

Acts Chapter 25

Verses 25:1-12: Paul's fourth of 6 defenses (22:1-21; 22:30-23:10; 24:10-21; 26:1-29; 28:17-29).

Acts 25:1 "Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem."

"After three days ... from Caesarea to Jerusalem": To acquaint himself with the situation in his new province.

We saw in the last lesson that Paul had been imprisoned two years in Caesarea by Felix. Now Festus has come to power. (In verse 1 above), we see Festus going up to Jerusalem. Festus had something to prove, being newly in office.

Acts 25:2 "Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him,"

We see that the Jew's hatred for Paul had not diminished at all these two years. The Jews (God's chosen people) who actually had been given the law and knowledge of God seemed to know less about the Lord than the unlearned. They lost no time in going to Festus and asking for Paul.

Acts 25:3 "And desired favor against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him."

"Laying wait": A second ambush plot. This time however, the members of the Sanhedrin were not accomplices (23:14-15), but the plotters.

These Jews were trying to trick Festus into sending for Paul. They would lay wait for him and murder him.

Acts 25:4 "But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly [thither]."

"Festus" (see note on 24:27).

"Caesarea" (see note on 8:40). As the headquarters of Roman government in Judea, Caesarea was the proper place for Paul, a Roman citizen, to be tried.

Festus was probably wise enough to see through their plot to kill Paul. Perhaps Felix had filled him in on some of the details. We are not told one way or the other. We were not told what happened to the forty Jews who made the vow not to eat or drink, until they killed Paul either.

There was a way to get out of such a vow, but there were severe consequences. The Lord had said not to make vows. We are sure they were not fasting after two years.

Acts 25:5 "Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with [me], and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him."

We see here, that Festus invites them all who have any accusation to place against Paul to come to Caesarea and file their complaint. Festus says, if there be any wickedness in him. Thanks to the fact that Festus has not already made his mind up as to Paul's guilt or innocence.

Acts 25:6 "And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought."

“Sitting on the judgment seat”: This signified that this hearing was an official Roman trial (see verses 10, 17; 18:12; Matt. 27:19; John 19:13).

Regarding the “judgment seat” (see the note on 18:16-17).

It seems, even here, that Festus would not be rushed into anything by these Jews. When he (Festus), did get back to Caesarea after ten days in Jerusalem, he had Paul brought to him.

Acts 25:7 "And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove."

Here again, we see that these Jews really did not have anything against Paul that they could prove. Even the accusations had nothing to do with civil law.

Acts 25:8 "While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all."

Paul gives an all-encompassing defense of himself here. He truly had not gone against the law of the Jews. He had kept their feasts and their customs when he was at the temple. He had not really broken any religious law, or any civil laws. He had not even spoken out against Caesar.

Acts 25:9 "But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?"

“Willing to do the Jews a pleasure” (24:27).

Festus was playing politics here. He knew that it was wrong to turn Paul over to these Jews. His wanting to be in good standing with the people of his area is the only reason he made such a suggestion.

Acts 25:10 "Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest."

“Caesar’s judgment seat”: Festus’ compromise gave the Jewish leaders all that they hoped for; they intended to murder Paul before he got to Jerusalem. The apostle therefore rejected Festus’

attempt at compromise and reminded the governor that he was standing at Caesar's judgment seat where, as a Roman citizen, he had every right to be judged.

As a Roman citizen, Paul has every right to be judged by a Roman court. Paul reminds Festus of that in the verse above. I believe he also is saying to Festus, you know how difficult these Jews can be, and you also know that I am innocent of all they have charged me with. I believe the expression as thou very well knowest shows us that.

Acts 25:11 "For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar."

"I appeal unto Caesar": He declared his right as a Roman citizen to have a trial in Rome.

Paul gets really bold here in telling Festus that no man (including Festus), has a right to turn him over to these Jews. As a Roman, he has the right to appeal to Caesar, and that is just what he does. Paul has no fear of death. He says, if a fair court judges him guilty, he is willing to die for what he has done, but he is not willing to be turned over to the Jews.

Acts 25:12 "Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go."

"The council", Festus' advisers.

"Unto Caesar shalt thou go": By granting the appeal, the governor removed himself from the case and transferred it to the emperor.

Paul's request to be tried by a higher court cannot be denied. Festus will get this whole mess out of his hands and let Caesar decide this impossible case.

Acts 25:13 "And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus."

"King Agrippa," historically identified as Agrippa II, was the son of the Herod of chapter 12, Herod Agrippa I. When Agrippa I died in A.D. 44 (12:23), Agrippa II was considered too young to rule over the entire Palestinian kingdom of his father. Thus, Cuspius Fadus was appointed as procurator over the troublesome province of Judea.

Herod Agrippa II son of the Herod who killed James and imprisoned Peter (see note on 12:1). He was the last of the Herods, who play a prominent role in New Testament history.

His great-uncles, Herod Antipas, was the Herod of the gospels (mark 6:14-29; Luke 3:1; 13:31-33; 23:7-12), which his great-grandfather. Herod the Great, ruled at the time Jesus was born (Matt. 2:1-19; Luke 1:5). Though not the ruler of Judea, Agrippa was well versed in Jewish affairs (26:3).

“Bernice”: Not Agrippa’s wife, but his consort and sister. (Their sister, Drusilla, was married to the former governor, Felix). Their incestuous relationship was the talk of Rome, where Agrippa grew up. Bernice for a while became the mistress of Emperor Vespasian, then of his son, Titus, but always returned to her brother.

Felix and “Festus” later occupy this same office. By the time of chapter 25 (A.D. 59), Agrippa II had become king of Galilee, other northern regions, and part of Perea. King Agrippa had no authority over Festus. Rome often allowed Eastern rulers to use the popular title of king.

Each governed his own realm. King Agrippa came to “Caesarea” merely to salute (greet), the new procurator. A similar situation exists in the Gospels between Herod Antipas and Pilate (Luke 23:6-7, 12; see also the note on 23:24).

“Herod Agrippa II,” called simply Agrippa in Scripture, was the son of the Herod in Acts 12. Bernice and Drusilla (24:24), were his sisters. Since he was young when his father died, he did not receive his father’s realm. But as the years passed he received one part and eventually the rest.

He had a long reign, from A.D. 50 until about A.D. 100. His incestuous relations with his sister Bernice became a subject of gossip as far away as Rome (only reference, Acts chapters 25, 26).

Festus was a governor and Agrippa a king. Agrippa was perhaps, seeing how well Festus was doing with his new job. This Agrippa was Herod Agrippa II actually, and he was king over about a third of Palestine. Agrippa was a descendant of the Edomites and was a Jew. It seems he was not a very faithful Jew, but was nevertheless a Jew.

Acts 25:14 "And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix:"

We see that Festus is telling Agrippa (an expert on Jewish law), about the problem with Paul and the Jews at Jerusalem. Festus is quick to tell Agrippa that this is a problem he inherited from Felix.

Acts 25:15 "About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed [me], desiring [to have] judgment against him."

It was a custom of the king to come and show respect for the new governor, but Agrippa had stayed longer than the normal visit of state, perhaps to help with any pending problems.

Acts Chapter 25 Questions

1. After Festus was in Caesarea (as ruler) three days, where did he go?
2. Who looked him up and brought charges to him against Paul?

3. What did they ask Festus to do to Paul?
4. What would they have done to Paul, if Festus had granted their wish?
5. What answer did Festus give them?
6. What did Festus invite Paul's accusers to do?
7. How long did Festus stay in Jerusalem?
8. Soon after he returned to Caesarea, what did he do about Paul?
9. Who laid many grievous complaints against Paul?
10. What three things did Paul deny offending?
11. Why did Festus ask Paul to go to Jerusalem to be judged before him?
12. Where did Paul say he stood?
13. What right did Paul have as a Roman citizen?
14. Who did Paul say was the one who had a right to make him be judged in Jerusalem?
15. Who did Paul appeal to?
16. After Festus conferred with his council, what did he decide to do?
17. What king and queen came to see Festus?
18. Why had the king come?
19. What was Bernice to Agrippa?
20. Who was Agrippa descended from?
21. Who was an expert on Jewish law?
22. Whose problem does Festus say Paul was?
23. Why had Agrippa stayed so long?