fairness and efficiency.
- **Agrippa II:** A client king of Rome, ruling over a territory in Palestine, and known for his knowledge of Jewish affairs.
- **Bernice:** The sister of Agrippa II, known for her political influence and complicated personal life.
- **Appeal to Caesar:** A legal right of Roman citizens to have their case tried before the emperor in Rome.
- **Ethos:** In rhetoric, an appeal to the speaker's character and credibility.
- **Pathos:** In rhetoric, an appeal to the audience's emotions.
- **Narratio:** In rhetoric, the narration or account of events relevant to the case.
- **Refutatio:** In rhetoric, the refutation or counterargument to the opposing side's claims.
- **Alms:** Charitable donations given to the poor and needy.
- **Prophets:** Individuals inspired by God to deliver messages and pronouncements, often associated with divine revelation and sometimes viewed as eccentric or "insane."



## **5. FAQs on Keener, Acts, Session 22, Acts 23-26, Biblelearning.org (BeL)**

### **FAQ: Paul's Trial and Imprisonment in Acts 23-26**

#### **1. Why was Paul brought before the Sanhedrin?**

Claudius Lysias, the Roman tribune, brought Paul before the Sanhedrin seeking their official assessment of the charges against him. Lysias needed clarity before sending Paul to the Roman governor, Felix. He hoped the Sanhedrin, as Jewish legal experts, would provide a clear verdict. Unfortunately, their hearing erupted into chaos due to internal conflicts.

#### **2. How did Paul navigate the hostile Sanhedrin hearing?**

Paul skillfully used rhetorical techniques to establish his character (ethos) and appeal to the different factions within the Sanhedrin. He strategically declared himself a Pharisee, highlighting his belief in the resurrection, a point of contention between Pharisees and Sadducees. This tactic sparked a conflict that ultimately led to the tribune intervening and removing Paul for his safety.

#### **3. What was the plot against Paul, and how was it thwarted?**

Forty Jewish zealots, enraged by Paul's teachings, vowed to assassinate him. They planned to ambush him during his transfer from the Fortress Antonia to the Sanhedrin. However, Paul's nephew learned of the plot and informed the tribune, who swiftly arranged for Paul's transfer to Governor Felix in Caesarea, preventing the assassination.

#### **4. Why did Felix keep Paul in custody despite the weak charges?**

Governor Felix, known for his corruption, sought a bribe from Paul for his release. Furthermore, Paul's status as a leader with potentially tens of thousands of followers in Judea and his Roman citizenship made Felix hesitant to execute him without a strong case. Felix sought to appease both the Jewish authorities and maintain his own political safety.

#### **5. How did Paul use his defense speech before Felix?**

Paul's defense speech was a masterful display of legal and rhetorical strategy. He strategically confessed non-crimes to gain credibility, highlighted his piety and charitable actions, and shifted the blame onto his absent accusers. He successfully framed the charges as a religious dispute, undermining the possibility of a capital offense under Roman law.

**6. What role did King Agrippa II play in Paul's case?**

King Agrippa II, a Jewish ruler respected by the Romans, became involved in Paul's case at the request of Governor Festus. Agrippa, familiar with Jewish customs and law, was consulted for advice on handling Paul's appeal to Caesar. Paul used the opportunity to preach the gospel directly to Agrippa, although his efforts to convert the king were unsuccessful.

**7. What led to Paul's appeal to Caesar?**

Paul's appeal to Caesar was a strategic move to avoid a biased trial in Jerusalem. Festus, facing pressure from the Jewish authorities and seeking to appease them, was inclined to send Paul to Jerusalem, despite knowing of the plot against him. Recognizing the danger, Paul exercised his right as a Roman citizen to appeal directly to Caesar, forcing Festus to send him to Rome.

**8. What was the final outcome of the hearing before Agrippa and Festus?**

After hearing Paul's defense and consulting with his advisors, Festus concluded that Paul had committed no capital crime and could have been released. However, due to Paul's appeal to Caesar, Festus was obligated to send him to Rome for trial. This decision pleased both Festus, as it relieved him of the politically sensitive case, and Paul, as it ensured a trial in a less hostile environment.