

Believing the Law and the Prophets (Acts 24:1-21)

Paul's defense before Felix, Roman governor of Judea

Context

Acts 23

- Paul accused of bringing a Gentile into the temple in Jerusalem, a riot ensues.
- Rescued from a Jewish mob by the authority of Rome.
- Jews plot to kill Paul, Roman commander sends Paul under guard to the governor, Felix.

Passage

Acts 24:1-9 ...

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. 2 And when he was called upon, Tertullus began his accusation, saying: "Seeing that through you we enjoy great peace, and prosperity is being brought to this nation by your foresight, 3 "we accept it always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. 4 "Nevertheless, not to be tedious to you any further, I beg you to hear, by your courtesy, a few words from us. 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. 6 "He even tried to profane the temple, and we seized him, and wanted to judge him according to our law. 7 "But the commander Lysias came by and with great violence took him out of our hands, 8 "commanding his accusers to come to you. By examining him yourself you may ascertain all these things of which we accuse him." 9 And the Jews also assented, maintaining that these things were so. (Acts 24:1-9)

Passage

Acts 24:10-21

10 Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered: "Inasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge of this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself, 11 "because you may ascertain that it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship. 12 "And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city. 13 "Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me. 14 "But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets. 15 "I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. 16 "This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men. 17 "Now after many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation, 18 "in the midst of which some Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with a mob nor with tumult. 19 "They ought to have been here before you to object if they had anything against me. 20 "Or else let those who are here themselves say if they found any wrongdoing in me while I stood before the council, 21 "unless it is for this one statement which I cried out, standing among them, 'Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day.'" (Acts 24:10-21)

Observations

Things to note...

- **Date** - Andrew Steinmann dates this in early July of A.D. 55.³
- **Textual Omission** - Acts [24:7](#) is in the KJV/NKJV, based on the *TR*, but has minority Greek witness.
 - Omitted from Majority Text based on Byzantine Greek manuscripts
 - Hodges and Farstad⁴
 - Robinson⁵
- **Nation** - "Seeing that we enjoy great peace, and prosperity is being brought to this nation ([ἔθνει](#) [*ethnei*]) by your foresight" (Acts [24:2](#)).
 - This Greek term is not exclusively used of Gentile nations, it can also apply to Israel, as Paul also does in his comments, "this nation" (Acts [24:10](#)).
 - "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you [Israel of Jesus' day, *this generation*] and given to a nation [Israel at the Second Coming] bearing the fruits of it. Matthew [21:43](#)
 - See [Kingdom Given to Nation Bearing Fruit \(Matthew 21:43\)^b](#) in [Daniel Discovered^c](#).

Observations

Things to note...

- **The Way** - Sect of the Nazarines - early Christianity considered a sect of Judaism, called "the way" (Acts [9:2](#); [24:14](#)).
 - Refers to the "Christian way of life"
 - "Sect" is from [αἵρεσις](#) [*hairesis*], meaning a religious party, faction, separate group, and is used elsewhere to describe heresy (2Pe. [2:1](#)).⁶
- **Flattery vs. Respect** - Contrast the insincere flattery of Tertullus when addressing Felix vs. that of Paul.
 - Salt and light: while Christians are to honor authority, they should not engage in flattery—which is manipulative and dishonest.
- **Sadducees and Resurrection** - The Pharisees and Sadducees divided over belief in the supernatural (angels and the resurrection). Paul had previously leveraged this disagreement in his favor.
 - ⁶ But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Men *and* brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!" ⁷ And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. (Acts [23:6-7](#))

Believing what is *Written*

Meaning depends upon *words*...

Paul believed ¹⁴ . . . all things which are **written** in the Law and in the **Prophets** (Acts **24:14**).

The *written words* are accurate → *verbal* inspiration

Philo of Alexandria, a contemporary of the apostles, attested thus: ‘The Jews would die ten thousand times rather than to permit one single word to be altered of their Scriptures.’ -- Rene Pache⁷

Occasionally the writers were even told to ‘not omit a *word*’ (Jer. **26:2**), and John even pronounced an anathema upon all who would add to or subtract from the *words* of the book of this prophecy’ (Rev. **22:18-19**). -- Normal L. Geisler and William E. Nix⁸

It is not my purpose to arbitrate among these translations but simply to make the point that meaning depends upon words. When the words differ, the meaning differs. To claim that we can translate *ideas instead of words* is an impossibility. -- Leland Ryken⁹

Believing what is *Written*

Meaning depends upon *words*...

As I argued in a chapter on fallacies about translation, it is illogical to claim that one can translate the thought of a biblical text rather than its words. There is no such thing as disembodied thought. As one translation theorect has accurately said, “Not just ideas, but words are important.” -- Leland Ryken¹⁰

Hodge and Warfield insisted on the inspiration of the very words of Scripture in spite of human limitations that may have played a part in producing the Bible. Suggestions that Scripture contains only the *thoughts*, i.e., the *gist*, of what actually happened was to them preposterous. As they so pointedly note, one cannot draw a line between “the thoughts and the words of Scripture,” because once someone changes a word, he has also changed the thought. Hence, a belief in the *verbal* inspiration of Scripture is an endorsement of the *ipsissima verba* ["the very words"] position. Only since the inroads of historical criticism of the Synoptic Gospels into evangelicalism have evangelicals begun to differ from Hodge and Warfield.” [Robert Thomas, *The Rationality, Meaningfulness, and Precision of Scripture*] -- Richard L. Mayhue, ed.¹¹

Believing what is *Written*

Meaning depends upon *words*...

Roger Nicole, in a significant essay in 1958, listed many more New Testament passages where the argument of Jesus or the New Testament author depended on a single word in the Old Testament. He gives the following list:

Mat. 2:15; 4:10; 13:35; 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 4:8; 20:42,43; John 8:17; 10:34; 19:37; Acts 23:5; Rom. 4:3,9,23; 15:9-12; 1Cor. 6:16; Gal. 3:8,10,13,16; Heb. 1:7; 2:12; 3:13; 4:7; 12:26. [Wayne Grudem, "Are Only *Some* Words of Scripture Breathed Out by God?"] -- Wayne Grudem et. al.¹²

WE AFFIRM that the whole of Scripture and all its parts, down to the very words of the original, were given by divine inspiration. WE DENY that the inspiration of Scripture can rightly be affirmed of the whole without the parts, or of some parts but not the whole. -- International Council on Biblical Inerrancy¹³

Resurrection Categories

The *just* and the *unjust*...

Paul mentions two categories associated with resurrection, the *just* and the *unjust* (Acts [24:15](#)).

Progressive revelation clarifies that *all* the dead will be resurrected (a resurrection awaits them all), but there are two different *categories* of resurrection—raised at different times.

² And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, Some to everlasting life, Some to shame and everlasting contempt. (Daniel [12:2](#))

Tregelles ably comments on this passage. . . . ‘Two of the Rabbis who commented on this prophet were, Saadiah Haggaon (in the tenth century of our era), and Aben Ezra (in the twelfth); the latter of these was a writer of peculiar abilities and accuracy of mind. He explains the verse in the following manner: . . . its interpretation is, those who shall awake shall be unto everlasting life, and those who shall not awake shall be unto shame unto everlasting contempt. . . .’ [S. P. Tregelles, *Remarks on the Prophetic Visions in The Book of Daniel*, 165-66] -- J. Dwight Pentecost¹⁴

And many from among the sleepers of the dust of the earth shall awake; these shall be unto everlasting life; but those [the rest of the sleepers] shall be unto shame and everlasting contempt.” S. P. Tregelles, *Remarks on the Prophetic Visions in the Book of Daniel*, p. 159, words in brackets supplied by Tregelles. “The true rendering of Dan. [12:1-3](#), in connection with the context, is ‘And (at that time) many (of thy people) shall awake (or be separated) out from among the sleepers in the earth-dust. These (who awake) shall be unto life everlasting, but those (who do not awake at that time) shall be unto shame and contempt everlasting.’ So, the most renowned Hebrew Doctors render it, and the best Christian exegetes. -- Nathaniel West¹⁵

Resurrection Categories

The *just* and the *unjust*...

- ¹³ "But when you give a feast, invite *the* poor, *the* maimed, *the* lame, *the* blind. ¹⁴ And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just." (Luke 14:13-14)
- ²⁸ "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice ²⁹ and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. (John 5:28-29)
- ³⁵ Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. (Hebrews 11:35) (A worse resurrection is implied.)
- ⁵ But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This *is* the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy *is* he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. (Revelation 20:5-6)
- After 1,000 years (the Millennial Kingdom), the rest of the dead are raised, judged, and cast into the Lake of Fire—the second death *has* power over these!
- ¹³ The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. (Revelation 20:13)

Resurrection Charge

Major Resurrections -- John Walvoord¹⁶

Order	Resurrection	Timing	Participants	Description	Scriptures
1	First	The Third Day	Jesus Christ	The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, the "firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."	Mat. 28:1-7 ; Mark 16:1-11 ; Luke 24:1-12 ; John 20:1-18 ; 1Cor. 15:20
2	First	Shortly after Christ's Resurrection.	A Few OT Saints	At the earthquake attending the crucifixion, graves were opened. Shortly after the resurrection of Christ, these saints were raised.	Mat. 27:50-53
3	First	Before the Tribulation.	Church	The resurrection of Church-age believers at the <i>Rapture</i> .	John 14:3 ; 1Th. 4:13-18 ; 1Cor. 15:50-53
4	First	Middle of the Tribulation.	Two Witnesses	God's two witnesses will be raised after being killed by <i>The Beast</i> .	Rev. 11:11-12+
5	First	After Jacob's Trouble	OT Saints	Old Testament saints will be resurrected to enter the Millennial Kingdom.	Dan. 12:1-2 ; Isa. 26:19 ; Eze. 37:13-149
6	First	Beginning of Millennial Kingdom.	Tribulation Martyrs	The Tribulation martyrs will be resurrected so that they can rule and reign with Christ.	Rev. 20:4-6+
7	Second	End of Millennial Kingdom	Unbelieving Dead	At the end of the millennial reign of Christ, the final resurrection will consist of all of the unbelieving, wicked dead. They will be found guilty at the Great White Throne Judgment and cast into the Lake of Fire.	Rev. 20:11-15+

- See [Two Resurrections^e](#) (Tony Garland).
- See [Resurrections in Review^f](#) (Andy Woods).
- See [A Testimony of Jesus Christ, Revelation 20:11^g](#) (Tony Garland).

Prophecy as Motivation

For Godly living ...

- This *being* so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men. (Acts 24:16)
- ¹⁰ . . . the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. ¹¹ Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, **what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,** ¹² **looking for** and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? (2Pe. 3:10-12)

Those who fail to inform their flock of things to come do not follow the example of Christ and the Apostles whose teachings were peppered through and through with truths about future things. Even New Testament writings that are not normally considered eschatological are filled with exhortations and instructions based on future events. [Paul Benware, *Biblical Prophecy: An Essential Element in Living a Genuine and Useful Christian Life*] -- Paul Benware¹⁷

Hope is one of the theological virtues. This means that a continual looking forward to the eternal world is not (as some modern people think) a form of escapism or wishful thinking, but one for the things that a Christian is meant to do. It does not mean that we are to leave the present world as it is. If you read history you will find that the Christians who did the most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. -- C. S. Lewis¹⁸

Endnotes

Resources for further study ...

1. https://spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Acts_by_Tony_Garland/80_Acts_24_1-21/index.htm
2. Unless indicated otherwise, all Scripture references are from the *New King James Version*, copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.
3. [Ref-1307](#), 344.
4. [Ref-0687](#), Acts 24:6
5. [Ref-1483](#), Acts 24:6
6. [Ref-0617](#), #146
7. [Ref-0060](#), 164
8. [Ref-0075](#), 50
9. [Ref-0240](#), 81
10. [Ref-0240](#), 217
11. [Ref-0164](#), Vol. 15 No. 2, Fall 2004, 175:207, 204
12. [Ref-0786](#), 19:56, 29
13. [Ref-1665](#), Article VI
14. [Ref-0050](#), 399-400
15. [Ref-0734](#), 266
16. [Ref-1664](#), 464, 275
17. [Ref-0785](#), Paul Benware, *Biblical Prophecy: An Essential Element in Living a Genuine and Useful Christian Life*, Volume 11 number 32, March 2007, 5-18, p. 5
18. [Ref-1364](#), 118

Sources

Resources for further study ...

Ref-0050	J. Dwight Pentecost, <i>Things To Come : A Study in Biblical Eschatology</i> (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958).
Ref-0060	Rene Pache, <i>The Inspiration And Authority Of Scripture</i> (Salem, WI: Sheffield Publishing Company, 1969). ISBN= 978-1879215115 ^j .
Ref-0075	Normal L. Geisler and William E. Nix, <i>A General Introduction To The Bible</i> (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986).
Ref-0164	Richard L. Mayhue, ed., <i>The Master's Seminary Journal</i> (Sun Valley, CA: Master's Seminary). https://mastersem.edu .
Ref-0240	Leland Ryken, <i>The Word of God in English: Criterial for Excellence in Bible Translation</i> , (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2002).
Ref-0617	James Swanson, <i>Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Greek (New Testament)</i> , electronic ed. (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).
Ref-0687	Hodges, Zane C. and Arthur L. Farstad, <i>The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text</i> (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985).
Ref-0734	Nathaniel West, <i>The Thousand Years in Both Testaments</i> (Fincastle, VA: Scripture Truth Book Company, 1889).
Ref-0785	<i>Journal of Dispensational Theology</i> , Fort Worth, TX: Tyndale Theological Seminary. https://tyndale.edu .
Ref-0786	Wayne Grudem et. al., <i>Translating Truth</i> (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005).
Ref-1307	Andrew E. Steinmann, <i>From Abraham to Paul</i> (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing, 2011). ISBN: 978-0-7586-2799-5 ^k .
Ref-1364	C. S. Lewis, <i>Mere Christianity</i> (New York, NY: MacMillan Publishing, 1943, 1977).
Ref-1483	Maurice A. Robinson, William G. Pierpont, <i>The New Testament in the Original Greek: Byzantine Textform 2005</i> (Southborough, MA: Chilton Book Publishing, 2005). ISBN: 978-0-7598-0077-9 ^l . ID=2006050505.
Ref-1664	John Walvoord, <i>Every Prophecy of the Bible</i> (Colorado Springs, CO: Chariot Victor Publishing, 1990, 1999). ISBN: 1-56476-758-2 ^m . ID=2000120312.
Ref-1665	International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, <i>The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy</i> (Chicago, IL: International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, 1978). URL= https://spiritandtruth.org/reference/chicago_statement/inerrancy.html .

Links

Resources for further study ...

- a - See <https://spiritandtruth.org/id/tg.htm>.
- b - See https://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Book_of_Daniel/commentary/htm/topics/kingdom_of_god.html#4.6.7.4.
- c - See https://spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Book_of_Daniel/commentary/htm/index.html.
- d - See https://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Book_of_Revelation/commentary/htm/chapters/20.html#76419.
- e - See https://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/topics_by_tony_garland_00/05_two_resurrections/05_two_resurrections.htm.
- f - See https://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Daniel_by_Andy_Woods/56_Daniel_12_2/index.htm.
- g - See https://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/Book_of_Revelation/commentary/htm/chapters/20.html#Revelation%2020%3A11.
- h - See <https://spiritandtruth.org>.
- i - See <mailto:contact@spiritandtruth.org>.
- j - See <https://spiritandtruth.org/id/isbn.htm?978-1879215115>.
- k - See <https://spiritandtruth.org/id/isbn.htm?978-0-7586-2799-5>.
- l - See <https://spiritandtruth.org/id/isbn.htm?978-0-7598-0077-9>.
- m - See <https://spiritandtruth.org/id/isbn.htm?1-56476-758-2>.