

THE BOOK OF ACTS

ACTS 23:12-35 | LESSON SUMMARY

The Plot Thickens

ACTS 23:12, "When it was day, the Jews made a plot and bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they had killed Paul." (ESV)

- More than 40 plot to assassinate Paul
 - "Dagger men"
 - Conspire with the high priest and elders
- The plan is to ambush him on the way to trial
 - The plan involves a lie to accomplish what they see as "the greater good"

ACTS 23:16, "Now the son of Paul's sister heard of their ambush, so he went and entered the barracks and told Paul."

- Paul's nephew overhears the plot and
- Very little is known of Paul's family, except what he himself mentions
 - Against cultural expectations for a Pharisee of Paul's age to be unmarried
 - This nephew is the "son of Paul's sister"
- The "barracks" reserved for important prisoners
 - In ancient Rome there was no "rehabilitation" plan for prisoners
 - Prisons were short-term as they served to confine until trial
 - Barracks = military housing
 - Paul is innocent



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- Paul sends his nephew to tell the tribune
 - The commander clearly doesn't see Paul as guilty and seeks to protect him from the mob, including those plotting his murder

ACTS 23:21, "But do not be persuaded by them, for more than forty of their men are lying in ambush for him, who have bound themselves by an oath neither to eat nor drink till they have killed him. And now they are ready, waiting for your consent."

- Paul's nephew is referred to as a "young man"
 - His interaction with the tribune indicates the commander seeks to protect this boy
 - ἐπιλαμβάνομαι = to help or rescue
 - The commander obviously sees the danger of his involvement and warns him to say nothing of what he's overheard
 - "So the tribune dismissed the young man, charging him, 'Tell no one that you have informed me of these things.'" (Acts 23:22, ESV)
 - The tribune sends a letter and a small army ahead with Paul to Governor Felix in Caesarea
 - 200 soldiers
 - 70 horsemen
 - 200 spearmen
 - Mounts for Paul to ride



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ACTS 23:34-35, "On reading the letter, he asked what province he was from. And when he learned that he was from Cilicia, he said, 'I will give you a hearing when your accusers arrive.'" And he commanded him to be guarded in Herod's praetorium."

- Paul will remain under house arrest for the next five years

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: Kelly Leslie, *Philosophers, Jews and Christians in the Roman Empire: authority, text and tradition*, F.F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, R. Kent Hughes, *The Church Afire*

