

Paul before Judges and Officials

PLACE	REFERENCE	CAUSE OF ACTION	OFFICIAL OR COURT	HOLDING OR OUTCOME	CONSEQUENCE
Jerusalem	Acts 9:1–2	Paul volunteers to arrest Christians in Damascus	The High Priest	Paul given letters of introduction	Paul blinded and converted
Paphos (on Cyprus)	Acts 13:6–12	Paul and Barnabas summoned concerning Bar-jesus, a sorcerer	Sergius Paulus, the Roman proconsul	Paul blinds Bar-jesus; he is led away by the hand	The proconsul believes
Antioch (in Pisidia)	Acts 13:14–51	Jews stir up persecution	The prominent men and women of the city	They expel Paul and Barnabas from their district	They pursue Paul to Lystra
Iconium (in Lycaonia)	Acts 14:1–5	People are divided over the miracles Paul performed	Gentiles and local Jewish leaders rush against Paul	They want to humiliate and stone Paul and Barnabas	Paul and Barnabas get word of it and leave for Lystra
Lystra (in Lycaonia)	Acts 14:12–19	Paul and Barnabas received as Mercury and Jupiter	Jews from Antioch and Iconium persuade the townspeople	They stone Paul; drag him out of the city as if dead	Paul revives
Philippi (Roman capital of Macedonia)	Acts 16:16–40	Paul and Silas interfere with a soothsayer's business; trouble the city; teach unlawful customs	They take Paul and Silas to the rulers in the forum	Magistrates tear their clothes and beat them without a conviction	Held overnight in prison; do not flee when earthquake hits; released and asked to leave town

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Thessalonica (town west of Philippi)	Acts 17:5–9	Zealous Jews arouse the rabble; put the city in an uproar; Paul escapes	Jason arraigned before the city fathers for violating decrees of Caesar and saying Jesus is king	They settle the case	They take a security offering and release Paul's friends
Athens	Acts 17:17–33	Paul disputes in the synagogue and the city center	Philosophers take him to the Areopagus, the high court	They recess to hear more about the matter later	Paul leaves town voluntarily
Corinth (Roman capital of Achaia)	Acts 18:1–18	The ruler of the synagogue converts to Christianity; Jews accuse Paul of apostasy	Publicly taken before Gallio, pro-consul of Achaia	Gallio declines to take jurisdiction	The new ruler of the synagogue is beaten publicly
Ephesus (Roman capital of Asia)	Acts 19:13–19	Jewish exorcists use the name of Jesus; the spirit recognizes Paul	Jews and Greeks become afraid and confess their activities	Many magic books are burned in public	The word of God prevails
Ephesus	Acts 19:24–41	Paul's preaching threatens the silver-smiths' business	Ephesus city clerk and a large assembly in the theater	Chief city administrative assistant sees no cause of action	Administrator dismisses the assembly
Jerusalem	Acts 21:27–34	Asian Jews accuse Paul of desecrating the people, the law, and the temple	Israelite men seize him and attempt to kill him	The Roman captain, Claudius Lysias, intervenes	Paul is chained and taken into custody

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Jerusalem	Acts 21:37–22:29	Roman captain allows Paul to speak to the crowd, who accuse him further	Military tribunal examines Paul by scourging him in the Antonia Fortress	Paul invokes his Roman citizenship	Any Roman charges against Paul are dropped
Jerusalem	Acts 22:30–23:10	Paul taken before the Jews to answer their charges; High Priest commands Paul be hit	Sanhedrin and Chief Priests	The court becomes divided over theological differences	Roman captain takes Paul back to the Fortress
Caesarea	Acts 23:25–35	Paul's preliminary hearing based on Claudius Lysias's transmittal letter	Felix, governor of Judea	Takes jurisdiction but postpones trial until accusers can appear	Paul placed in Herod's Praetorium
Caesarea	Acts 24:1–26	Tertullus and Ananias charge Paul of disruption, sedition, and profaning temple	Felix hears Paul's denial of the charges	Case suspended awaiting Claudius Lysias's testimony	For two years, Felix holds Paul in house arrest hoping for a bribe. Paul is able to teach
Caesarea	Acts 25:6–12	Jews from Jerusalem accuse Paul of offending Jewish law, the temple, and Caesar	Festus, governor of Judea	Paul refuses to be tried in Jerusalem	Paul's appeal to Caesar in Rome is accepted
Caesarea	Acts 25:22–26:32	Festus is unsure what charges he should report when he sends Paul to Rome	King Agrippa, son of Herod Agrippa I, volunteers to hear the case	They find Paul innocent of all charges	Agrippa decides that Paul's appeal must stand

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Explanation

In addition to its accounts of Paul's missionary efforts, the book of Acts intriguingly chronicles Paul's appearance before many officials and judges. Often he welcomed the opportunity to explain his actions and, more frequently than not, answer charges brought by angry local Jewish leaders whose congregants Paul had converted to Christianity. On occasion the presiding official was Roman, but usually these judges were city magistrates who would have shared a Greek background with their fellow townsmen, or they were local citizens from a town of Asia Minor with a hellenized population. The typical outcome of such hearings and inquests was dismissal of the charges or a tacit agreement that Paul move on in order to assure local order. Chart 15-6 presents detailed information about each judicial appearance of Paul as recounted in Acts. Paul's repeated victories in court show that he was well trained in the law and reassured early Christians that their cause was just and defensible.

References

D. W. J. Gill and Conrad Gempf, *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting: Greco-Roman Setting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

Brian Rapske, *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting: Paul in Roman Custody* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

John W. Mauck, *Paul on Trial: The Book of Acts as a Defense of Christianity* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 85–86, featuring charts on legal charges against Paul, arguments and possible exhibits in defense of Paul, countercharges against accusers of Christians, speeches and trials in Acts.