

CHAPTER 23

INTRODUCTION TO ACTS 23

Ver. 1. *And Paul earnestly beholding the council*, etc.] Fastening his eyes upon them, looking wistly and intently at them, and thereby discovering a modest cheerfulness, and a becoming boldness, confidence, and intrepidity, as being not conscious of any guilt, and well assured of the goodness of his cause:

said, men and brethren; (see ~~401~~ Acts 22:1).

I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day; not only from the time of his conversion, but throughout the whole of his life; for though, strictly speaking, there is no good conscience but what is awakened by the Spirit of God, and is unprincipled by his grace, and is purged from sin by the blood of Christ; in which sense he could only have a good conscience, since he believed in Christ; yet whereas in his state of unregeneracy, and even while he was a blasphemer, and persecutor, he did not act contrary to the dictates of his conscience, but according to them, in which his view was to the glory of God, and the honour of his law; he therefore says he lived before God, or unto God, in all good conscience, though an erroneous and mistaken one; he thought he ought to do what he did; and what he did, he did with a zeal for God though it was not according to knowledge: besides, the apostle has here respect to his outward moral conversation, which, before and after conversion, was very strict, and even blameless, at least unblemished before men; nobody could charge him with any notorious crime, though he did not live without sin in the sight of the omniscient God.

Ver. 2. *And the high priest Ananias*, etc.] This could not be the same with Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, but rather Ananus his son; though this is more generally thought to be Ananias the son of Nebedaeus, whom Josephus ^{f1140} speaks of. There is one R. Ananias, the sagan of the priests, often spoken of in the Jewish writings ^{f1141}, who lived about these times, and was killed at the destruction of Jerusalem; and in the times of King Agrippa, there was one Chanina, or Ananias the priest, who was a

Sadducee^{f1142}; and from the number of Sadducees in this sanhedrim, who very likely were the creatures of the high priest, one would be tempted to think he might be the same with this: who

commanded them that stood by him: that is, by Paul, who were nearest to him, some of the members of the sanhedrim; unless they should be thought to be some of the high priest's officers, or servants, as in (~~4182~~ John 18:22) though if they were, one would think they would be so called: these he ordered

to smite him on the mouth: or give him a slap on the face, by way of contempt, and as if he had spoken what ought not to be said, and in order to silence him; the reason of which might be, either because Paul did not directly address him, and give him such flattering titles as he expected, or because he set out with such declarations of his innocence, and spotless behaviour, and with so much courage and boldness.

Ver. 3. *Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee*, etc.] Which may be considered either as a prophecy of what would be, that God would smite him with some judgment here, or with death quickly, or with eternal damnation hereafter; taking up his own words, and suggesting that a retaliation would be made, and that the measure he meted, would be measured to him again; or else as an imprecation upon him; for the words may be rendered, “may God smite thee”; the future tense being often used by the Jews for the imperative, and that in this very phrase; for certain it is, that this is the form of an imprecation with them: for it is said, if anyone should say, **μωηλ α ηκκγ**, “may God smite”, or “so may God smite”; this is **ηλ α**, “a curse”, written in the law^{f1143}; though this instance of the apostle ought not to be drawn into example, any more than those of other saints, who might be under a direction of the Holy Ghost to deliver out such things, which would come to pass in righteous judgment: and if this was Ananias, the son of Nebedaeus, as is generally thought, it is remarkable, that five years after this, in the beginning of the wars of the Jews with the Romans, this Ananias, hiding himself under the ruins of a conduit, was discovered, and taken out, and killed^{f1144}: and no doubt but he very fitly calls him

thou whited wall; or hypocrite, in like manner as Christ compares the hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees to whited sepulchres, (~~4127~~ Matthew 23:27).

for sittest thou to judge me after the law; the law of Moses, which was the rule of judgment in the sanhedrim, at least professed to be, and which was allowed of by the Romans, especially in matters relating to the Jewish religion:

and commandest me to be smitten contrary to law? which condemns no man before he is heard, and much less punishes him, (^{<475>}John 7:51) and which is contrary not only to the Jewish laws, but to the Roman laws, and all others founded upon the law of nature and reason.

Ver. 4. *And they that stood by*, etc.] The members of the sanhedrim that were next to the apostle; or the servants of the high priest, since they are said to stand, whereas those of that court sat: said,

revilest thou God's high priest? which seems to confirm that the apostle's words were not a bare prediction, but an imprecation, since they are charged with reproaching, reviling, and speaking evil of him; and the aggravation of which was not only that the person reviled was a priest, an high priest, but an high priest of God; though this could not have been proved, for there was now no high priest of God but Jesus Christ; the priesthood was changed and abrogated, and there were no more high priests among men of God's appointing and approving.

Ver. 5. *Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest*, etc.] Or I did not know that he was the high priest; and the sense is, that he did not really know him, either because he had been long absent from Jerusalem; and besides there were new high priests made, sometimes every year, and sometimes oftener, that it is no wonder he should not know him; or because he might not sit in his usual place; or chiefly because he was not, in his habit, an high priest; for the priests, both the high priest, and the common priests, only wore their priestly robes, when they ministered in their office, and at other times they wore other clothes, as laymen did, according to (^{<3419>}Ezekiel 44:19) which the Targum paraphrases thus;

“when they (the priests) shall go out of the holy court into the outer court, to be mixed with the people, they shall put off their garments in which they ministered, and lay them up in the holy chamber, and shall clothe themselves with other garments, that they may not be mingled with the people, ^{whyꝛwbl b}, “in their garments”.”

For as soon as they had performed their office, there were servants that attended them, who stripped them of their robes, and laid them up in chests which were in the temple ^{f1145} till they came to service again, and put them on common garments; for they might not appear among the common people in their priestly garments; which when they were off of them, they were, as Maimonides says ^{f1146}, *μυρζκ*, “as strangers”, or as laymen, like the rest of the people; for which reason Paul might not know Ananias to be the high priest: and this points to another sense of these words; for it was a rule with the Jews ^{f1147}, that

“at the time the priests’ garments were upon them, their priesthood was upon them, but when their garments were not on them, *ἤνυλ [μτνωηκ ἤνα*, “there was no priesthood upon them”; for lo, they were as strangers.”

And then the sense is, Ananias not being in the discharge of his office, nor in his habit, the apostle did not know, or own him as an high priest, or consider him as in such a station; or rather, since the priesthood was changed, and there was no other high priest of God but Jesus Christ, he did not own him as one; had he, he should not have spoke to him in the manner he did. Moreover, if this was Ananias, the son of Nebedaeus, as is the opinion of many, he had no right to the office of the priesthood when he was first made an high priest; after which he was sent a prisoner to Rome; during which time several succeeded in the priesthood; and at this time not he, though he had got the management of affairs in his hands, was high priest, but Jesus the son of Gamaliel; so that the apostle’s sense might be, he did not own or acknowledge him high priest. Some take the apostle’s words in an ironical sense; he an high priest, I should not have known him to be an high priest, he looks and acts more like a furioso, a madman, an unjust judge, and a tyrant, than an high priest, who ought to behave in another guise manner. But what follows shows rather that the apostle spoke seriously, unless the words can be thought to be a citation made by Luke,

for it is written, in (⁴⁰²²⁸Exodus 22:28) “thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people”; which the Jewish writers generally understand of the head of the great sanhedrim, as Ananias might be, or of a king ^{f1148}.

Ver. 6. *But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees*, etc.] That is, that one part of the sanhedrim consisted of Sadducees, which was

often the case; sometimes the high priest was of this sect, as Ananias probably was, and sometimes the greater part of the sanhedrim were Sadducees, and even sometimes the whole; (see Gill on “~~467~~ Acts 5:17”), but this sanhedrim were only part of them Sadducees:

and the other Pharisees; of both these sects, (see Gill on “~~467~~ Matthew 3:7”).

he cried out in the council; with a loud voice, that he might be heard by all:

men and brethren, I am a Pharisee; he was not only brought up in that sect from his youth, and lived according to it before his conversion, but he was still a Pharisee; wherefore he does not say, I “was”, but I “am” a Pharisee; for whatever distinguished the Pharisee from the Sadducee, whether in principle, or in practice, and manner of living, which agreed with Christianity, the apostle still retained; as the belief of the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the dead, and a future state, and strict holiness of life and conversation.

The son of a Pharisee; the Alexandrian copy, and some others, and the Vulgate Latin version, read in the plural number, “the son of Pharisees”; his father and his mother were both Pharisees; for there were women Pharisees^{f1149}, as well as men; so that he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, as well as an Hebrew of the Hebrews; and this is said to show that he was by education of that sect.

Of the hope and resurrection of the dead, I am called in question; that is, either for the hope of the resurrection of the dead, (~~465~~ Acts 24:15) or for professing the hope of eternal life, and happiness in a future state, and the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, when the soul and body will be reunited, and enjoy endless felicity together: not that these were the particular things now charged upon him, and for which he was now trying and judging; but that these were the ground and foundation of the hatred and persecution of him, because he preached the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and the resurrection of men through him, and that there was hope of eternal life and salvation by him. And in this the apostle showed the prudence and wisdom of the serpent, along with the innocence of the dove, hereby to divide the assembly, and free himself from them; and it was but just and right; for since they would not hear him about to make a fair and open defence of his cause, but ordered him to be smitten on the mouth, it was but justice to throw them into confusion, and save himself.

Ver. 7. *And when he had so said*, etc.] He stopped and made a pause:

and there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; about the things which he had spoken of, particularly the resurrection of the dead; and this was what the apostle intended, so that his end was answered by the speech he made:

and the multitude was divided; that is, the members of the sanhedrim were divided, some being on one side of the question, and some on the other; for this multitude cannot design the multitude of the common people, who were not convened together on this occasion.

Ver. 8. *For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection*, etc.] Of the dead, being ignorant of the Scriptures, and the power of God; (see ~~4023~~ Matthew 22:23,29).

neither angel nor spirit; the Ethiopic version reads, “nor Holy Spirit”: but the sense seems to be, that they did not believe any such species of beings as angels, nor indeed any spirits whatever, which were immaterial or immortal; for as for the spirit or soul of man, they took that to be only the temperament of the body, and that it died with it, and did not exist in any separate state after this life: for so Josephus^{f1150} says, that they deny the permanence of the soul, and rewards and punishments in the invisible state. And, according to the Talmudic^{f1151} writers, they denied that there was any other world than this:

but the Pharisees confess both; the resurrection of the dead, and that there are spirits, both angels and the souls of men, which are immortal. Josephus, in the place before referred to, says, that they hold that every soul is incorruptible or immortal; and that they held the resurrection of the dead, is manifest from the Talmud^{f1152}, and other writings of theirs; the Syriac version renders it, “the Pharisees confess all these things”; to which agree the Arabic and Ethiopic versions.

Ver. 9. *And there arose a great cry*, etc.] Or noise, a loud clamour; they began to be very noisy, and to talk loud, and in high spirits, one against another:

and the Scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose; there were Scribes in the sanhedrim, and these were some of them on the side of the Sadducees, and some on the side of the Pharisees; though, generally speaking, they agreed with the latter, and are often in Scripture mentioned

with them, and for them: however, that part in this sanhedrim that were on their side rose up from their seats,

and strove; that is, contended, disputed, and litigated the point with the Sadducees:

saying, we find no evil in this man; why he should be hated, persecuted, and punished:

but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him; that is, if the Holy Spirit, as the Ethiopic version reads, has inspired him, or God by an angel has revealed anything to him, who has to say anything against it? This they said in agreement with their own principles, and more for the sake of establishing them, and in opposition to the Sadducees, than in favour of Paul:

let us not fight against God; as in (~~418D~~ Acts 5:39). These words are not in the Alexandrian copy, nor in the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions.

Ver. 10. *And when there arose a great dissension*, etc.] When that was come to a very great height, hot words were spoken, and they were ready to come to blows, and there was like to be a riot and tumult among them:

the chief captain fearing lest Paul should be pulled in pieces of them; either of the Sadducees, whom he had greatly offended and provoked, or of both Sadducees and Pharisees, the one laying hold on him to preserve him from the fury of the other, and the other endeavouring to pluck him out of their hands; and the fears of the chief captain were not so much out of affection to Paul, but lest there should be an uproar, which might issue in sedition, and rebellion against the Roman government, of which the Roman officers were always jealous; and because that Paul was a Roman, and should he suffer him to be destroyed in an illegal manner, he must be accountable for it: wherefore he

commanded the soldiers to go down: either from the castle of Antonia, or from a superior part of the temple, where he with his guards were, to hear this cause before the sanhedrim, to that part where it sat, and Paul was: and

take him by force from among them; if they refused to deliver him up, to make use of their arms:

and bring him into the castle; of Antonia, where he was before.

Ver. 11. *And the night following*, etc.] The day in which Paul was brought before the sanhedrim, and pleaded his own cause before them, and had thrown them into confusion and division:

the Lord stood by him; the Lord Jesus Christ appeared in a vision to him, and stood very near him, by the side of him, by the bed or couch on which he might lie: and said,

be of good cheer, Paul; though he was now a prisoner in the castle; and though the high priest, and the Sadducees especially, were enraged against him; and though a plot was about to be formed to take away his life; for this exhortation seems to be designed to prepare him for further trials, and to prevent discouragement under them; which shows the great care of Christ over him, his concern for him, and love to him: the word Paul is not in the Alexandrian copy, nor in the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions; but the calling him by name seems to express not only singular knowledge of him, but greater familiarity and affection; it is in the Arabic version, and in other Greek copies:

for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem; not only in the Christian church, and before the Apostle James, and the elders, but in the Jewish sanhedrim, and before the high priest, Scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees, where and before whom, though not particularly recorded, he bore a testimony for Jesus, that he was the true Messiah; and that though he died, he was risen from the dead, and was at the right hand of God, and was the only Saviour of men:

so must thou bear witness also at Rome; as he had bore a public and faithful witness to the person, office, and grace of Christ at Jerusalem, the metropolis of Judea; so it was necessary, by the decree of God, and for the glory of Christ, that he should bear a like testimony at Rome, the chief city in the whole world; hereby signifying, that he should not die at Jerusalem, and giving him a hint that he should appeal to Caesar, which he afterwards did.

Ver. 12. *And when it was day*, etc.] As soon as it was light, very early in the morning:

certain of the Jews banded together; these very likely were of the sect of the Sadducees, who had been exceedingly irritated and provoked by what Paul had said the day before in the council; these therefore gathered

together, entered into a conspiracy to take away Paul's life, and trailed in it, as one man:

and bound themselves under a curse; or “anathematized themselves”; the Hebrew word **מֵרִיב** , which answers to “anathema”, is sometimes used for an oath, **הַיְבֹחֵ אֵיךְ מֵרִיב** , “Cherem” or “anathema” is “an oath”^{f1153} , a vow made to be punished with an anathema if not kept; so these men swore to it, bound themselves with an oath, or wished they might be an anathema, accursed of God, and cut off from his people; they imprecated the most dreadful evils upon themselves:

saying, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul: it was a common form of a vow or oath with the Jews^{f1154} , **אֲנִי לֹא אֶכְלֶה** , “that I will not eat”; sometimes they only vowed abstinence from particular things, and then others were lawful; as for instance, if one vowed that he would not eat boiled meat, he might eat roast, or that he would not eat flesh, he might eat broth, or that he would abstain from milk, then he might drink whey,^{f1155} ; but this oath and vow here were, that they would neither eat nor drink anything, till they had destroyed Paul: these were a set of zealots, who in imitation of Phinehas, and pretending the glory of God, took upon them to take away the lives of men, without any, judicial procedure, or the authority of the civil magistrate; of whom, (see Gill on ~~<000>~~ Matthew 10:4”) it may be asked, what became of this vow? or how did they get clear of it, since they did not accomplish the fact? to which it may be answered, that it was a pretty easy thing to be freed from oaths and vows, among the Jews, whose doctors had a power to absolve men from them; and in such cases as this, and such a vow as this, might be loosed upon more accounts than one, as on account of keeping another law, the observing the sabbath and other festivals, when men were obliged to eat and drink: and thus it is said^{f1156} ,

“if a man swears that he will not drink wine, or that he will not eat flesh, for so many days, then they say to him, if thou hadst known at the time of the oath, that the sabbath or a feast day were within these days, in which thou art obliged to eat flesh and drink wine, as it is said, (~~<2883>~~ Isaiah 58:13) “and call the sabbath a delight”; wouldst thou have swore at all? if he says no, they loose his oath:”

and likewise it might be loosed on account of life, which a man is bound to preserve: for so they likewise say^{f1157} , “if a man vows that he will not eat

anything, woe be to him if he eats, and woe be to him if he does not eat; if he eats he breaks his vow, if he does not eat he sins against his own soul, or life; what must he do? let him go to the wise men, *wrdn ta wl wrytyw*,

“and they will loose his vow for him”, as it is written, (~~2028~~ Proverbs 12:18) but the tongue of the wise is health;”

and no doubt but these men very easily got their vow loosed, since it was made on such a design.

Ver. 13. *And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy.*] Who met together, formed this resolution, entered into this scheme, and bound themselves with this oath; the word rendered “conspiracy”, signifies an agreement by oath; such a number of them banded together, that they might have strength sufficient to take Paul out of the hands of the soldiers, as he was conducted by them from the castle to the temple.

Ver. 14. *And they came to the chief priests, and elders,* etc.] Who were members of the sanhedrim, to acquaint them with their designs:

and said, we have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul: these chief priests and elders, had they acted according to the character they bore, on such an information, would have taken up those men, and punished them, at least would have dissuaded them from so vile an action; but they knew the men to whom they applied, and very likely they were all of them of the sect of the Sadducees, whom Paul had so much offended the day before; and therefore were pleased with what they had done, approved of their scheme, and readily fell in with the following proposal.

Ver. 15. *Now therefore ye with the council,* etc.] The whole sanhedrim; their sense is, that they would have the sanhedrim convened by the chief priests and elders, and being met together, then to

signify to the chief captain; or let him know that they were assembled together, upon the affair of Paul, and that they here desirous he might be brought before them:

that he bring him down unto you tomorrow; from the castle of Antonia to the place where the sanhedrim met; the word “tomorrow” is not in the Alexandrian copy, nor in the Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Ethiopic versions; and then it should seem that they desired him to be brought down

forthwith, or otherwise they must propose to fast all that day, and so long on the morrow, till Paul was brought down; but that the common reading is right, appears from the chief captain's sending away Paul at the third hour of the night following, to prevent their designs on the morrow, (~~4223~~ Acts 23:23). The pretence formed for his being brought down is,

as though ye would inquire something more perfectly concerning him; what he had done, which had occasioned this uproar, what it was he was charged with, and whether he was guilty or not:

and we, or ever he come near: where the sanhedrim sat;

are ready to kill him; lying in wait in some private place between the castle and the temple, from whence they intended to rush out at once upon him, and murder him; far enough both from the temple and the council, that both the one might not be defiled, though they did not greatly stick at that in those times, and that the other might not be charged with having any hand in his death.

Ver. 16. *And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait,* etc.] Paul might have a sister living in Jerusalem; or this her son might be there on account of his studies; he might be a pupil to one of the doctors, by which means he might come at this secret, that such a number of men were in ambush, in order to take away his uncle's life: wherefore having got intelligence of it,

he went and entered into the castle; the Alexandrian copy reads, "the synagogue"; but Paul was not there, but in the castle of Antonia; the Ethiopic version renders it, "the prison"; though it is plain that he was not very closely confined, it was easy to have access to him; the reason might be, not only because he was a Roman, but because he was uncondemned, nor was any charge proved against him:

and told Paul; what he had heard, that such a number of men had entered into a conspiracy to take away his life, and lay in wait for him; and this was an instance both of duty and affection to his uncle, and worthy of imitation, whether it proceeded from natural relation, or from religion, or both.

Ver. 17. *Then Paul called one of the centurions unto him,* etc.] For under this chief captain there must have been ten of them, if the company of which he was captain consisted of a thousand men, as his title chief captain

or chiliarch imports; for a centurion was over an hundred men, as his title signifies; perhaps this might be the same, as in (~~4225~~ Acts 22:25,26)

and said, bring this young man to the chief captain: which was a very prudent step, not to let the centurion into the secret, but to desire him to introduce the young man to the chief captain; for had he trusted the centurion with it, he might not have acquainted his officer with it, but have informed the liars in wait of it: now though the apostle was assured by Christ that he should not die at Jerusalem, but should bear witness of him at Rome, and though he did not distrust the truth of Christ's words, but most firmly believed them; yet he thought it his duty to make use of the means, which providence had put in his way, for his preservation and safety; the Ethiopic version reads, "bring this young man by night to the chief captain"; that so he might not be seen, and observed to have carried any intelligence to him:

for he hath a certain thing to tell him; which was of some moment and importance, and proper for him to know.

Ver. 18. *So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain,* etc.]

Immediately, without any more to do, without curiously inquiring into the thing, or examining the young man about it; which showed him to be a man of a good disposition, and ready to do a kind office, even to a prisoner:

and said, Paul the prisoner called me to him; either vocally or by some gesture, beckoned him to him:

and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee; in which may be observed the apostle's manner of address to the centurion, on this occasion; it was by way of entreaty; he asked it as a favour of him, to introduce his nephew to the chief captain; and the honour and modesty of the centurion, he did not seek by any methods to get the secret out, either of Paul or the young man; but readily undertakes the affair, honourably performs it, acquaints the captain with the circumstances of it, tells him the young man had something to say to him, he could not tell what, and then departs.

Ver. 19. *Then the chief captain took him by the hand,* etc.] Some have thought that the reason of this was, that he expected that the young man had brought him a present in his hand, from Paul; but this is to represent him as a sordid mercenary man, which ought not to be said, without sufficient proof; rather this should be considered as an instance of civility

and humanity, and what showed him to be a man of breeding and good manners; and might be done partly out of respect to Paul, and partly to encourage the young man to use freedom in the account he was about to give him:

and went with him aside privately; concluding by his coming from Paul, and perceiving by the account of the centurion, that he had a secret to communicate to him; wherefore it was acting a wise and prudent part to take him into a private room, and hear what he had to say:

and asked him, what is that thou hast to tell me? thereby giving the young man an opportunity, and encouraging him to relate the secret to him.

Ver. 20. *And he said, the Jews have agreed to desire thee*, etc.] By the Jews are meant, the Jewish sanhedrim, for the young man had not only intelligence of the conspiracy, and lying in wait of the forty men or more; but also of the agreement which the sanhedrim at the motion of these men were come into, to make the following request to the chief captain; which seems to confirm the above conjecture, that this young man might be a student under the president of the council, or one of the doctors, whereby he came at the knowledge of these things:

that thou wouldst bring down Paul tomorrow into the council, etc. (See Gill on “⁴²³¹⁵Acts 23:15”).

Ver. 21. *But do not thou yield unto them*, etc.] Or be persuaded by them, to bring Paul down from the castle to the sanhedrim; this must not be imputed to the young man’s pride and vanity, in taking upon him to give advice to the chief captain; but to his great affection for his uncle, which moved him to entreat, rather than to direct him, for which he gives a good reason:

for there lie in wait for him more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him; (see Gill on “⁴²³¹²Acts 23:12”). (see Gill on “⁴²³¹³Acts 23:13”).

and now are they ready; to execute their designs, being met together, and lying in ambush in some place, between the castle and the place where the sanhedrim met:

looking for a promise from thee; that when the sanhedrim should apply to him, he would promise them to bring Paul down according to their request;

and for the making and performing of this promise, these men were waiting.

Ver. 22. *So the chief captain then let the young man depart*, etc.] After he had had the account from him, and was master of the whole affair:

and charged him, see thou tell no man that thou hast showed these things to me; which was prudently said; it was a right and wise thing to conceal this matter, that the men might go on with their designs, and an opportunity be taken to convey Paul away, before the time came fixed by them to execute them; for otherwise, should it have been known that their plot was discovered, they would have entered upon new measures.

Ver. 23. *And he called to him two centurions*, etc.] Who had each of them an hundred soldiers under them:

saying, make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea; which was formerly called Strato's tower, a sea port town, where Felix the Roman governor now was; it was six hundred furlongs, or seventy five miles ^{f1158} from Jerusalem: these two hundred soldiers were foot soldiers, as appears by their being distinguished from horsemen in the next clause, and were just the number that the two centurions had the command of; the making of them ready, was their seeing to it, that they were properly clothed, and accoutred with arms and ammunition, and with sufficient provision for their journey:

and horsemen threescore and ten; the Ethiopic version reads, "a hundred"; but without support from any copy: "and spearmen two hundred"; who carried spears in their right hand; the word used signifies such who receive, lay hold on, or hold anything in their right hand: some think it designs such who were employed in the militia, to lay hold on guilty persons, and hold them; the Alexandrian copy reads, *δεξιοβολους*, "those that cast with the right hand"; and so reads the Syriac version, to which the Arabic agrees, which renders it "darters"; such as carried darts in their hands, and did not shoot out of a bow, but cast darts with their hands: now these being got ready, were ordered to march,

at the third hour of the night; at nine o'clock at night, that they might go out unobserved, and before the petition from the sanhedrim was presented to him.

Ver. 24. *And provide them beasts*, etc.] Horses or mules; the Syriac version reads in the singular number, “a beast”: and one being sufficient for Paul, here may be a change of number; the Arabic and Ethiopic versions leave out these words, but the following clause makes them necessary:

that they may set Paul on; on the beast, or on one of the beasts provided; if more than one were provided, they might be for his companions, to go along with him:

and bring him safe unto Felix the governor; this man, of a servant, was made a freed man by Claudius Caesar ^{f1159}, and by him appointed in the room of Cumanus governor of Judea ^{f1160}; he was the brother of Pallas, who had the chief management of affairs under the emperor; and this Felix married three persons successively, that were of royal families; hence Suetonius ^{f1161} calls him the husband of three queens; one of these was Drusilla, afterwards mentioned in (~~402b~~ Acts 24:24) who was sister to King Agrippa. Tacitus calls him Antonius Felix ^{f1162} which name he had from Antonia the mother of Claudius’, whose servant he was; Josephus ^{f1163} calls him Claudius Felix, which name he took from the Emperor Claudius, who from so low and mean condition raised him to such honour and dignity; his name Felix signifies “happy”: according to Tacitus ^{f1164}, when Felix was first sent into Judea, the government was divided between him and Cumanus; Felix had Samaria, and Cumanus the other part, which was called the nation of the Galilaeans; but Josephus takes no notice of any such division, he says ^{f1165}, that Cumanus was banished; and after that Felix was sent by Caesar, governor of Judea, of Galilee, Samaria, and Peraea; and so he seems to be governor of the whole country at this time; he was now at Caesarea, and it is plain that Judea was under his government, since Paul, a prisoner at Jerusalem, is sent down unto him; and in this his government he continued during the life of Claudius; and when Nero became emperor, and added four cities to the kingdom of Agrippa, he constituted Felix governor of the rest of Judea ^{f1166}; which character he bore till he thought fit to remove him, and put Festus in his room, of whom mention is made hereafter: after these words the following ones are added, in the Vulgate Latin version, “for he was afraid lest perhaps the Jews should take him by force and kill him, and afterwards he should bear the reproach, as if he had took money”; but they are not to be found in any Greek copies.

Ver. 25. *And he wrote a letter after this manner.*] The chief captain wrote a letter to Felix the governor, the form and sum of which were as follow; this letter he sent by one of the centurions to him.

Ver. 26. *Claudius Lysias, unto the most excellent Governor Felix,* etc.] This is the inscription of the letter, and by it we learn the name of the chief captain, so often spoken of in this and the two preceding chapters, which was Claudius Lysias; the first of these names is a Roman one, and which he might take from the Emperor Claudius, for he was not a Roman born; and the latter seems to be a Greek name, and was his proper name, and, he himself very likely was a Greek, since he purchased his freedom with money; one of this name was Archon of Athens ^{f1167}; and another is reckoned by Cicero ^{f1168}, among the famous orators of Greece, and is often cited by Harpocratian ^{f1169}; one of Antiochus's noblemen, and who was of the blood royal, and acted as a general against the Jews, was of this name ^{f1170}.

“So he left Lysias, a nobleman, and one of the blood royal, to oversee the affairs of the king from the river Euphrates unto the borders of Egypt:” (1 Maccabees 3:32)

The chief captain calls Felix the governor

the most excellent, which was a title of honour that belonged to him as a governor; the same is given to Theophilus, (~~LUKE~~ Luke 1:3) sendeth greeting; or wishes all health and prosperity.

Ver. 27. *This man was taken by the Jews,* etc.] Meaning Paul, who was presented by the centurions to the governor, and was in his presence when the letter was opened and read, and who was taken by the Jews in the temple, and from thence dragged out and beaten by them:

and should have been killed of them; and would have been killed, had it not been for the chief captain; he was very near being killed by them, he was nigh unto death:

then came I with an army and rescued him; he came with the Roman band, which he had the command of, perhaps a thousand soldiers; for such a number he should have under him by his title; with these he came upon the Jews on a sudden, as they were beating Paul, and took him out of their hands, and saved him:

having understood that he was a Roman; but this he did not know till afterwards, after he had bound him with two chains, and after he had ordered him to be bound with thongs, and examined by scourging; all which he covers and hides from the governor, and suggests that it was his great concern for the Roman name, and for a Roman citizen, which put him upon this enterprise.

Ver. 28. *And when I would have known the cause*, etc.] Or crime, he was guilty of:

wherefore they accused him: which they charged him with, and for which they beat him almost to death:

I brought him forth into their council; their court of judicature, the great sanhedrim.

Ver. 29. *Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law*, etc.] As about the resurrection of the dead, and a future state, which some in the council denied, and some asserted, which with this heathen man were idle and foolish questions; or about the defiling of the temple, and speaking contemptibly of the law of Moses, the people of the Jews, and the holy place, which was the cry of the populace against him, and were things the captain knew little of:

but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death, or of bonds: by the laws of the Romans; and yet he himself had bound him with two chains at the first taking of him, and afterwards ordered him to be bound with thongs, and scourged, of which he says nothing, being convinced of his error, and willing to hide it; however, he bears a full testimony to the innocence of the apostle.

Ver. 30. *And when it was told me*, etc.] As it was by Paul's sister's son,

how that the Jews laid wait for the man; had formed a conspiracy to take away his life, and laid a scheme in order to it, and at least intended, if they were not actually in ambush, to seize him as he should be brought from the castle to the sanhedrim:

I sent straightway to thee; the prisoner Paul, under a guard of soldiers; this he did directly, as soon as ever he heard of the design of the Jews; and he sent him to Felix, as being governor, to whom the judgment of this affair properly belonged, and who was best qualified for it, at least in the chief

captain's account; and who doubtless consulted his own honour and safety, lest he should incur blame and disgrace, should a Roman have been slain through any neglect or want of care in him:

and gave commandment to his accusers also, to say before thee what they had against him; it is reasonable to conclude, that he said nothing of this to them, though he might have determined he would, till after Paul was sent away; otherwise the affair would have been discovered, which he desired might be concealed:

farewell; which is the conclusion of the epistle, and is a wish of health and happiness.

Ver. 31. *Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul*, etc.]

Out of the castle, and put him upon a beast, as the chief captain had ordered the centurions, and they had directed the soldiers to do:

and brought him by night to Antipatris: they set out from Jerusalem at the third hour, or about nine o'clock at night, and travelled all night, and by break of day came to Antipatris; a city which lay in the road from Jerusalem to Caesarea: it was built by Herod the great, in the best soil of his kingdom, enriched with rivers and woods^{f1171}; and was so called by him, in memory of his father Antipater; it before went by the name of Chabar Zaba^{f1172}, or Capharsaba; the Jewish writers place it in the utmost borders of the land of Judea^{f1173}; hence that phrase so often used by them, from Gebath to Antipatris^{f1174}, in like sense as from Dan to Beersheba, these two places being the utmost borders of the land; here it was that Simon the just, with some of the principal inhabitants of Jerusalem, met Alexander the great, who travelled all night, as these soldiers with Paul did, and came to Antipatris at sun rising^{f1175}. It was forty two miles from Jerusalem. It was in the road from Judea to Galilee, as appears from the following canon of the Jews, concerning divorces^{f1176};

“if a husband says to his wife, lo, this is thy divorce, if I do not come thirty days hence, and he goes from Judea to Galilee, and comes to Antipatris and returns, it becomes void:”

the way from Jerusalem to Caesarea lay through Nicopolis, Lydda, Antipatris, and Betthar; from Jerusalem to Nicopolis, according to the old Jerusalem Itinerary^{f1177}, were twenty two miles; from thence to Lydda, ten miles; and from Lydda to Antipatris ten more (which make forty two miles, as before observed); and from Antipatris to Betthar ten miles, and from

thence to Caesarea, sixteen more: so that when the apostle was at Antipatris, he had twenty six miles more to go to Caesarea; and hence it appears, that the length of the journey from Jerusalem to Caesarea was sixty eight miles; though Josephus^{f1178} makes the distance to be six hundred furlongs, or seventy five miles: and that the way from the one to the other lay through the places before mentioned, may be illustrated from what the same writer says, of some persons travelling from Caesarea to Jerusalem; so he relates^{f1179}, concerning Quadratus governor of Syria, that from Tyre he came to Caesarea, from Caesarea to Lydda, and from Lydda to Jerusalem; and of Cestius the Roman general, he says^{f1180}, that from Caesarea he came to Antipatris, and from Antipatris to Lydda, and from Lydda to Jerusalem, which clearly seems to be the same road the apostle went; and so Jerom^{f1181}, in the account he gives of the journey of Paula, says, that she came to Caesarea, where she saw the house of Cornelius, the cottage of Philip, and the beds of the four virgin prophetesses; and from thence to Antipatris, a little town half pulled down, which Herod called after his father's name; and from thence to Lydda, now Diospolis, famous for the resurrection of Dorcas, and the healing of Aeneas. Antipatris is, by Ptolomy^{f1182}, placed at the west of Jordan, and is mentioned along with Gaza, Lydda, and Emmaus; some take it to be the same with Capharsalama, mentioned in:

“Nicanor also, when he saw that his counsel was discovered, went out to fight against Judas beside Capharsalama:” (1 Maccabees 7:31)

and others say, it is the same that is since called Assur or Arsuf, a town on the sea coast, which is not likely, since it does not appear that Antipatris was a maritime city. The apostle could not now stay to preach the Gospel in this place, nor do we elsewhere read or hear of a Gospel church state in it, until the “fifth” century; when it appears^{f1183} there was a church here, and Polychronius was bishop of it, who was present at the council of Chalcedon, held in the year 451; and in the “eighth” century there were many Christians dwelt here, for in the year 744 there were many of them killed by the Arabians.

Ver. 32. *On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him*, etc.] That is, the two hundred soldiers, and the two hundred spearmen, who were all on foot, left the seventy horsemen to conduct Paul to Caesarea; for being come to Antipatris, all danger from the Jews was over:

and returned to the castle; the castle Antonia in Jerusalem, from whence they set out.

Ver. 33. *Who, when they came to Caesarea*, etc.] The seventy horsemen:

and delivered the epistle to the governor; to Felix, governor of Judea, who was now at Caesarea; namely, the letter which Claudius Lysias, the chief captain, sent to him; the form and contents of which are before given:

these presented Paul also before him; concerning whom, and whose affairs, the letter was.

Ver. 34. *And when the governor, had read the letter*, etc.] Which he doubtless opened and read as soon as he had received it, not knowing what important business might be contained in it, or of what dangerous consequence a neglect of reading it might be; this showed care and diligence in him:

he asked of what province he was; since he perceived by the letter he was a Roman, and that he might know whether he was under his jurisdiction, and whether the hearing of his case belonged to him; and it should seem that it rather belonged to the governor of Syria; but that the crimes he was charged with were committed in Judea, particularly that of profaning the temple.

And when he understood that he was of Cilicia; which was a Roman province, in which Tarsus was, where Paul was born free; (^{<4213>}Acts 21:39, 22:3).

Ver. 35. *I will hear thee, said he*, etc.] The Arabic and Ethiopic versions read, “we will hear”, which is a grand courtly way of speaking:

when thine accusers are come; which Lysias, in his letter, informed him that he had ordered them to come; which shows the governor to have some sense of justice and integrity, being desirous to hear both sides before he judged of the affair, though there was so much said in the chief captain’s letter in favour of Paul’s innocence, and against his enemies.

And he commanded him to be kept in Herod’s judgment hall; or palace: this was a place built by Herod the great at Caesarea, of whose magnificent buildings here Josephus gives a large account. For besides the famous haven or port which he made here, he adorned the place with splendid palaces, he built a theatre, and an amphitheatre, and a “forum”^{f1184}, which

was either a market place, or a court of judicature; and if the latter, perhaps the same that is here meant, in a part of which, or in a place adjoining to it, the apostle was put. Here he was kept by a guard of soldiers, but not in close confinement; he had much liberty, and his friends and acquaintance had leave to come to him; (see ~~4023~~ Acts 24:23). We read ^{f1185} of $\hat{y}rsyq$ $l \text{ } \text{ç} \text{ } yj \text{ } yd$, which some interpret “the chamber of the judges of Caesarea”; or the place where they sat in judgment, and may be the same that is here meant; though others interpret it a prison; and so it seems was this judgment hall of Herod’s.