

A Study in Acts

Chapter Twenty-Five – Paul’s Defense Before Festus.

ACTS 25:14-27:

In our previous lesson, Paul gave his defense to Felix, the Roman governor. He defended himself against the false claims of the Jews and their hired advocate. Felix would put off pronouncing judgments in Paul’s case, claiming that he would do so when the commander of Jerusalem came.

In the interim, Paul has been given the opportunity to speak with Felix and Drusilla. Paul spoke exactly what Felix needed to hear for salvation from himself, righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come. Felix was afraid, but not enough to call upon Paul many more times, in hopes of receiving a bribe. Paul would stay in Caesarea for two years and during that time Felix would be replaced by Festus, a new governor.

In this lesson, we will present his case to the new governor and set in motion things that would begin the process of fulfilling the promise that the Lord made to him in Jerusalem:

Acts 23:11 “*But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, “Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome.”*”

Text #1

Acts 25:14-16 “*When they had been there many days, Festus laid Paul’s case before the king, saying: “There is a certain man left a prisoner by Felix,¹⁵ about whom the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, when I was in Jerusalem, asking for a judgment against him.¹⁶ To them I answered, ‘It is not the custom of the Romans to deliver any man to destruction before the accused meets the accusers face to face, and has opportunity to answer for himself concerning the charge against him.’”*

Festus’ Dilemma – Although Paul’s appeal may have been an immediate solution to an early problem for Festus, it appears now that he has an even bigger problem. “***I have nothing certain to write to my Lord concerning him***”. Festus’ words in **Vs. 26** concerning Paul. So, taking advantage of Herod’s arrival and his knowledge of the Jews, he is going to lay out the events that have transpired thus far, in hopes that Herod will hear the case and share what to write to Caesar. He is very careful to make sure that Herod knows Roman law towards its citizens.

Text #2

Acts 25:17-21 “*Therefore when they had come together, without any delay, the next day I sat on the judgment seat and commanded the man to be brought in.¹⁸ When the accusers stood up, they brought no accusation against him of such things as I supposed,¹⁹ but had some questions against him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who had died, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.²⁰ And because I was uncertain of such questions, I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there be judged concerning these*

matters. ²¹ But when Paul appealed to be reserved for the decision of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I could send him to Caesar.””

Decision of Augustus – Yes, Nero Claudius Caesar Germanicus is the correct emperor at this time. This is not an error as some may suspect, but a quick check to history reveals that it would be that Augustus would be the originator of the law of appeal being discussed here. In addition, he was the progenitor of the Augustan Dynasty (Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero).

Text #3

Acts 25:22-23 “Then Agrippa said to Festus, “I also would like to hear the man myself.”

“Tomorrow,” he said, “you shall hear him.”

²³ So the next day, when Agrippa and Bernice had come with great pomp, and had entered the auditorium with the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at Festus’ command Paul was brought in.”

Festus must have been thrilled at the news of acceptance by Herod, he will waste no time setting up the meeting. Herod and Bernice will arrive at this meeting with great pageantry, as is the custom of kings.

Text #4

Acts 25:24-27 “*And Festus said: “King Agrippa and all the men who are here present with us, you see this man about whom the whole assembly of the Jews petitioned me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying out that he was not fit to live any longer. ²⁵ But when I found that he had committed nothing deserving of death, and that he himself had appealed to Augustus, I decided to send him. ²⁶ I have nothing certain to write to my lord concerning him. Therefore, I have brought him out before you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the examination has taken place, I may have something to write. ²⁷ For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him.”*”

Purpose – Festus has made it abundantly clear as to the reason for this gathering. It is strictly for information. Such information, that would keep himself from looking like a fool before his master.

A Note – The Herod’s are not Jews. They are Idumaeans by birth (from Edom), and raised in the Jewish faith, traditions, and laws. They were entrusted by their Roman benefactors to oversee civil and religious affairs, always keeping with the goodwill of their Roman sponsors. This very Herod would side with the Romans in the war that led to the destruction of Jerusalem.

He would, however, have more insight to the issues of which have caused such an uproar among the Jews.

