

Esther:

A Brave Queen



One of the remarkable things about the account in the Book of Esther is that God isn't mentioned in it BUT His name is hidden in the Hebrew text and His activity is everywhere.

In today's passage in Acts 23:12-35 can you see God at work even though His name isn't mentioned?

Acts 23:12 – 35

The account so far

Paul had gone to Jerusalem with a gift for the believers. He was attacked and was rescued/arrested by the Romans guards at the temple. The Romans were going to flog Paul but he told them he was a Roman citizen.

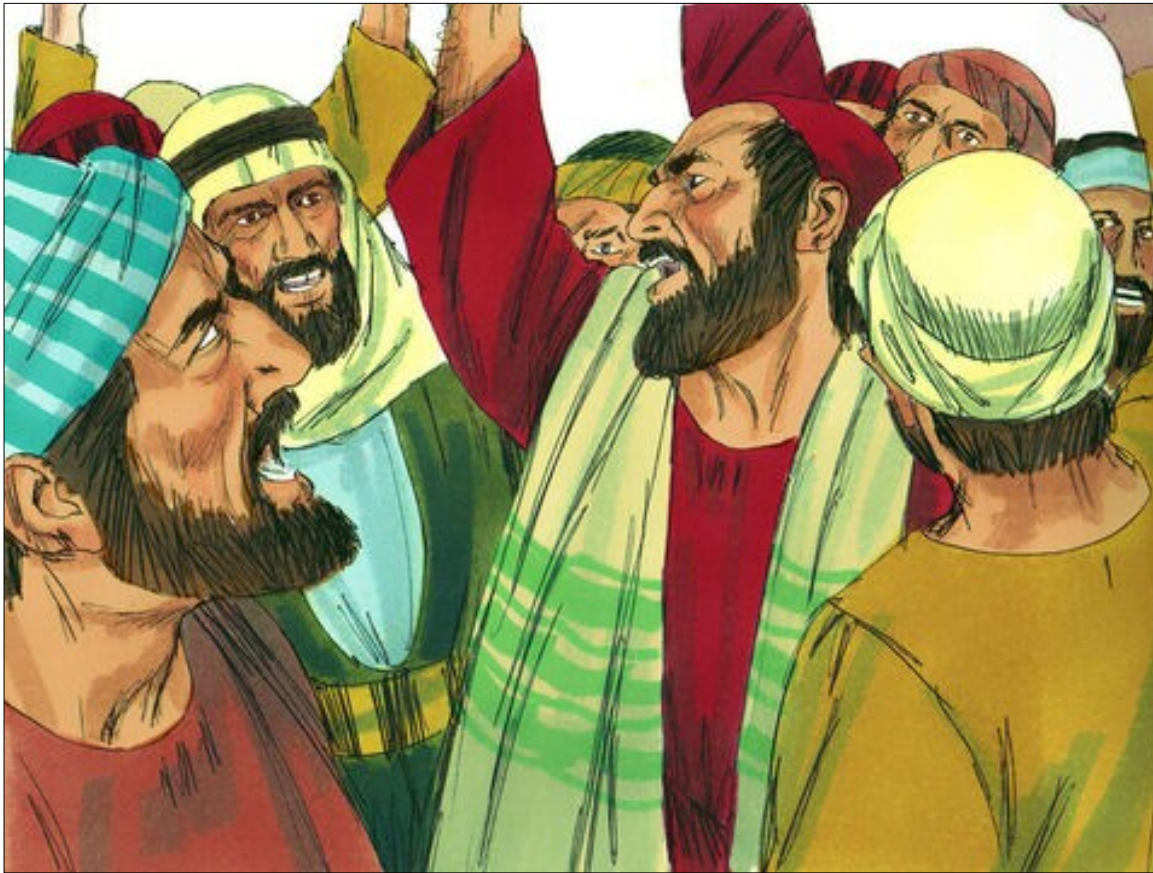
It was arranged for him to speak at the Sanhedrin the following day so that the Roman Commander could clarify what it was all about, but it turned into a shouting match between the Pharisees and Sadducees.

That night the Lord told Paul he would be going to Rome.



The plot to kill Paul

The next morning the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. More than forty men were involved in this plot.



40+ angry Assassins

Commitment doesn't
make it right.

They went to the chief priests and elders and said, "We have taken a solemn oath not to eat anything until we have killed Paul.



Probably from the Sadducee group of leaders.

Corrupt leadership!
Encouraging injustice
rather than condemning
the plan.

Now then, you and the Sanhedrin petition the commander to bring him before you on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about his case. We are ready to kill him before he gets here."



It's a lie! (Who is the author of lies?)

WE will kill him and YOU will not appear to be involved!

The enemy tries to cancel the Lord's promise to Paul.

Proverbs 21:30 There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the LORD.

But when the son of Paul's sister heard of this plot, he went into the barracks and told Paul.



God's providential overruling.

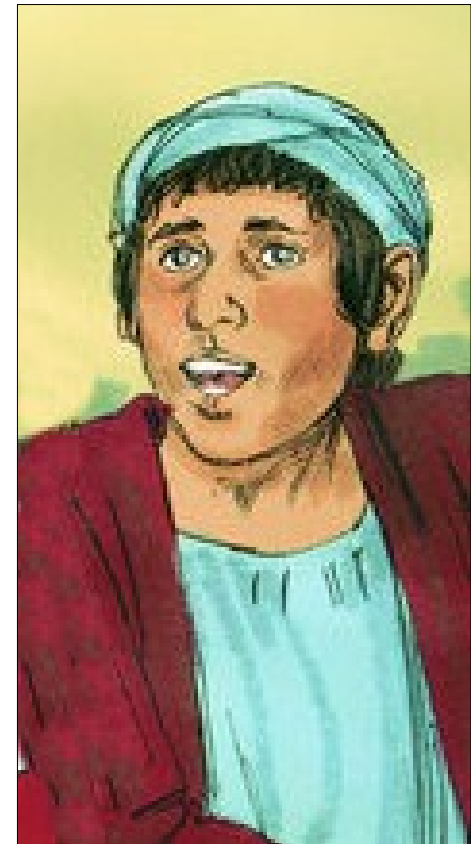
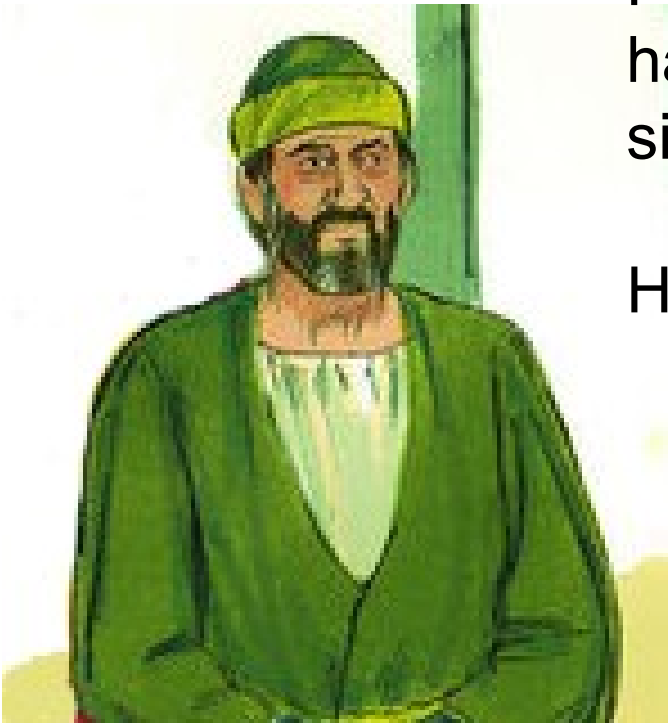
How did he get to just overhear about the plot. Had some of them been boasting etc?

Then Paul called one of the centurions and said, "Take this young man to the commander; he has something to tell him." So he took him to the commander.

Paul instructs the 'respectful' officer

Paul's Roman citizenship would have had some influence in the situation.

He was born a Roman citizen!



The centurion said, "Paul, the prisoner, sent for me and asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you."



So far ... so good.

The commander took the young man by the hand, drew him aside and asked, "What is it you want to tell me?"



The friendly commander put him at ease

He said.. "The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul before the Sanhedrin tomorrow on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about him.



He passed on the information clearly – there's a plot going on

Don't give in to them, because more than forty of them are waiting in ambush for him. They have taken an oath not to eat or drink until they have killed him. They are ready now, waiting for your consent to their request."



It's a trick. They will be ambushed and probably all killed.

The commander dismissed the young man and cautioned him, "Don't tell anyone that you have reported this to me."

Message received and understood.
It would be dangerous for you if our
conversation became known.



SHHH!!!

Then he called two of his centurions and ordered them, "Get ready a detachment of two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at nine tonight. Provide **mounts** for Paul so that he may be taken safely to Governor Felix."



His instant response.

This is quite a large escort – 470 soldiers! Get him out of the area to the Roman provincial headquarters.

What became of the 40+ assassins?

He wrote a letter as follows.. Claudius Lysias, To His Excellency, Governor Felix.. Greetings.



This was an explanation for the Governor (in Greek or Latin?).

Usual introduction style

Felix (not a good man according to the records. How would he react?

This man was seized by the Jews and they were about to kill him, but I came with my troops and rescued him, for I had learned that he is a Roman citizen.



‘This man’ is a respectful term.

Lysias claims the credit for Paul’s ‘rescue’.

‘Spinning’ the details.

I wanted to know why they were accusing him, so I brought him to their Sanhedrin.



I wanted to ascertain the facts of the case, so employed their system of enquiry.

I found that the accusation had to do with questions about their law, but there was no charge against him that deserved death or imprisonment.



He managed to make some sense of the chaos, and it involved nothing we Romans would be worried about.
(This was a message for future Roman readers of Acts)
Luke was being directed by the Lord.

When I was informed of a plot to be carried out against the man,
I sent him to you at once.



This was true.
Prompt reaction to a real
threat.



I also ordered his accusers to present to you their case against him.



The order would have been given in the morning, after Paul was safely out of the way.

I'm passing the responsibility to a more senior level – you...

So the soldiers, carrying out their orders, took Paul with them during the night and brought him as far as Antipatris.



Antipatris lies on less mountainous ground and so the risk of ambush was less. It was safe for the soldiers to return.

The next day they let the cavalry go on with him, while they returned to the barracks. When the cavalry arrived in Caesarea, they delivered the letter to the governor and handed Paul over to him.



Safe arrival.
Stage 1 completed

The governor read the letter and asked what province he was from. Learning that he was from Cilicia, he said, "I will hear your case when your accusers get here."



The case was in Felix's jurisdiction.
And this was the start of a prophetic fulfilment of Acts 9:15

Then he ordered that Paul be kept under guard in Herod's **palace**.



A prisoner for years to come!



Could you see God's hand at work in this account?

Paul had to leave Jerusalem – the plot speeds it up.
Paul's nephew just happened to be in the right place.
The captain was willing to listen.
Paul had free access to the commander (for a prisoner!)
The commander took the message seriously.
A suitable transport was provided.
A substantial escort was provided.
A royal residence to stay in.

Psalm 23:1 The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.