

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Lesson 17 w/Answers

Acts 24-26

In our last lesson, we saw that at end of Paul's third missionary journey he returned to Jerusalem, was arrested; and a plot to assassinate him developed. Learning of the plot, the Roman guards snuck Paul out of Jerusalem at night and took him to Caesarea for trial.

This lesson picks up with Paul living under house arrest in the governor's official residence. Located on the west coast of the Mediterranean, Caesarea is a beautiful location for Paul's house arrest and coming trial.

Read Acts Chapters 24 through 26 and consider the following:

1. Refer to Acts 24:1-5. Who actually brought charges against Paul to the Governor? Who should have been there to bring charges? (See also Acts 21:27-28)
 - a. ANSWER 1: Those present and bringing charges against Paul were: the High Priest Ananias, Jewish Elders from Jerusalem, and their attorney, Tertullus.
 - b. ANSWER 2: In fact the charges Paul was facing were brought against him in the Temple courtyard by the "Jews from Asia," who now were not present. They were simply trouble makers trying to stir up problems for Paul and the Way, the followers of Jesus.
2. Tertullus the attorney is now addressing the governor, Felix (see Acts 24:2-3). Check your Bible Handbook or Dictionary and see what you can find out about Felix, i.e., what kind of a man is Tertullus addressing? Does Felix have any insight into the Jewish faith or this new following called the Nazarenes?
 - a. ANSWER 1: Felix, it turns out, was a dishonest and corrupt ruler of Judea. Appointed by his brother, he ruled with cruelty, was sexually promiscuous, and loved bribes. This is the character of the "governor" whom Tertullus is addressing.
 - b. ANSWER 2: Further, Felix was married a total of three times; his second wife Drusilla, a Judean and a Jew, is his current wife during this time. Later, in 79 AD, she would die in the Vesuvius eruption at Pompeii.
 - c. ANSWER 3: Felix was aware of the Jewish faith, and about "the Nazarenes" (also called "The Way" in verse 22), and he wanted little or nothing to do with either of them unless it meant bribes and favors for him.
3. What is the charge that they bring against Paul? (see Acts 24:4-6)
 - a. ANSWER: They charge Paul with stirring up dissension and rebellion among the Jews throughout the world.
4. Refer to Acts 24:7-9. Why would Felix, a Greek non-believer, care about issues that the Jews were having with Paul? Why is it mentioned that Lysias, the commander, interfered with their plans to judge him according to their law?
 - a. ANSWER 1: Felix's power and position depended on his ability to keep the peace in Judea. A Jewish uprising would threaten his position if he did not deal with it directly.
 - b. ANSWER 2: The Jews try to blame the Roman Centurion's interference as the cause that brought the case to Felix, ignoring the fact the Roman actually rescued Paul. They want Felix to understand they were going to deal with Paul themselves.
5. Using Paul's own words, list the points of Paul's defense, noting that he clearly understood the laws of the land and the charges being brought against him. (see Acts 24:10-21)
 - a. ANSWER 1: "At no time in the past twelve days, not in the temple, nor the synagogues, nor the city, did anyone find me causing a riot. The people standing before you today have no proof that any such act occurred."
 - b. ANSWER 2: "I am however a preacher of the Gospel."
 - c. ANSWER 3: "I was in the Temple presenting offerings having been purified without any crowd or uproar."
 - d. ANSWER 4: "It was the Jews from Asia, not Jerusalem—and who are not here today to present any charges—these were the ones who stirred up the crowd against me."
 - e. ANSWER 5: "The only thing I can assume is that I am on trial today for preaching about the resurrection of the dead."
6. Refer to Acts 24:22. Who is Lysias the commander? What would his military responsibilities have included?
 - a. ANSWER: He was a centurion; this meant he was a high-ranking general responsible for up to 1,000 men. He was the one who rescued Paul and smuggled him out of Jerusalem. He also wrote a letter to Felix (see Acts 23:26-30) laying out the facts that led to Paul being taken to Caesarea.

7. What jail or prison was Paul held in, pending another hearing? What were the conditions of his imprisonment, and how long was he held there?
 - a. ANSWER: Paul was essentially held under house arrest and lived in the governor's home. He was to "have some freedom", and the guards were not to prevent Paul's friends from ministering to him. He was held there for two years. (see Acts 24:27)
8. Did Paul have any friends in Caesarea? (see Acts 21:8-16)
 - a. ANSWER: Yes; many, as you see in these verses—some of whom told him not to go to Jerusalem to begin with.
9. In Acts 24:24-25, why do think that Felix was afraid, or frightened, when Paul spoke?
 - a. ANSWER: Felix, being a promiscuous and cruel ruler who took bribes, was clearly frightened and convicted by Paul's words about righteousness, self-control, and, of course, the coming judgment. He realized he would be judged for all of his unrighteous acts.
10. Why did Felix keep bringing Paul in to discuss issues with Paul over the two years that Paul was held at the Governor's house? (see Acts 24:26-27)
 - a. ANSWER: Felix kept hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe to let him go.
11. Felix retires and is replaced by Porcius Festus (see Acts 24:27). In Acts 25:1-5, we see that two years later, the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem still want to kill Paul. What does Festus tell them while he is visiting Jerusalem?
 - a. ANSWER: Essentially, he tells them that Paul was already being held in Caesarea, and that since he was leaving to go there in a few days, they should come with him and argue their case in Caesarea.
12. In Acts 25:6-8, the Jews continued to accuse Paul of many serious charges, none of which they could prove. What was Paul's response? What three codes of law does he argue that he is innocent from breaking?
 - a. ANSWER: He has "committed no offense either against the Law of the Jews, or against the Temple, or against Caesar."
13. Festus again tries to get Paul to go back to Jerusalem to stand trial, but Paul refuses. Instead, what does Paul do that ties Festus' hands? (see Acts 25:10-12)
 - a. ANSWER: He appeals to Caesar, which leaves Festus and his council with little choice other than to send Paul to Rome for a hearing with Caesar.
14. A few days after the hearing, King Agrippa and Bernice arrive in Caesarea to pay their respects to the new Governor, Festus. Who is King Agrippa, and what influence does he have over the Jews? Who is Bernice?
 - a. ANSWER 1: King Agrippa is the great grandson of Herod the Great; brought up in the court of the Emperor Claudius, he is a favorite of the Emperor.
 - b. ANSWER 2: Since King Agrippa appointed the High Priest, he essentially had control over the Temple Treasury.
 - c. ANSWER 3: Bernice is his sister; she was married multiple times, including once to her uncle. Some time after his death, she eventually came to live with her brother Agrippa, in an incestuous relationship.
15. Since Agrippa is familiar with the Jewish faith—he is a converted Jew as well—Paul appeals to him by sharing his testimony. See Acts 25:1-23. We know this testimony today as what?
 - a. ANSWER: We know it as Paul's "Road to Damascus Experience."
16. As Paul was relaying his Road to Damascus Experience and his belief in Jesus as the Christ, what was the response from Festus, who was there with Agrippa and Bernice? (see Act 26:24)
 - a. ANSWER: Festus thought Paul was out of his mind. He also realized from Paul's rational argument and presentation that Paul was also a very learned man.
17. Paul responded that he was speaking the truth. What else did Paul assert about King Agrippa regarding his testimony and the events of Christ's death and resurrection? (see Acts 26:26)
 - a. ANSWER: Paul asserted that not only was Agrippa aware of these events, but that none of them were done in secret; everything that happened took place in public so that everyone was a witness.
18. What was Agrippa's response? (see Acts 26:28)
 - a. ANSWER: Paul's arguments were so strong that Agrippa almost believed him; he was almost persuaded to become a "Christian."
19. What was the consensus of Festus and Agrippa after hearing Paul's testimony? (see Acts 26:31-32)
 - a. ANSWER: Their consensus was that Paul had done nothing wrong and should have been freed—except that he had appealed to Caesar, and now they had no choice but to send him to Rome.

What no one at the time understood was that Paul's appeal to Rome would open the door for him to preach the gospel in the capital of the Roman Empire, so that the gospel could be heard by both Jew and Gentile in the most influential city in the world.

In our next lesson, we conclude our study in Acts, with a look ahead at Paul's trip to Rome and his ministry there.

Have a great week everyone!

In Christ,

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