
ACTS 21- THE EGYPTIAN

During the apostle Paul's visit to Jerusalem, Paul had an encounter with a Roman tribune who mistakenly suspects that he is the Egyptian prophet who had recently led many of the Jews into rebellion. We read in Acts 21 verses 33-38: "Then the commander came near and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and he asked him what he had done.



"Then as Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I speak to you?" The commander replied, "Can you speak Greek? **Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up rebellion and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?"**

Amazingly enough a mention of this revolt led by a self proclaimed prophet from Egypt is confirmed in the annals of history.

The Jewish historian Josephus writing in the first century gives us this account:

“These deeds of the robbers filled the city with all sorts of impiety. And now conjurers and **deceivers persuaded the multitude to follow them into the wilderness**, and pretended that they would show them manifest wonders and signs that would be performed by the providence of God. And those that were deceived suffered the pain of their folly, for Felix brought them back and punished them. At this time **there came out of Egypt to Jerusalem a man who said he was a prophet, and advised the multitude of the common people to go along with him** to the mountain called the Mount of Olives, which lay a distance of five furlongs from the city. He said that he would show them that at his command the walls of Jerusalem would fall down, through which he promised that he would procure them an entrance into the city. Now when Felix was informed of this he ordered his soldiers to take up their weapons, and with a great number of horsemen and footmen from Jerusalem he attacked the Egyptian and the people that were with him. He slew four hundred of them and took two hundred alive. **But the Egyptian himself escaped** from the fight and did not appear any more. And again the robbers stirred up the people to make war with the Romans.”

Antiquities 20.8.5-6 (War 2.13.5-6)

Back in Acts 21, after the commander realizes that Paul is not this Egyptian rebel he sends Paul to the Roman procurator Felix for judgement. The Bible records the following:

And he called for two centurions, saying, "Prepare two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at the third hour of the night; " and provide mounts to set Paul on, and bring him safely to Felix the governor."

. . .And he (Felix) commanded him to be kept in Herod's Praetorium.

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. . . Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered: . .

"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. "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. . . . "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.'" . . .

And after some days, when **Felix came with his wife Drusilla**, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.



Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you."

But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound. Acts 23:23-Acts 24:27

Not only is the Egyptian confirmed in history but the whole sequence of events and people that surround the apostle Paul's trials and imprisonment from Acts 21 - 24 are confirmed as well as recorded by Josephus:

"Claudius now sent **Felix , brother of Pallas, to take charge of Judea. . . . Felix fell in love with Agrippa's sister, Drusilla,** who surpassed all other woman in beauty. He sent a Jewish magician named Atomus to lure her away from her husband and into Felix's arms. . . . In Judea, where matters were going from bad to worse, **Felix had to capture imposters and rebels on a daily basis. When Porcius Festus replaced Felix,** the Jewish leaders accused Felix before Nero."

'Jewish Antiquities'

These statements confirm the Biblical account that Felix was indeed the procurator of Judea, that he was replaced by Porcius Festus and that Felix was married to Drusilla by adultery. And as an adulterer it would come as no surprise that Felix became afraid and convicted when Paul preached to him about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come.

You see the Gospel convicts us of our sins.

JESUS GREATEST WORDS ABOUT CONVICTION

"But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. **And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:**

"Of sin because they do not believe in me. Of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged."

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when **He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth**; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. "He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you."

"A little while, and you will not see Me; and again in a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father." John 16:5-15 (NKJV)

Sources:

The Holy Bible, Author: The Lord God

Scripture taken from the New King James Version unless noted.

Josephus: Antiquities of the Jews 20 Chapter 8 Section 5
(The Jewish War 2 Chapter 13 Section 5) The Egyptian Account

Josephus The Essential Writings, ISBN 0-8254-2963-3
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Art: Soldiers bringing Paul into the barracks
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Art: Paul before Felix and Drusilla
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