

ACTS CHAPTER 24

HAVE YOU EVER BEEN CALLED TO JURY DUTY? TODAY WE ARE GOING TO WATCH THE ROMAN COURT AS PAUL STANDS BEFORE THE ROMAN GOVERNOR FELIX (THE JUDGE). THIS SECTION CONTAINS A FULL EXAMINATION, WITH REPRESENTATION BY BOTH THE JEWISH ACCUSERS AND PAUL. LISTEN CAREFULLY....

FIRST WE MUST HEAR THE BACKGROUND OF OUR CASE. WHAT HAPPENED THAT BROUGHT PAUL TO THIS PLACE OF ACCUSATION? LOOK AT ACTS 21:17 After we arrived in Jerusalem, the brothers *and sisters* received us gladly. **18** And the following day Paul went in with us to [a]James, and all the elders were present. **19** After he had greeted them, he *began* to relate one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. **20** And when they heard *about them*, they *began* glorifying God; and they said to him, "You see, brother, how many [b]thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law; **21** and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to abandon Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to [c]walk according to the customs. **22** So what is *to be done*? They will certainly hear that you have come. **23** Therefore, do [d]as we tell you: we have four men who have a [e]vow upon themselves; **24** take them along and purify yourself together with them, and [f]pay their expenses so that they may shave their [g]heads; and *then* everyone will know that there is nothing to what they have been told about you, but that you yourself also conform, keeping the Law.

SO FAR SO GOOD, VS 26 Then Paul [a]took along the men, and the next day, after purifying himself together with them, he went into the temple giving notice of the completion of the days of purification, until the sacrifice was offered for each one of them. BUT....

27 When the seven days were almost over, the Jews from [a]Asia, upon seeing him in the temple, *began* to stir up all the crowd and laid hands on him, **28** crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who instructs everyone everywhere against our people and the Law and this place; and besides, he has even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place!" NOW WE HAVE THE BACKGROUND STORY, LET THE TRIAL BEGIN.

VS 1 THE ACCUSERS ARE: 1. _____ . 2. _____
3. _____

VS 2-8 THE CHARGES ARE: VS 2-3 WHO IS THE PROSECUTOR? _____
HOW DOES THE PROSECUTOR BEGIN? (BEFORE YOU CAN WIN A CASE, YOU MUST WIN OVER YOUR JUDGE.) VS 2 WHAT IS THE FLATTERY IN THIS VERSE? _____
_____ (THOUGHT: WHY DID IT TAKE NEARLY FIVE HUNDRED SOLDIERS TO PROTECT PAUL IN TRANSIT FROM JERUSALEM TO CAESAREA?)
VS 4 WHAT DOES THE PROSECUTOR REQUEST?

VS 5-6 WHAT ARE THE CHARGES? 1. _____ . 2. _____
3. _____ 4. _____

VS 7 NOTE- THE EARLY MANUSCRIPTS DO NOT CONTAIN THE REMAINDER OF VERSE 6, VERSE 7, NOR THE FIRST PART OF 8. WHAT WAS LEFT OUT SAYS, VS 6 "WE WANTED TO JUDGE HIM ACCORDING TO OUR OWN LAW. VS 7 BUT LYSIAS THE COMMANDER CAME ALONG AND WITH VIOLENCE TOOK HIM OUT OF OUR HANDS. VS 8 ORDERING HIS ACCUSERS TO COME BEFORE YOU.

VS 8 WHAT DOES THE ATTORNEY SUGGEST?

VS 9 WE SEE MORE WITNESSES. WHO ARE THEY? WHAT DO THEY SAY?

LET'S REVIEW THE CHARGES:

1. THIS CHARGE HAD POLITICAL OVERTONES. PAUL IS A PEST, A WORLDWIDE TROUBLEMAKER, STIRRING UP RIOTS EVERYWHERE. THIS CHARGE MAKES PAUL A DANGER TO CIVIC PEACE. IT IS FRAMED IN A WAY THAT CONNECTS THIS CASE WITH FELIX'S CHIEF AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY, KEEPING THE PEACE.

2. THE SECOND CHARGE WAS ALSO CONCERNED WITH THE GOVERNMENT BECAUSE TERTULLUS MADE IT APPEAR THAT CHRISTIANITY WAS DIVORCED FROM THE JEWISH RELIGION. ROME PERMITTED JUDAISM AS A LEGAL RELIGION, BUT IT WOULD NOT TOLERATE ANY NEW RELIGIONS.

3. WHAT IS THE NEXT CHARGE? DESECRATING THE TEMPLE ALSO HAD POLITICAL OVERTONES BECAUSE THE ROMANS HAD GIVEN THE JEWS PERMISSION TO EXECUTE ANY GENTILE WHO WENT INSIDE THE BARRIER OF THE TEMPLE (21:28). NOTE: AT THIS POINT TERTULLUS MODIFIED THE ORIGINAL CHARGE MADE IN 21:28. **28** crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who instructs everyone everywhere against our people and the Law and this place; and besides, he has even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place!" THERE PAUL IS ACCUSED OF BRINGING A GENTILE INTO THE TEMPLE COURTS; HERE PAUL IS SAID TO HAVE ATTEMPTED DESECRATION.

VS 9 HOW DID THE JEWS RESPOND?

THE ACCUSED SPEAKS- OPENING STATEMENT:

VS 10 PAUL HAS A SHORTER OPENING STATEMENT. PAUL SIMPLY RECOGNIZED FELIX'S ROLE FOR MANY YEARS AS JUDGE AND EXPRESSED HIS APPRECIATION FOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO DEFEND HIMSELF. (FELIX WOULD HAVE BEEN A JUDGE FOR ABOUT FIVE YEARS AT THIS POINT). THE IMPLICATION IS THAT THE GOVERNOR WILL BE ABLE TO WEIGH AND DISCERN THE LACK OF EVIDENCE AGAINST PAUL. PAUL LAYS OUT HIS REMARKS AS A DEFENSE, TO DECLARE HIS INNOCENCE.

THE STRUCTURE OF HIS REPLY IS:

VS 11 WHAT DOES PAUL SAY HIS REASON WAS FOR GOING TO JERUSALEM? THERE IS MUCH DISPUTE ABOUT THE TWELVE DAYS. HOW ARE THEY RECKONED IS NOT CLEAR. SO WE WILL JUST STAND BY PAUL'S WORD OF "TWELVE DAYS AGO". PAUL WAS NOT THE CAUSE OF ANY DISTURBANCE ANYWHERE. HE WAS THERE MERELY TO WORSHIP.

VS 12 DEFENSE CONTINUES- WHAT DOES PAUL DECLARE?

VS 13 WHAT DOES PAUL DECLARE?

VS 14-16 ALWAYS A WITNESS! PAUL NEVER MISSES AN OPPORTUNITY TO WITNESS FOR HIS SAVIOR! HE ADMITS TO CERTAIN THINGS, NONE OF THEM CRIMES. WHAT DOES PAUL ADMIT?

1. _____ "THE WAY" WAS AN EARLY NAME FOR CHRISTIANITY. "SECT" A SMALL FACTION OR PARTY UNITED BY COMMON INTEREST OR BELIEFS. BEFORE PAUL WAS A CHRISTIAN, HE WAS A PHARISEE-A MEMBER OF THE STRICTEST GROUP OF JEWISH RELIGION. BY BEING CALLED A "SECT" IS SEEN AS JEWISH IN ORIGIN.

2. _____ I WORSHIP THE GOD OF ISRAEL.

3. _____ IN CONFORMITY WITH LAW/PROPHETS
PAUL MEANT THAT CHRISTIANITY WAS AN OUTGROWTH OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

VS 15 WHAT IS PAUL'S HOPE? _____ WHO WILL THIS INCLUDE?

VS 16 WHAT DOES THE STATEMENT "IN VIEW OF THIS" REFER TO? WHAT DOES PAUL DESIRE BEFORE GOD AND OTHER PEOPLE? _____

VS 17 PAUL EXPLAINS WHY HE CAME TO JERUSALEM. WHAT DOES HE SAY?

VS 18 PAUL WAS GIVING THANKS IN THE TEMPLE, NOT CAUSING ANY TROUBLE AS HE WORSHIPPED. PAUL CLAIMS THAT IT WAS THE JEWS FROM ASIA WHO CAUSED HIS ARREST AND DISTURBANCE. HIS JEWISH ACCUSERS SIMPLY DISTURBED SOMEONE ENGAGED IN GENUINE WORSHIP.

VS 19-21 WHAT DOES PAUL ASK OF FELIX? WHO DOES PAUL THINK SHOULD BRING THE CHARGES AGAINST HIM? AS A JUROR WOULD YOU ALSO WANT TO KNOW WHY THEY ARE NOT THERE? THE DEFENSE ATTORNEY WILL BRING UP THE FACT THAT THE COUNCIL FOUND HIM INNOCENT. ACTS 23:9 And a great uproar occurred; and some of the scribes of the Pharisaic party stood up and *started* arguing heatedly, saying, "We find nothing wrong with this man; suppose a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?" THERE RESURRECTION WAS A KEY ISSUE.

THE VERDICT

VS 22 WHAT DO WE LEARN ABOUT THE JUDGE? 1. _____
HOW FELIX KNEW ABOUT THE WAY CAN ONLY BE SURMISED. PROBABLY HE HEARD ABOUT IT FROM DRUSILLA, HIS WIFE, WHO WAS THE DAUGHTER OF HEROD AGRIPPA I AND SISTER OF HEROD AGRIPPA II. BECAUSE SHE WAS A JEWESS SHE WOULD KNOW ABOUT THE WAY. BESIDES, FELIX COULD SCARCELY RULED IN JUDEA FOR SEVERAL YEARS WITHOUT LEARNING SOMETHING OF THE EARLY CHURCH.

AND 2. _____ (IN ROMAN LEGAL TERMINOLOGY, HE "RESERVES JUDGMENT.") REMEMBER FELIX HAD A LETTER FROM LYSIAS. (ACTS 23:26-30)

26 "Claudius Lysias, to the most excellent governor Felix: Greetings.

27 When this man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them, I came up to them with the troops and rescued him, after learning that he was a Roman. 28 And wanting to ascertain the basis for the charges they were bringing against him, I brought him down to their [a] Council; 29 and I found that he was being accused regarding questions in their Law, but [b] was not charged with anything deserving death or [c] imprisonment.

30 When I was informed that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, also instructing his accusers to [d] bring charges against him before you."

YET FELIX DECIDES TO PUT OFF A DECISION AND WAIT FOR CLAUDIUS LYSIAS TO COME TO CAESAREA. PAUL WAS KEPT IN CUSTODY WITH FREEDOM. WHY DO YOU THINK GOD ALLOWED THIS TO HAPPEN? LET'S SEE WHAT HAPPENS.

THE SENTENCE:

VS 23 FELIX, EVIDENTLY AWARE OF PAUL'S INNOCENCE, GRANTED HIM A LIMITED AMOUNT OF FREEDOM AS A PRISONER UNDER THE GUARDIANSHIP OF A CENTURION. THE GUARDS WERE CHANGED EVERY SIX HOURS, A PERFECT CAPTIVE CONGREGATION. WE ARE NOT TOLD, BUT WONDER HOW MANY MEN PAUL LEAD TO SALVATION? WHAT PAUL'S MINISTRY WAS DURING THOSE TWO YEARS, WE DO NOT KNOW, BUT WE CAN BE SURE HE GAVE A FAITHFUL WITNESS FOR THE LORD.

VS 24 WHAT DOES THE LORD DO NEXT? WHO COMES? IT MUST HAVE BEEN THE CURIOSITY OF DRUSILLA THAT PROMPTED FELIX TO GIVE PAUL ANOTHER HEARING. GOD GIVES PAUL'S TESTIMONY TO THE NATION'S HIGHEST SOCIAL LEVELS. DRUSILLA WAS BORN IN AD 38, SHE IS NOT YET TWENTY YEARS OLD, THE YOUNGEST DAUGHTER OF HEROD AGRIPPA I AND SISTER TO AGRIPPA II. THIS IS HER SECOND MARRIAGE. SHE LEFT HER FIRST HUSBAND, WHO SHE HAD MARRIED IN AN ARRANGED MARRIAGE AT FOURTEEN. SHE IS FELIX'S THIRD WIFE. HER FAMILY HAD BEEN INVOLVED WITH "THE WAY" ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS. HER GREAT-GRANDFATHER TRIED TO KILL JESUS IN BETHLEHEM (MATT 2); HER GREAT-UNCLE KILLED JOHN THE BAPTIST AND MOCKED JESUS (LUKE 23:6-12); AND ACTS 12:1-2 TELLS OF HER FATHER KILLING THE APOSTLE JAMES.

JOSEPHUS NOTES THAT SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL AND PERSUADED BY FELIX TO LEAVE HER FIRST HUSBAND. SO WHAT DOES THE LORD WANT THIS COUPLE TO HEAR? PAUL COVERS THE TOPIC OF FAITH IN JESUS, IDENTIFYING WHO THE MESSIAH IS.

VS 25 SO WHAT DOES PAUL DECIDE TO TEACH THESE TWO PEOPLE? PAUL COVERS THE ISSUE OF YESTERDAY'S SIN. 1. _____ OR MORALITY DR. KARL MENNINGER, ONE OF THE WORLD'S LEADING PSYCHIATRISTS, PUBLISHED A STARTLING BOOK, "WHATEVER BECAME OF SIN?" HE POINTED OUT THAT THE VERY WORD SIN HAS GRADUALLY DROPPED OUT OF OUR VOCABULARY, "THE WORD, ALONG WITH THE NOTION." WE TALK ABOUT MISTAKES, WEAKNESSES, INHERITED TENDENCIES, FAULTS, AND EVEN ERROR, BUT WE DO NOT FACE UP TO THE FACT OF SIN. "PEOPLE ARE NO LONGER SINFUL," SAYS PHYLLIS MCGINLEY, NOTED AMERICAN WRITER AND POET. "THEY ARE ONLY IMMATURE OR UNDERPRIVILEGED OR FRIGHTENED OR MORE PARTICULARLY, SICK."

2. PAUL DEALS WITH TODAY'S TEMPTATIONS. _____ OR PERSONAL ETHICS. THIS WAS THE CLINCHER, "JUDGMENT TO COME".

3. _____ ONE'S MORAL RESPONSIBILITY BEFORE GOD. HOW DOES FELIX RESPOND? THE GREEK WORD REFLECTS EMOTIONS THAT ARE MORE INTENSE THAN THOSE INDICATED. FELIX WAS BROUGHT UNDER CONVICTION AND WELL HE SHOULD BE, FOR HIS MARRIAGE TO DRUSILLA WAS HIS THIRD AND HE HAD TO BREAK UP ANOTHER MARRIAGE TO SECURE HER. HIS REGIME WAS MARKED BY INJUSTICES THAT CONTRAST WITH THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD. HE WAS A MAN TOTALLY LACKING IN SELF-CONTROL. HOW DOES FELIX REACT TO PAUL'S MESSAGE? HE SENDS PAUL AWAY FOR FUTURE MEETINGS, BUT HIS MOTIVES ARE NOT ENTIRELY PURE.

VS 26 WHAT DO WE LEARN ABOUT FELIX? HIS MOTIVES ARE NOT PURE. WHAT DOES HE WANT? TAKING BRIBES WAS ILLEGAL IN PRINCIPLE, BUT THE RESTRICTION OFTEN WAS NOT HEEDED. THIS SHOWS US WHY FELIX IS PORTRAYED AS A ROMAN RULER IN A LESS THAN FAVORABLE LIGHT BY THOSE WHO WROTE ABOUT HIM. WE HAVE A MIXED PORTRAIT OF FELIX AS CURIOUS ABOUT THE WAY AND YET SEEKING BRIBES.

VS 27. FELIX NEVER ISSUES A JUDGMENT ABOUT PAUL. PAUL IS STILL IN PRISON. FESTUS, AS NEW GOVERNOR OF PALESTINE, HAD A BETTER REPUTATION FOR FAIRNESS THAN FELIX DID. ALL WE KNOW ABOUT FESTUS COMES FROM ACTS AND JOSEPHUS. MORE TO FOLLOW NEXT WEEK....

CONCLUSION

1. LIKE PAUL, WE MUST BE BLAMELESS BEFORE GOD. BY BEING BLAMELESS BEFORE GOD, PAUL COULD SAY HE DID NOT BREAK ANY LAWS. TO BRING PEOPLE TO FAITH

SHOULD RESULT IN MORE LAW-ABIDING CITIZENS WHO HAVE A MORAL COMPASS AND DO NOT HARM OTHERS BUT SEEK THE BEST FOR THEM.

2. WE ALSO SEE A DIRECTNESS IN PAUL'S ENGAGEMENT WITH FELIX. HE DOES NOT SAY WHAT FELIX MIGHT WISH TO HEAR, EVEN THOUGH HE DOES COMMUNICATE RESPECTFULLY. WHEN PAUL SPEAKS TO FELIX, HE IS PREACHING WHAT HE HIMSELF WANTS TO LIVE.

3. PAUL'S DEFENSE IS THAT AS A CITIZEN GUILTY OF NOTHING BUT LIVING OUT HIS FAITH.

4. PAUL HAS MET HIS RESPONSIBILITY BY SHARING. HE IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RESULT OR THE RESPONSE.

5. WHAT DID FELIX DO? HE PROCRASTINATED! "WHEN I HAVE A CONVENIENT TIME I WILL CALL YOU". FELIX'S MIND WAS ENLIGHTENED, HIS EMOTIONS WERE STIRRED, BUT HIS WILL WOULD NOT YIELD. HE TRIED TO GAIN THE WORLD, BUT AS FAR AS WE KNOW, HE LOST HIS SOUL. HE PROCRASTINATED HIMSELF INTO HELL. WHAT ABOUT US? DO WE PROCRASTINATE WHEN THE LORD CALLS US TO SERVICE?

5. FELIX HAD A FOOLISH ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD'S WORD. CAN WE FALL INTO THAT TRAP?

6. WHEN FELIX WAS REPLACED, HE LEFT PAUL A PRISONER, BUT IT WAS FELIX WHO WAS REALLY THE PRISONER. HE HAD A FOOLISH ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD'S WORD, THINKING HE COULD "TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT." DO WE SEE THAT TODAY? WHEN GOD SPEAKS, WE HAD BETTER LISTEN AND OBEY.

CLOSING THOUGHT-

DR. CLARENCE MACARTNEY TOLD A STORY ABOUT A MEETING IN HELL. SATAN CALLED HIS FOUR LEADING DEMONS TOGETHER AND COMMANDED THEM TO THINK UP A NEW LIE THAT WOULD TRAP MORE SOULS. "I HAVE IT" ONE DEMON SAID. "I'LL GO TO EARTH AND TELL PEOPLE THERE IS NO GOD."

"IT WILL NEVER WORK" SAID SATAN. "PEOPLE CAN LOOK AROUND THEM AND SEE THAT THERE IS A GOD".

"I'LL GO AND TELL THEM THERE IS NO HEAVEN!" SUGGESTED A SECOND DEMON, BUT SATAN REJECT THAT IDEA. "EVERYBODY KNOWS THERE IS LIFE AFTER DEATH AND THEY WANT TO GO TO HEAVEN."

"LET'S TELL THEM THERE IS NO HELL!" SAID A THIRD DEMON.

NO, CONSCIENCE TELLS THEM THEIR SINS WILL BE JUDGED," SAID THE DEVIL. "WE NEED A BETTER LIE THAN THAT."

QUIETLY, THE FOURTH DEMON SPOKE. "I THINK I HAVE SOLVED YOUR PROBLEM," HE SAID. "I'LL GO TO EARTH AND TELL EVERYBODY **THERE IS NO HURRY.**"

BUT THE BEST TIME TO TELL OTHERS THE GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL IS NOW. THAT IS OUR JOB, SO HOW ARE WE DOING?

