

**THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW**  
**Christianity In The Making: From Jerusalem To The South Bay**  
**Acts 23-24**

**For discussion with your small group, an accountability partner, your spouse,  
or for your own reflection.**

1. Any “ah ha’s” from the message this week?
2. Paul told his own story instead of preaching a sermon both to the crowd and to the Roman authorities. When do you find your story most helpful to others? If you haven’t already done so, share your story with the small group.
3. What is one of the hardest things you have had to experience because of your faith?
4. How have you felt encouraged by the Lord during hard times?
5. What could be your “Rome”, the next crucial step in your spiritual journey? Why do you think so?
6. What examples of irrational hatred have you seen or felt?
7. How has your desire to serve Christ been misunderstood by others? How did you feel?
8. If someone wanted to prove you were a Christian passed on evidence this past week, what could they use?
9. What difference does it make to you that Jesus truly rose from the dead? What would be different about your faith if that were not the case?

**Digging deeper in personal study and reflection.**

1. Thinking of the determination of these men to kill Paul in Acts 23:12-15, look up Romans 10:2. Why do you think Paul was a threat?
2. If Felix (Acts 24:22-26) had been in Pilates place, what do you think he would have done with Jesus. Compare with Luke 23:1-25.
3. If someone were to offer you a bribe to do a favor for them, what’s the most effective incentive they could use: A return favor? Your favorite meal? Free babysitting? Flattery? Give an example of how bribery has worked with your parents, spouse, or kids.
4. What’s the difference with being well acquainted with the way (Acts 24:22) and being a true believer? How long were you acquainted before you became a believer?



5. Paul has come a long way since Acts 9:1. How do you think this accounts in part for the animosity?
6. When have you personally had to appear before an important or powerful person and put your fate in their hands: Before a judge? A tax audit? Asking for a pay raise or hike in your allowance? Asking for his daughter's hand in marriage? Asking for liability damages? Agreeing with a dentist or doctor about something that had to be done? How did you feel about this beforehand?
7. Compare Acts 26:20 with Acts 20:21. How would you tell someone what it meant to be a Christian from these two verses?
8. Up until this point the Romans considered Christians and Jews basically one and the same. Within five years of this time, the emperor Nero was aware of enough differences to violently persecute the Christians in Rome. From Paul's speech in Acts 26, what can the Romans begin to see as some of the differences?
9. How does Acts 26:18 fit as a description of your spiritual journey?
10. Digging a little deeper into Paul's trial and reflect on or re-read Acts 22-26 and look at the parallels between the response of the Jews and Romans and subsequent trials of Jesus and Paul.

### **Parallel Trials - Jesus & Paul**

**Luke 6:40** The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher

#### **False Charges:**

**Matt. 26.59-60** The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward.

#### **Accused of Blasphemy:**

**Matt. 26.65-68** Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?" "He is worthy of death," they answered. Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him and said, "Prophecy to us, Messiah. Who hit you?"

#### **Accused of disrespecting the High Priest for truth telling:**

**John 18:20-23** "I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said." When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby slapped him in the face. "Is this the way you answer the high priest?" he demanded. "If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?"

#### **Both are innocent:**

**Luke 23:4** Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no basis for a charge against this man."

#### **The disciples and Paul are given assurance:**

**Luke 12.11-12** "When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say."