

# Acts 25 - Paul's Defense Before Festus

III. Outreach to the remote parts of the earth (Acts 13:1—28:31)

(5) Paul's journey to Rome (21:17—28:31)

(B) Paul in Caesarea (23:23—26:32)

(b) Paul's defenses (24:1—26:32)

(ii) Before Festus (25:1-27)

## Acts 25

(ii) Before Festus (25:1-27)

1 Festus, then, after arriving in the province, went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea three days later.

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1 Three days after Festus had arrived in the province, he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem.

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

- Festus has a unique problem, he is the new governor and here is a guy whom the Jews hate, who is appealing to Caesar

— The Jews say that they want to examine Paul, but it is really just a ploy to get him back to Jerusalem so they can kill him

— So he should send Paul to Rome, but on what charges?

2 And the chief priests and the leading men of the Jews brought charges against Paul, and they were pleading with Festus,

2 And the chief priests and the leading men of the Jews brought charges against Paul, and they were urging him,

2 The high priests and Jewish leaders informed him of their charges against Paul, urging

2 Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him,

3 requesting a concession against Paul, that he might have him brought to Jerusalem (*at the same time*, setting an ambush to kill him on the way).

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3 and asking Festus to have Paul brought to Jerusalem as a favor. They were laying an ambush to kill him on the road.

3 And desired favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him.

- Ishmael wanted to resurrect the plot to murder Paul that they hatched two years before (23:12-15)

4 Festus then answered that Paul was being kept in custody in Caesarea, and that he himself was about to leave shortly.

4 Festus then answered that Paul was being kept in custody at Caesarea and that he himself was about to leave shortly.

4 Festus replied that Paul was being kept in custody at Caesarea and that he himself would be going there soon.

4 But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly thither.

5 "Therefore," he \*said, "have the influential men among you go there with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, have them bring charges against him."

5 "Therefore," he \*said, "let the influential men among you go there with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, let them prosecute him."

5 "Therefore," he said, "have your authorities come down with me and present their charges against him there, if there is anything wrong with the man."

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.

### **Paul's Hearing Before Festus & the Jewish Leaders in Caesarea**

6 After *Festus* had spent no more than eight or ten days among them, he went down to Caesarea, and on the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered that Paul be brought.

6 After he had spent not more than eight or ten days among them, he went down to Caesarea, and on the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought.

6 Festus stayed with them no more than eight or ten days and then went down to Caesarea. The next day, he sat on the judge's seat and ordered Paul brought in.

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.

7 After Paul arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many, and serious, charges against him which they could not prove,  
7 After Paul arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him which they could not prove,  
7 When Paul arrived, the Jewish leaders who had come down from Jerusalem surrounded him and began bringing a number of serious charges against him that they couldn't prove.  
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.

8 while Paul said in his own defense, "I have not done anything wrong either against the Law of the Jews, or against the temple, or against Caesar."  
8 while Paul said in his own defense, "I have committed no offense either against the Law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar."  
8 Paul said in his defense, "I have done nothing wrong against the Law of the Jews, or of the Temple, or of the emperor."  
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.  
- The serious charges made by the Jews were the same ones as those that Tertullus had presented (24:5-6)  
— However, the Jews could not prove the charges, and they had no witnesses, so all Paul had to do was categorically deny them

9 But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, replied to Paul and said, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me on these *charges*?"  
9 But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me on these *charges*?"  
9 Then Festus, wanting to do the Jewish leaders a favor, asked Paul, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem to be tried there before me on these charges?"  
**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?  
- The fact that Festus asked Paul if he was "willing" to move his trial to Jerusalem shows that Paul was not a common criminal, but an unconvicted Roman citizen with rights that the governor had to respect

10 But Paul said, "I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried. I have done nothing wrong to *the* Jews, as you also very well know.  
10 But Paul said, "I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried. I have done no wrong to *the* Jews, as you also very well know.

10 But Paul said, "I am standing before the emperor's judgment seat where I ought to be tried. I haven't done anything wrong to the Jewish leaders, as you know very well.

**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.

- A Roman judge could not move a case to another court without the consent of the accused, *and Paul refused to go!*

— Instead, he claimed the right of every Roman citizen to appeal to Caesar

11 If, therefore, I am in the wrong and have committed something deserving death, I am not trying to avoid execution; but if there is nothing to the accusations which these men are bringing against me, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar."

11 If, then, I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die; but if none of those things is *true* of which these men accuse me, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar."

11 If I'm guilty and have done something that deserves death, I'm willing to die. But if there is nothing to their charges against me, no one can hand me over to them as a favor. I appeal to the emperor!"

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.

- By appealing to Caesar, Paul forced the Romans to guard him and take him to Rome

— He knew that his destination was Rome, not Jerusalem; and the fastest way to get there was to appeal to Caesar

— Paul also knew that the Jews had not given up their hopes of killing him, so he was wise to stay under the protection of Rome

— Finally, Paul realized that he could never have a fair trial in Jerusalem anyway, so why go?

- Paul's appeal for a trial in Rome ("unto Caesar") was the right of every Roman citizen who believed he was in danger of violent coercion or capital punishment in a lower court

— At the time, Nero was emperor, but in the early years of his rule (54-62 AD), he was a relatively admirable emperor, and Paul had no reason to fear him. It was only after 62 AD that Nero began to rule erratically and turn against Christianity.

12 Then when Festus had conferred with his council, he answered, "You have appealed to Caesar; to Caesar you shall go."

12 Then when Festus had conferred with his council, he answered, "You have appealed to Caesar, to Caesar you shall go."

12 Festus talked it over with the council and then answered, "To the emperor you have appealed; to the emperor you will go!"

**12** Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? Unto Caesar shalt thou go.

- The new governor's problems were not over. He had managed not to offend the Jews, but he had not determined the legal charges against his prisoner.

— How could he send such a notable prisoner to the emperor and not have the man's crimes listed against him?

### **Herod Agrippa II Meets Paul**

**13** Now when several days had passed, **King Agrippa** and **Bernice** arrived in Caesarea, paying their respects to Festus.

**13** Now when several days had elapsed, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea and paid their respects to Festus.

**13** After several days had passed, King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to welcome Festus.

**13** And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus.

- "...King Agrippa" - King Agrippa was Marcus Julius Agrippa II, the son of Herod Agrippa I (12:1-11); he was the last of the Herods

— Rome had given Herod Agrippa II legal jurisdiction over the temple in Jerusalem, so it was logical that Festus share Paul's case with him

- "...Bernice" - the sister of Drusilla (wife of Felix), yet she was also her husband's sister

— Incest on the throne: Agrippa and Bernice, husband and wife, and brother and sister!

— The fact that his sister lived with him created a great deal of suspicion on the part of the Jewish people, for their Law clearly condemned incest (Lev 18:1-18; 20:11-21)

### **Herods**

The dynasty of the Herods were Edomites: he was Idumean (he came from Edom). The Edomites came from Esau, the rival brother of Jacob (whom the Jews came from). During the reign of the Hasmoneans, John Hyrcannus forced the Edomites to become Jews under pain of death. The Romans had established the Edomites on the throne regarding them as "a kind of Jew." Herod attempted to win the favor of the Jews by rebuilding the Temple.

- Herod the Great was the one who killed the babes in Bethlehem
- Herod Antipas was the one who beheaded John the Baptist when Salome danced for him
- Herod Agrippa I is the one who put the apostle James to death with a sword
- Herod Agrippa II is the one seen here

**14** And while they were spending many days there, Festus presented Paul's case to the king, saying, "There is a man who was left as a prisoner by Felix;

14 While they were spending many days there, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying, "There is a man who was left as a prisoner by Felix;

14 Since they were staying there for several days, Festus laid Paul's case before the king. He said, "There is a man here who was left in prison by Felix.

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:

- Festus, being in a sticky political situation just after arriving in office, took counsel from Herod, who had a reputation for being an expert in Jewish matters

15 and when I was in Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews brought charges against him, asking for a sentence of condemnation against him.

15 and when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews brought charges against him, asking for a sentence of condemnation against him.

15 When I went to Jerusalem, the high priests and the Jewish elders informed me about him and asked me to condemn him.

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.

16 I replied to them that it is not the custom of the Romans to hand over any person before the accused meets his accusers face to face, and has an opportunity to make his defense against the charges.

16 I answered them that it is not the custom of the Romans to hand over any man before the accused meets his accusers face to face and has an opportunity to make his defense against the charges.

16 I answered them that it was not the Roman custom to sentence a man to be punished until the accused met his accusers face to face and had an opportunity to defend himself against the charge.

16 To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.

17 So after they had assembled here, I did not delay, but on the next day took my seat on the tribunal and ordered that the man be brought.

17 So after they had assembled here, I did not delay, but on the next day took my seat on the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought before me.

17 So they came here with me, and the next day without any delay I sat down in the judge's seat and ordered the man to be brought in.

17 Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth.

18 When the accusers stood up, they did not *begin* bringing any charges against him of crimes that I suspected,

18 When the accusers stood up, they *began* bringing charges against him not of such crimes as I was expecting,

18 When his accusers stood up, they didn't accuse him of any of the crimes I was expecting.

18 Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed:

19 but they *simply* had some points of disagreement with him about their own religion and about a dead man, Jesus, whom Paul asserted to be alive.

19 but they *simply* had some points of disagreement with him about their own religion and about a dead man, Jesus, whom Paul asserted to be alive.

19 Instead, they had several arguments with him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus who had died—but Paul kept asserting he was alive.

19 But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

20 And being at a loss how to investigate such matters, I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and stand trial there on these matters.

20 Being at a loss how to investigate such matters, I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there stand trial on these matters.

20 I was puzzled how I should investigate such matters, so I asked if he would like to go to Jerusalem and be tried there for these things.

20 And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters.

21 But when Paul appealed to be held in custody for the Emperor's decision, I ordered that he be kept in custody until I send him to Caesar."

21 But when Paul appealed to be held in custody for the Emperor's decision, I ordered him to be kept in custody until I send him to Caesar."

21 But Paul appealed his case and asked to be held in prison until the decision of his Majesty. So I ordered him to be held in custody until I could send him to the emperor."

21 But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar.

It is interesting that by this stage the question of Paul's alleged desecration of the temple has quite disappeared from sight, and the topic of the resurrection (23:4; 24:21) has replaced it. The real ground of dispute is that Paul preaches the resurrection of Jesus, something which the Sadducees refused to believe on principle, and which the Pharisees likewise refused to believe, although they admitted the fact of a final resurrection of all men.

22 Then Agrippa *said* to Festus, "I also would like to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," he *said*, "you shall hear him."

22 Then Agrippa *said* to Festus, "I also would like to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," he *said*, "you shall hear him."

22 Agrippa told Festus, "I would like to hear the man." "Tomorrow," he said, "you will hear him."

**22** Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him.

- Jesus had also appeared before a Jewish king (Herod Antipas I), who similarly wanted to meet Him (Luke 23:8)

(B) Paul in Caesarea (23:23—26:32)

(a) Paul's transfer to Caesarea (23:23-35)

**23** So, on the next day when Agrippa and Bernice came amid great pomp and entered the auditorium, accompanied by the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought *before them*.

**23** So, on the next day when Agrippa came together with Bernice amid great pomp, and entered the auditorium accompanied by the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in.

**23** The next day, Agrippa and Bernice arrived with much fanfare and went into the auditorium along with the tribunes and the leading men of the city. At the command of Festus, Paul was brought in.

**23** And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth.

- This must have been quite a scene with Festus in his Roman robes, and King Agrippa and Bernice with all the royal ceremony, and in comes Paul, probably in his prison clothes!

— Everyone who was anyone would have been there...



24 And Festus \*said, "King Agrippa, and all you gentlemen present with us, you see this man about whom all the people of the Jews appealed to me, both in Jerusalem and here, shouting that he ought not to live any longer.

24 Festus \*said, "King Agrippa, and all you gentlemen here present with us, you see this man about whom all the people of the Jews appealed to me, both at Jerusalem and here, loudly declaring that he ought not to live any longer.

24 Then Festus said, "King Agrippa and all you men who are present with us! You see this man about whom the whole Jewish nation petitioned me, both in Jerusalem and here, shouting that he ought not to live any longer.

24 And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer.

25 But I found that he had committed nothing deserving death; and since he himself appealed to the Emperor, I decided to send him.

25 But I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death; and since he himself appealed to the Emperor, I decided to send him.

25 I find that he has not done anything deserving of death. But since he has appealed to his Majesty, I have decided to send him.

25 But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him.

- Festus' introduction is the second "official statement" declaring Paul's innocence (Cf. 23:29)

— Pilate made a similar observation about Jesus' innocence (Luke 23:4,14,22)

26 Yet, I have nothing definite about him to write to my lord. Therefore, I have brought him before you *all* and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the investigation has taken place, I may have something to write.

26 Yet I have nothing definite about him to write to my lord. Therefore I have brought him before you *all* and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the investigation has taken place, I may have something to write.

26 I have nothing reliable to write our Sovereign about him, so I have brought him to all of you, and especially to you, King Agrippa, so that I will have something to write after he is cross-examined.

26 Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write.

- The purpose of this entire hearing...to "find" legitimate charges against Paul, who had already been incarcerated for two years

27 For it seems absurd to me in sending a prisoner, not to indicate the charges against him as well."

27 For it seems absurd to me in sending a prisoner, not to indicate also the charges against him."

27 For it seems to me absurd to send a prisoner without specifying the charges against him."

27 For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him.

- What was "unreasonable" was to hold a prisoner in custody for over two years, but not have formal charges brought against him...