

Abounding Grace Christian Church

The Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church – Part 71

I. Exposition of Chapter Twenty Four.

A. Verses 1-9 Accusations against Paul to Felix.

1. Verse 1 – “Now after five days Ananias the high priest came down with the elders and a certain orator named Tertullus. These gave evidence to the governor against Paul.” – After five days the corrupt high priest and other members of the Sanhedrin arrive in Caesarea. The man Tertullus is called an “orator”, which is a reference to him being a lawyer, to present their case against Paul. It’s important to note that he was either a Roman lawyer, or a Hellenistic Jew, who the Sanhedrin hired in order to possibly have better results which, in their minds, would be the death sentence for Paul.
2. Verses 2-4 – Tertullus gives his opening statement of flattering Felix. Scholars tell us that this kind of flattery was part of the custom of the day in Roman court proceedings.¹ Stanley Toussaint asserts:

The lawyer spent almost as much time on his introduction as he did on the specific charges against Paul. His description of Felix was obviously fawning flattery, for Felix was known for his violent use of repressive force and corrupt self-aggrandizement. Felix had been a slave, won his freedom, and carried favor with the imperial court.

Tacitus, a Roman historian, bitinglly summed up Felix’s character with the terse comment, ‘He exercised royal power with the mind of a slave.’²

3. Verses 5-9 – Tertullus presents the Charges against Paul.

- a. Verse 5 – “For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.”

- 1) “...a plague...” – This word literally refers to a disease but here, obviously, it’s used metaphorically. Grant Osborne writes

“He is a ‘troublemaker’ or ‘public menace’ (*loimos*), a word that means a ‘pestilence’ or ‘plague,’ causing trouble everywhere he goes. This is undoubtedly a reference to the trouble that followed Paul into nearly every city he visited. This would have worked, for there were many of these that Rome had to deal with.”³

- 2) “...a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world...” – This goes along with the previous statement, but is obviously an exaggeration when he states; “...throughout the world.” This was a very serious accusation because the Romans didn’t like uprisings. Appealing to Osborne again, he writes:

“More than anything, Rome wished to keep the peace everywhere it existed. This was a very serious charge.

Anything that disturbed the civil peace and quiet had to go. The Jews erupted wherever Paul’s evangelistic enterprise operated, and often Gentiles joined in their demonstrations. His ‘sedition’ is not against Rome, but it is a disturbance of the peace nevertheless. He didn’t cause it—the Jews did—but Tertullus is hoping that won’t matter to Felix.”⁴

- 3) “...and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.” – With this statement, we can see the cunning of Tertullus and why the Jews acquired his help. Dr. Constable asserts:

“...Tertullus pictured Paul as the leader of a cult outside mainstream Judaism. The Roman Empire tolerated Judaism, but the ‘sect of the Nazarenes’ was not a part of Judaism to the Jewish leaders. This title is a unique name for Christianity found nowhere else in the New Testament. Tertullus evidently used this name to make ‘the Way’ sound as bad as possible.”⁵

- a) The word “Nazarene” – It referred to an inhabitant of Nazareth which was a small village in Jesus’ day. The angel went to Nazareth to announce to Mary and Joseph the coming birth of Jesus (Luke 1:26-28). After Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem, Joseph and Mary eventually went back to Nazareth (Matthew 2:19-23) where Jesus grew from boyhood to manhood (Luke 2:39-40; 4:16). Jesus became known as “Jesus of

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1992), 344.

² Stanley D. Toussaint, “Acts,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 421.

³ Grant R. Osborne, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019), 420.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 420.

⁵ Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on Acts* (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2019), 448.

Nazareth” (Matthew 26:71; Acts 10:38).⁶

b) Also regarding the use of the word, “Nazarenes”, Warren Wiersbe writes:
“The term ‘Nazarene’ was one of contempt; ‘Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?’ asked Nathanael (John 1:46).”⁷

b. Verse 6 – “He even tried to profane the temple, and we seized him, and wanted to judge him according to our law.” - Several scholars state that this was the most serious charge, saved for last. Dr. Constable offers some insight:

“Third, Tertullus claimed Paul had tried to ‘desecrate the temple,’ allegedly by attempting to bring a Gentile into its inner precincts (21:28). This was a softening of the Asian Jews’ earlier charge that Paul had indeed brought Trophimus into the inner precincts of the temple (21:28-29). Tertullus’ statement that the Jews had arrested Paul harmonized with Lysias’ report (23:27). The Jews had also tried to kill Paul on the spot (21:31-33). Probably Tertullus left that part out because it would have put the Jews in a very bad light. This third charge implied that Felix should put Paul to death, since Rome had given the Jews the right to execute temple desecrators.”⁸

c. Verses 7-9 – Tertullus gives a few closing remarks and the Jews “...assented, maintaining that these things were so.”

B. Verses 10-21 – Paul gives his Defense.

1. Verses 10-13 – Paul addresses Felix with respect but doesn’t seem to resort to flattery as the attorney had. In Verses 12-13, Paul states clearly that they had not found him “...in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city.” It wasn’t Paul who was causing riots, it was the unbelieving Jews who stirred up the people. Paul continued and states: “Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me.”
2. Verses 14, 17 and 18 – Paul affirms his belief in the Law and the Prophets.
3. Verses 15 and 21 – Paul exposes the real reason the Sanhedrin were out to destroy Paul. It’s because he preached the “...resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.” (Cf. 23:6-8).

C. The Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead.

1. This is a Foundational Doctrine – **Hebrews 6:1-2.**
2. A central theme of apostolic preaching was the physical resurrection of Jesus – **Acts 2:31-32; Acts 10:35-41; Acts 13:33-38.**
3. There is a spiritual resurrection which takes place when we receive Christ - **Ephesians 2:1-7; Colossians 2:11-13; Romans 6:4.**
4. There will be two physical/bodily resurrections when it comes to the entire human race. “...both the just and the unjust.” (24:15).
 - a. The Resurrection of the Just.
 - 1) Called the “**First Resurrection**” – **Revelation 20:4-6.**
 - 2) The Resurrection of Life – **John 5:29.**
 - 3) The Awakening to Everlasting Life – **Daniel 12:2.**
 - 4) The Better Resurrection – **Hebrews 11:35.**
 - b. The Resurrection of the Unjust.
 - 1) The Second Resurrection – **Revelation 20:4-6.** This will take place 1000 years after the first resurrection. During that 1000 years the believer will live and reign with Christ on the earth.
 - 2) The Resurrection of Damnation/Condemnation – **John 5:29.**
 - 3) The Awakening to Shame and Everlasting Contempt – **Daniel 12:2.**
5. The Physical/Bodily Resurrection of Believers - **Acts 4:2; Acts 24:15; I Corinthians 15:12-23; I Thessalonians 4:13-18.**
 - a. Our bodies will be like Jesus’ glorified body. **Philippians 3:20,21.**
 - b. Our bodies will be a real body of flesh and bone. **Luke 24:39.**
 - c. Our bodies will be incorruptible bodies. **I Corinthians 15:42, 53, 54.**
 - d. Our bodies will be immortal bodies. **I Corinthians 15:53; II Corinthians 5:1-8.**
 - e. Our bodies will not be subject to material limitations. **John 20:19-28.**
 - f. Our bodies will possibly be able to enjoy food. **John 21:1-14.**

⁶Jerry W. Batson, “Nazareth, Nazarene,” ed. Chad Brand et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 1177.

⁷Warren W. Wiersbe, 345.

⁸Constable, 449.

