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**APOSTOLIC VERSE BY VERSE BIBLE STUDY**

**Straightway Church of Christ, Inc.**

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**“AFTER THE WAY WHICH THEY CALL HERESY”**

**Acts 24:1-14**

***Acts 24:1 "And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and [with] a certain orator [named] Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul."***

Chapter 24 continues Luke’s narrative by summarizing the situation under which the charges against Paul were formed. The intensity of the opposition to Paul is reflected in the coming of the high priest, Ananias, to Caesarea and the hiring of a high-powered advocate to present the case against Paul. This is the same Ananias who had told one of his men to slap Paul in the mouth. Paul had called him a whited wall. We had already mentioned that he had probably proclaimed himself high priest. Tertullus was a Roman and probably was hired because he could speak the language of the governor, as well as the language of the high priest. He made his living as an orator. He told the governor the accusations against Paul.

***Acts 24:2-3***

***2 "And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse [him], saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence,"***

***3 "We accept [it] always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness."***

This orator begins by flattering the governor to get him on the side of the high priest. He speaks of providence as being the reason worthy deeds had been done of their nation. He praised Felix for his peaceful rule and reforms, hoping to influence the governor for a favorable decision. Civil unrest had actually become worse under Felix’s rule.

***Acts 24:4-6***

***4 "Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words."***

***5 "For we have found this man [a] pestilent [fellow], and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes:"***

***6 "Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law."***

Tertullus presented three charges against Paul. First, knowing that the Romans did not tolerate civil disorder, he said that Paul was a troublemaker. Pestilent means nuisance here. Second, he was the leader of a sect of the Nazarenes. There had been many riots instigated by rebellious Jews, and Felix was familiar with the problems they had caused. Now this paid orator has brought this up to try to get up a case against Paul. The Jews used the name Nazarenes for followers of Jesus. They had previously made the statement, "can any good thing come out of Nazareth?". This was intended to be a slur against Paul. Their true complaint was that he was a follower of Jesus Christ from Nazareth. Since the Romans had not yet distinguished Christianity from Judaism, which was a legal religion, Tertullus gave a cryptic description of this new faith in Jesus to raise Felix’s suspicions about a new sect. Third, he accused Paul of defiling the temple. Truly, Paul had not profaned the temple. This was plainly untrue, but they knew they had to make Paul guilty of something that would concern a Roman ruler. If Paul were disturbing the peace and causing riots, Rome would need to do something. Many believe Paul had gone to the temple to sacrifice because he had never truly given up trying to win his Jewish brothers to Christianity, and he was trying to make himself acceptable unto them by going through the Jewish rituals.

***1 Corinthians 9:19-23***

***19 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.***

***20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;***

***21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.***

***22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.***

***23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.***

The Sadducees, who were collaborators with the Romans, were responsible for maintaining order in the temple. This is why they seized Paul—they were trying to keep peace, but Paul’s presence had ignited a riot. All three of these charges were cleverly designed. Under Gallio faith in Jesus was officially and legally viewed as a subset of Judaism, and as such Rome would not view it as illegal.

***Acts 24:7-9***

***7 "But the chief captain Lysias came [upon us], and with great violence took [him] away out of our hands,"***

***8 "Commanding his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things, whereof we accuse him."***

***9 "And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so."***

Though Tertullus tried to frame the case to make it appear that Paul violated Roman law, he did not provide any solid evidence. This is perhaps the reason that he encouraged Felix to question Paul further and that all the Jewish opponents present joined in a verbal attack on Paul. Nowhere do these accusers tell Felix that they had every intention to kill Paul. They do not mention that he is a Roman, either. They, also, find it very convenient to hide the fact that Paul is really one of them, a Pharisee. They want to blame anyone, but themselves. They are showing their anger here in having to come to a higher court. They are reminding Felix here of his duty. Up until now, the orator had spoken for them, but in verse 9, Jews which hired this orator have spoken out and said that what he had said was true.

***Acts 24:10 "Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself:"***

Paul is a wonderful orator himself. He, also, begins with a little flattery of the governor. Paul says, I know you are fair. I am happy to bring my case before you. In his defense, Paul denied the charges, and claimed to be a Jew, whose hope was in God’s promises to Israel. Though Felix knew that Paul was innocent, he ordered him held as a prisoner for two years but with limited freedom. Felix hoped that Paul would pay him a bribe, but he also talked with Paul about faith in Jesus. Paul used the opportunity to challenge Felix with the moral demands of following Christ.

***Acts 24:11-12***

***11 "Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship."***

***12 "And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city:"***

***13 "Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me."***

When given opportunity to respond, Paul did not hesitate to speak the truth and seek to address his illegitimate incarceration through the legal means available to him. He agreed that he had been in Jerusalem but denied the accusation that he had caused a disturbance, whether in the temple or anywhere in the city. Paul tells this governor that twelve days ago, he went to Jerusalem for one purpose (to worship). He had no evil intent at all. Paul is not making inflammatory remarks about his accusers. He is just quietly denying any wrongdoing. Paul really did not try to minister on this particular trip to the temple. These Jews were accusing him of things he had taught in other cities before he came back to Jerusalem. The Jews of Asia were really the ones who had stirred this whole thing up. These are all false accusations. None of the charges they made could be proved.

***Acts 24:14 "But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:"***

The only thing to which Paul would admit was being a worshiper of God according to the Way, that is, Apostolic Christianity, which these Jews rejected as a sect, but which was nonetheless a fulfillment of the law and the prophets. Sect is used in the sense of one's philosophical belief. This covers sect of the Sadducees. Here it just means that Paul is a follower of the Nazarene Jesus Christ. This he admits. He does not call him Jesus Christ here; it would just tend to inflame the Jews more. He does say that he believes the law and the prophets. In volatile times of opposition worshippers of the “way which they call heresy” must carefully rely on the Holy Spirit to teach them how to respond. The Way” is mentioned several times in the book of Acts in connection with early followers of Christ.

***Acts 9:2 “And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.”***

***Acts 19:9 “But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus.”***

***Acts 19:23 “And the same time there arose no small stir about that way.”***

***Acts 22:4 “And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.”***

It was to take prisoner men and women who “belonged to the Way” that [Saul of Tarsus](https://www.gotquestions.org/Saul-of-Tarsus.html) went to Damascus. After [Saul was converted](https://www.gotquestions.org/Damascus-Road.html), he became a missionary and went by the name of Paul. In Ephesus, Paul met some in the synagogue who “became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way.” Paul left the synagogue and continued to preach the gospel where it would be heard rather than remain with those who denigrated the Way. During his trial before Felix, Paul said, “I admit that I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect.” We are also told that Felix knew about the Way. It seems that the Romans considered the Way to be a sect of Judaism rather than a separate religion. Presumably, the early followers of Christ referred to themselves as followers of the Way because of Jesus’ statement in John 14:6 that He is “the way and the truth and the life.” Luke says that Aquilla and Priscilla explained to Apollos “the way of God” more fully (Acts 18:26). Peter refers to Christianity as “the way of truth” (2 Peter 2:22). And the writer of Hebrews says that Jesus’ broken body is the “new and living way” for us to enter the Most Holy Place (Hebrews 10:19-20).

***1 Peter 3:15 “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:”***

***Luke 12:11-12***

***11 And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say:***

***12 For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.***

***Proverbs 15:1-2***

***1 A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.***

***2 The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.***

**QUESTIONS**

1. How long after Paul arrived in Caesarea, did the high priest come?
2. What was the high priest's name?
3. Who would do the speaking for him?
4. How does the orator begin?
5. What adjectives does he use of Felix in verse 3?
6. What kind of a fellow did he call Paul?
7. He called Paul a ringleader of the sect of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
8. What did he say Paul profaned?
9. What was the chief captain's name?
10. In verse 10, what approach did Paul take to speak to the governor?
11. How many days had it been since Paul went to Jerusalem?
12. In verse 12, Paul states three things he did not do, what were they?
13. In verse 13, Paul says all the accusations were \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
14. In verse 14, Paul proclaims belief in what?
15. In what sense is sect used in verse 14?