

Sha'ul of Tarsus & His Letters ~ Part 161

Sha'ul's Arrest and Trial ~ Part 5

Note: To examine the graphics in this series, click on them for a pop-up version.

We continue in the **Book of Acts**. **Sha'ul's Arrest and Trial** continues in Acts 23:16.

Sha'ul's Nephew Gives Warning

¹⁶ But the son of Sha'ul's sister got wind of the planned ambush, and he went into the barracks and told Sha'ul.

We know a bit about **Sha'ul's** parents—they were **Hellenist Jews** who also were **P'rushim**; they were of the tribe of **Benjamin**; and they spoke **Hebrew** as well as **Greek** (Acts 23:6, Philippians 3:5) in the town where they lived, **Tarsus**, in **Cilicia**. But we know nothing about his sister or about his nephew, who was visiting or living in **Yerushalayim** and who helped save him. How his nephew became privy to the plot is uncertain. Either **Sha'ul's** enemies included members of his own family, in which case the nephew's presence would not have alarmed them, or his relationship with **Sha'ul** was unknown to the plotters.

¹⁷ Sha'ul called one of the officers and said, "Take this man up to the commander; he has something to tell him." ¹⁸ So, he took him and brought him to the commander and said, "The prisoner Sha'ul called me and asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you." ¹⁹ The commander took him by the hand, led him aside privately and asked, "What is it you have to tell me?" ²⁰ He said, "The Judeans have agreed to ask you tomorrow to bring Sha'ul down to the Sanhedrin on the pretext that they want to investigate his case more thoroughly. ²¹ But don't let yourself be talked into it because more than forty men are lying in wait for him. They have taken an oath neither to eat nor to drink until they kill him, and they are ready now, only waiting for you to give your consent to their request." ²² The commander let the young man go, cautioning him, "Don't tell anyone that you have reported this to me."

It is not surprising that **Sha'ul's** nephew had access to **Sha'ul**, who had not been condemned for a crime besides being a **Roman** citizen. Also, the **commander** apparently believed **Sha'ul** was innocent.

Preparations for Transfer of Sha'ul

²³ Then he summoned two of the captains and said, "Get two hundred infantry soldiers ready to leave for Caesarea at nine o'clock tonight, and seventy mounted cavalry and two hundred spearmen; ²⁴ also provide replacements for Sha'ul's horse when it gets tired; and bring him through safely to Felix the governor."

Felix, the governor, or, more precisely, the **Procurator of Judea**. He was governor of **Shomron** (**Samaria**) from 48 to 52 CE, while **Cumanas** ruled **Judea**. When the latter was removed from office for failing to suppress rioting between the **Jews** and **Gentiles** of **Caesarea**, **Felix** replaced him. About him, **Tacitus** wrote, "With all cruelty and lust he exercised the power of a king with the spirit of a slave," referring

to his being a freedman of **Emperor Claudius' mother, Antonia. Felix** had three wives in succession, the last being **Drusilla** (Acts 24:17). ¹

25 And the commander wrote the following letter:

The following letter is literally “a letter having this form.” **Luke** must have had access to the document itself in order to quote it exactly.

26 From: Claudius Lysias

To: His Excellency, Governor Felix:
Greetings!

27 This man was seized by the Judeans and was about to be killed by them when I came on the scene with my troops and rescued him. After learning that he was a Roman citizen, ²⁸ I wanted to understand exactly what they were charging him with, so I brought him down to their "Sanhedrin."

29 I found that he was charged in connection with questions of their "Torah" but that there was no charge deserving death or prison.

30 But when I was informed of a plot against the man, I immediately sent him to you and also ordered his accusers to state their case against him before you. ²

I immediately sent him to you and ordered his accusers to state their case against him before you. **Claudius Lysias** knows that these accusers have nothing against **Sha'ul** worthy of judgment in a **Roman** court (compare Acts 18:12–16, 25:19)—he has already learned that and just said so (vv. 28–29). But he wants to extricate himself from a bad situation which he has already bungled several times.

Sha'ul Removed to Caesarea

31 So the soldiers, following their orders, took Sha'ul during the night and brought him to Antipatris, ³² then returned to the barracks after leaving the cavalry to go on with him. ³³ The cavalry took him to Caesarea, delivered the letter to the governor, and handed Sha'ul over to him. ³⁴ The governor read the letter and asked what province he was from. On learning he was from Cilicia, ³⁵ he said, "I will give you a full hearing after your accusers have also arrived," and ordered him to be kept under guard in Herod's headquarters.

The propraetor of Syria ruled **Cilicia**, and **Sha'ul** might have to be heard before him. ***Under guard in Herod's headquarters*** (the **Praetorium**). **Sha'ul** is placed in military custody for his protection but not put in a prison cell since no charges have yet been brought against him.

In our next post, we learn about **Sha'ul's Appearance Before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa**.

¹ David H. Stern, Jewish New Testament Commentary, Acts 23:24.

² Acts 23:16–30.