

## Ancient Sources for Acts

### Chapter 25

#### 25:1–5

Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.9.1 §200

When, therefore, Ananus was of this disposition, he thought he had now a proper opportunity [to exercise his authority]. Festus was now dead, and Albinus was but upon the road; so he assembled the sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, [or, some of his companions]; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned.

Josephus, *Jewish Wars* 2.14.1 §271–76

1. (271) Now it was that Festus succeeded Felix as procurator, and made it his business to correct those that made disturbances in the country. So he caught the greatest part of the robbers, and destroyed a great many of them. (272) But then Albinus, who succeeded Festus, did not execute his office as the other had done; nor was there any sort of wickedness that could be named but he had a hand in it. (273) Accordingly, he did not only, in his political capacity, steal and plunder every one's substance, nor did he only burden the whole nation with taxes, but he permitted the relations of such as were in prison for robbery, and had been laid there, either by the senate of every city, or by the former procurators, to redeem them for money; and nobody remained in the prisons as a malefactor but he who gave him nothing. (274) At this time it was that the enterprises of the seditious at Jerusalem were very formidable; the principal men among them purchasing leave of Albinus to go on with their seditious practices; while that part of the people who delighted in disturbances joined themselves to such as had fellowship with Albinus; (275) and everyone of these wicked wretches were encompassed with his own band of robbers, while he himself, like an arch robber, or a tyrant made a figure among his company, and abused his authority over those about him, in order to plunder those that lived quietly. (276) The effect of which was this, that those who lost their goods were forced to hold their peace, when they had reason to show great indignation at what they had suffered; but those who had escaped, were forced to flatter him that deserved to be punished, out of the fear they were in suffering equally with the others. Upon the whole, nobody durst speak their minds, for tyranny was generally tolerated; and at this time were those seeds sown which brought the city to destruction.

#### 25:6–12

Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44

Such indeed were the precautions of human wisdom. The next thing was to seek means of propitiating the gods, and recourse was had to the Sibylline books, by the direction of which prayers were offered to Vulcanus, Ceres, and Proserpina. Juno, too, was entreated by the matrons, first, in the Capitol, then on the nearest part of the coast, whence water was procured to sprinkle the fane and image of the goddess. And there were sacred banquets and nightly vigils celebrated by married women. But all human efforts, all the lavish gifts of the emperor, and the propitiations of the gods,

did not banish the sinister belief that the conflagration was the result of an order. Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judæa, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired.

Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle, and was exhibiting a show in the circus, while he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer or stood aloft on a car. Hence, even for criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion; for it was not, as it seemed, for the public good, but to glut one man's cruelty, that they were being destroyed.

## **25:13–22**

Juvenal, *Satire* 6.155–60

She'll carry off large crystal vases, the most enormous pieces of agate too, along with a legendary diamond, its value enhanced by Berenice's finger. It was once given by the barbarian Agrippa to his incestuous sister to wear in the place where barefooted kings keep the Sabbath as their feast day and their traditional mercy is kind to elderly pigs.

Tacitus, *History* 2.2

These and like thoughts made him waver between hope and fear; but hope triumphed. Some supposed that he retraced his steps for love of Queen Berenice, nor was his young heart averse to her charms, but this affection occasioned no hindrance to action. He passed, it is true, a youth enlivened by pleasure, and practiced more self-restraint in his own than in his father's reign. So, after coasting Achaia and Asia, leaving the land on his left, he made for the islands of Rhodes and Cyprus, and then by a bolder course for Syria. Here he conceived a desire to visit and inspect the temple of the Paphian Venus, a place of celebrity both among natives and foreigners. It will not be a tedious digression to record briefly the origin of the worship, the ceremonial of the temple, and the form under which the goddess is adored, a form found in no other place.

Suetonius, *Titus* 7

Besides his cruelty, he lay under the suspicion of giving way to habits of luxury, as he often prolonged his revels till midnight with the most riotous of his acquaintance. Nor was he unsuspected of lewdness, and his well-known attachment to queen Berenice, who received from him, as it is reported, a promise of marriage. He was supposed, besides, to be of a rapacious disposition; for it is certain, that, in causes which came before his father, he used to offer his interest for sale, and take bribes. In short, people publicly expressed an unfavorable opinion of him, and said he would prove another Nero. This prejudice, however, turned out in the end to his advantage, and enhanced his

praises to the highest pitch when he was found to possess no vicious propensities, but, on the contrary, the noblest virtues. His entertainments were agreeable rather than extravagant: and he surrounded himself with such excellent friends, that the succeeding princes adopted them as most serviceable to themselves and the state. He immediately sent away Berenice from the city, much against both their inclinations. Some of his old eunuchs, though such accomplished dancers, that they bore an uncontrollable sway upon the stage, he was so far from treating with any extraordinary kindness, that he would not so much as witness their performances in the crowded theatre. He violated no private right; and if ever man refrained from injustice, he did; nay, he would not accept of the allowable and customary offerings. Yet, in munificence, he was inferior to none of the princes before him. Having dedicated his amphitheatre, and built some warm baths close by it with great expedition, he entertained the people with most magnificent spectacles. He likewise exhibited a naval fight in the old Naumachia, besides a combat of gladiators; and in one day brought into the theatre five thousand wild beasts of all kinds.

#### Dio Cassius 65:15

<sup>1</sup>In the sixth consulship of Vespasian and the fourth of Titus the precinct of Pax was dedicated and the “Colossus” was set up on the Sacred Way. This statue is said to have been one hundred feet in height and to have borne the features of Nero, according to some, or those of Titus, according to others. <sup>2</sup>Vespasian often gave wild-beast hunts in the theatres, but he did not take much pleasure in armed combats between men; yet Titus had once in the course of the youthful sports which were celebrated in his native district engaged in a sham fight in heavy armor with Alienus. <sup>3</sup>When the Parthians, who had become involved in war with some neighbors, asked for his help, he would not go to their aid, declaring that it was not proper for him to interfere in others' affairs.

Berenice was at the very height of her power and consequently came to Rome along with her brother Agrippa. <sup>4</sup>The latter was given the rank of praetor, while she dwelt in the palace, cohabiting with Titus. She expected to marry him and was already behaving in every respect as if she were his wife; but when he perceived that the Romans were displeased with the situation, he sent her away. <sup>5</sup>For, in addition to all the other talk that there was, certain sophists of the Cynic school managed somehow to slip into the city at this time, too; and first Diogenes, entering the theatre when it was full, denounced the pair in a long, abusive speech, for which he was flogged; and after him Heras, expecting no harsher punishment, gave vent to many senseless yelpings in true Cynic fashion, and for this was beheaded.

#### Dio Cassius 66:18

At his death Titus succeeded to the rule:

<sup>1</sup>Titus after becoming ruler committed no act of murder or of amatory passion, but showed himself upright, though plotted against, and self-controlled, though Berenice came to Rome again. This may have been because he had really undergone a change; indeed, for men to wield power as assistants to another is a very different thing from exercising independent authority themselves. <sup>2</sup>In the former case, they are heedless of the good name of the sovereignty and in their greed misuse the authority it gives them, thus doing many things that make their power the object of envy and slander; but actual monarchs, knowing that everything depends upon them, have an eye to good repute also. <sup>3</sup>It was this realization, doubtless, that caused Titus to say to someone whose society he had previously affected: “It is not the same thing to request a favor of another as to decide a case yourself, nor the

same to ask something of another as it is to give it to someone yourself.” Again, his satisfactory record may also have been due to the fact that he survived his accession but a very short time (short, that is, for a ruler), for he was thus given no opportunity for wrongdoing. <sup>4</sup>For he lived after this only two years, two months and twenty days — in addition to the thirty-nine years, five months and twenty-five days he had already lived at that time. In this respect, indeed, he is regarded as having equaled the long reign of Augustus, since it is maintained that Augustus would never have been loved had he lived a shorter time, nor Titus had he lived longer. <sup>5</sup>For Augustus, though at the outset he showed himself rather harsh because of the wars and the factional strife, was later able, in the course of time, to achieve a brilliant reputation for his kindly deeds; Titus, on the other hand, ruled with mildness and died at the height of his glory, whereas, if he had lived a long time, it might have been shown that he owes his present fame more to good fortune than to merit.