

Paul in Caesarea

Acts 24-25

1. The Plot to Kill Paul (23:12-22)

- A. A group of more than forty Jews make a vow to kill Paul (23:12-15)
 - 1. This is a rather strong response, but it is not unexpected after the events in the Temple.
 - 2. The group has gathered as part of a “plot,” a word which is associated with a gathering for seditious purposes.
 - 3. Paul has admitted that his ministry was to the Gentiles and he believed that he was functioning as the messianic “light to the Gentiles.” This was taken as an act of treason by these zealots!
- B. Paul is warned and then protected by the Romans (23:16-22)
 - 1. A warning is given by “Paul’s sister’s son,” Paul’s nephew.
 - 2. The warning is taken seriously by the Romans, and the commander transfers Paul under guard to Caesarea, and placed him under the protection of Felix, the Roman governor of Judea.
- C. Paul Moved to Caesarea by night (23:23-35). Paul is transferred to Felix for protection
 - 1. Lysias sends about half to the total number of soldiers in his command to escort Paul to the governor Felix.
 - 2. After Paul arrives in Caesarea, Felix asks from what province Paul obtained his citizenship. .
 - 3. Lysias prepared a letter to explain the need to transfer Paul to Caesarea. Does this letter contain the truth?

2. Paul’s Defense Before Felix (24:1-27). Paul has been transferred to the governor Felix for protection from the Jews. After five days Ananias, the high priest, along with some elders and lawyers, go to Felix to accuse Paul.

- A. Felix is well known from history as a particular bad governor of Judea.¹
 - 1. Marcus Antonius Felix was appointed as governor of Judea in 52 by the emperor Claudius.
 - 2. He was married to Drusilla, the daughter of Herod Agrippa I.
 - 3. Felix’ mismanagement of the territory of Judea was one of the biggest factors in the revolution that began in 66.
- B. The Jews waste no time in tracking Paul down and accusing him before the Roman governor. Some elders go to Caesarea along with a lawyer named Tertullus.
 - 1. Tertullus is probably a Hellenistic Jew, a Jew that is trained in Greek and Roman law.

¹For some details on Felix, see <http://readingacts.wordpress.com/>

2. Tertullus accuses Paul of the following crimes:
 - A. Paul is a troublemaker and he stirs up riots.
 - B. He is the ringleader of the sect of the Nazarene.
 - C. He tried to desecrate the Temple
3. It is possible that Tertullus knows he has a weak case and therefore highlights the crime most likely to get Felix's attention - rioting as a potential rebel against Rome.
- C. Paul's response is also a masterpiece of legal rhetoric. Once again Paul demonstrates that he is a well educated and eloquent man, able to hold his own in a hearing before a powerful Roman governor.
 1. Paul begins by saying that the accusers are wrong, he was found in the Temple worshipping, not causing a riot, and that those who actually seized him are not there to accuse him.
 2. Paul claims to be a loyal follower of the Law.
 3. Paul then claims that his accusers are not present.
 4. Felix decides not to decide, and wants to wait until Lysias, the centurion that took care of Paul in Rome, to arrive. This will allow him to investigate the charges further.
- D. Felix says that he has heard of "the Way", and is interested to hear more (24:22-27).
 1. Felix and his wife are not very interested in the Gospel, rather Luke tells us that Felix wants a bribe.
 2. Paul talks about several subjects with Felix, righteousness, self control, and the judgement to come.
 - A. Righteousness has a different nuance for a Jewish audience than for a Roman.
 - B. Self-control, on the other hand, is the foundation of Greek philosophical ethics.
 - C. Jews and Greeks both understand what the "judgment to come" means, although Romans do not have a robust view of the end of the world.
 3. Felix' reaction is "that's enough for now!" If he finds it convenient, he will call for Paul, and since he was fishing for a bribe, he frequently called for Paul.
- E. Because Felix refuses to make a decision, Paul is held at Caesarea for two years.