

Bible Study # 20

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Acts 24

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- **Acts 24:1-9** *“And after five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a spokesman,...The Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that all this was so.”*
 - Luke presented a vivid picture of Paul’s trial in *Caesarea* before the governor Felix
 - It began with arguments from *Tertullus*, the attorney hired by the Sanhedrin who attempted to present the formal charges against Paul
 - He began by flattering the governor
 - Then he charged Paul with being a pest and trouble maker who caused dissension among the Jews all over the world

Acts 24 (Cont)

- He also accused him of being the ringleader of the sect of Nazoreans (a term meaning followers of Jesus of Nazareth)
- His most serious charge was that Paul tried to **desecrate the temple** which provoked a civil disturbance in *Jerusalem*
- He then invited Felix to examine Paul to verify these accusations
- Finally, the Jewish leaders joined in the attack attempting to vouch for the truth of the charges *

Acts 24

- **Acts 24:10-27** *“And when the governor had motioned to him to speak...and desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison*
 - Paul graciously accepted Felix’s offer to defend himself
 - Paul began by acknowledging that Felix had been a judge over his nation for many years (52 – 60) and expressed his pleasure to defend himself before him
 - Paul then invited Felix to verify the details of his defense and recounted the events leading up to his arrest and provided an explanation of how he was practicing Judaism according to **“the way”**

Acts 24 (Cont)

- Paul also explained how he came to the temple to offer alms to God for his nation
- He discussed his purification ritual and how he was in the temple without attracting a crowd or causing a disturbance
- He stated that the charges were brought by some Jews from Asia who were not present at this trial
- He concluded by exclaiming that he was on trial for his belief in **the resurrection of the dead**
- Felix stated that he would not rule on this issue until he had heard from *Lysias*, the Roman tribunal, and ordered that Paul remain in a slightly restricted custody

Acts 24 (Cont)

- Unfortunately Felix did not keep his promise to wait for the tribune but instead brought Paul before his wife *Drisilla*, a Jewess, who could help him understand some of the Jewish issues
- Just as Herod Antipas like to listen to the teachings of John the Baptist, Felix listened to Paul speak about his faith in Christ Jesus
- When Paul spoke about self-restraint and the coming judgement, Felix became frightened, leading him to dismiss Paul at that time
- Most likely he was also hoping to receive a bribe from Paul for his release
- Shortly afterwards Felix was replaced by *Porcius Festus* as governor
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Acts 25

Acts 25

- **Acts 25:1- 12** *“Now when Festus had come into his province,...’You have appealed to Caesar; to Caesar you shall go.’”*
 - After Festus’ arrival in the province of Judea in 59, he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem to meet with the Jewish leaders
 - Not even Paul’s two-year imprisonment had changed the anger of the Jewish authorities against Paul
 - They immediately presented their formal charges against him and sought to bring Paul to Jerusalem so they could ambush and kill him en route

Acts 25 (Cont)

- Upon his return to *Caesarea* Festus took his seat on the tribunal for a second trial of Paul
- The Jews came down from *Jerusalem* and made many serious charges against him
- However, just as they failed in the first trial, they were unable to prove any of their accusations
- Again, Paul defended himself by insisting that he had committed no crimes against either the Jewish or Roman leadership nor had he desecrated the temple
- Like his predecessor, Festus attempted to ingratiate himself with the Jews by asking Paul if he would stand trial in Jerusalem

Acts 25 (Cont)

- Paul insisted that he should be tried by the Romans and demanded that he stand before the tribunal of Caesar which was his right as a Roman citizen
- After conferring with his council, Festus declared “you have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go”*

Acts 25 (Cont)

- **Acts 25:13-27** *“Now when some days had passed, Agrippa the king and Bernice arrived ... in sending a prisoner, not to indicate the charges against him.”*
 - Shortly after Festus’ trial of Paul, King Agrippa and his wife Bernice arrived in *Caesarea* for a state visit with in honor of the new governor (Festus)
 - Agrippa II, Bernice and Festus’s wife Drusilla were siblings, children of Herod Agrippa I (ruled in Judea 41-44)
 - Agrippa I had James executed in Jerusalem (Acts 12:1-2)
 - His own death was recorded in Acts 12:23
 - Agrippa II was the last of Herod’s line to rule in Palestine (he died in 92)

Herod the Great

Luke 1-2, Matt 2

Aristobulus

Archelaus

Matt 2:22

Herod Antipas

(Tetrarch) Every Gospel reference
except Luke 1-2, Matt 2

Philip

Luke 3:1,
Matt 14:3

Herod Agrippa I

Every Acts reference
(except 4:27 & 13:1,
which refer to Antipas)

Herodias

Philip's wife who became
Antipas' wife – Matt 14:3-6

Herod Agrippa II

Every Acts reference
to "Agrippa" (chap 25-26)

Bernice

"Wife" of Agrippa II

Drusilla

Wife of Gov. Felix
(Acts 24:24)

Acts 25 (Cont)

- Festus consulted with King Agrippa II about Paul and reminded the Jews that it was Roman custom not to hand over anyone before he faced his accusers and had opportunity to defend himself
- When the Jews arrived to condemn Paul, Festus was surprised that they did not charge him with any of the crimes that would warrant a Roman condemnation
- Again, Festus asks Paul if he was willing to go to Jerusalem and stand before the Sanhedrin
- Paul appealed for a decision from the Emperor
- Therefore, Festus held him in custody until he could send him to Rome

Acts 25 (Cont)

- King Agrippa II told Festus that he would like to hear from Paul
- The king and queen arrived with great ceremony in the audience hall and were joined by the cohort commanders and other prominent men of the city
- Festus presented Paul to the king stating that he had not found anything that Paul was accused of deserving death
- He concluded his presentation by stating that since Paul had appealed to the Emperor he would send him to Rome
- There are similarities between the actions of Pontus Pilate and Festus as they attempted to respond to the demands of the Jewish leaders

Acts 26

Acts 26

- **Acts 26:1-27** *“Agrippa said to Paul, ‘You have permission to speak for yourself.’ Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense: ‘I think myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I am to make my defense... ‘I know that you believe.’”*
 - King Agrippa II invited Paul to speak for himself, as he had in all his previous trials
 - Paul began his defense (Greek *apologia*) with a standard request for attention
 - Agrippa II was an expert in all the Jewish customs and controversies and therefore able to understand Paul’s argument during Paul’s lengthy presentation

Acts 26 (Cont)

- **Acts 26:28-32** *“And Agrippa said to Paul, ‘In a short time you think to make me a Christian!’...And Agrippa said to Festus, ‘This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.’”*
 - The king dodged a direct answer to Paul’s appeal with the ironic response that Paul was trying to convert him
 - Paul responded that he would pray to God that eventually Agrippa II and everyone hearing him might become a Christian believer
 - Paul proclaimed that he had something infinitely more valuable than the king’s wealth and power
 - The exchange ended when the king rose, along with all the others, signaling that the hearing was over

Acts 26 (Cont)

- There is no indication that King Agrippa II ever met Festus's original purpose of seeking his advice in preparing an explanation as to why he was sending Paul to Caesar
- Instead, they agreed that Paul had not done anything that deserved death or even imprisonment*