

ACTS 25:1-27 PAUL BEFORE GOVERNOR FESTUS: HIS APPEAL TO CAESAR

Paul's case rapidly became a political football. During the two years since his arrest, Jewish leaders from Jerusalem kept pressure on Roman officials to have him condemned and executed. Chapter 25 records Paul's dealings with Festus who replaced Felix as Roman Procurator of Judea in 59 AD. Festus in turn gets King Agrippa II into the act. Bottom line: though every governmental authority recognized the Apostle's innocence, he nevertheless remains under house arrest for a total of four years (two at Caesarea; two more in Rome)! The Holy Spirit through Luke sees to it that we have the details.

25:1-6 Governor Festus Listens to the Charges of Jewish Leaders

- v. 1 Festus, newly on the job as Roman Governor, makes it a priority to settle standing grievances of Jewish leaders. This requires a visit to _____.
- v. 2, 3 KJV "Then the high _____ and the chief of the Jews..."
NASV "And the chief _____ and the _____ men of the Jews..."
This is an example of textual variants that in no way affect doctrine.

Luke highlights their actions:

1. THEY INFORM* HIM _____ PAUL (*aorist active indicative)
 2. THEY KEPT BESEECHING* HIM _____ PAUL (*imperfect active indicative)
 3. BY PERSISTENTLY REQUESTING* A FAVOR _____ PAUL (*present middle participle)
 4. THEIR REAL MOTIVE; "laying wait," an _____ to kill Paul! The ambush plot motivates the religious leaders!?! No strange occurrence when anyone politicizes religious office.
- v. 4, 5 FESTUS IS DECISIVE AND OBJECTIVE
1. Paul will be kept at _____.
 2. You Jews must bring your _____ against him there, (v. 6) _____ days from now.
- v. 6 Festus on the court date sits on the _____, the _____ seat.

25:7-12 Festus Hears the Case; Paul Appeals to Caesar

- v. 7 THE JEWISH SIDE (covered in one verse)
"Many _____ charges WITH NO PROOF."
Paul's accusers produce no eyewitnesses or objective evidence acceptable under Roman law. Was Jewish law less objective?
- v. 8-11 PAUL'S SELF-DEFENSE
- v. 8 A simple pointed denial of all the charges
 - v. 9 As a _____ to the Jews, Festus asks Paul if he would accept a change of venue and be tried in Jerusalem.
 - v. 10 "My trials must (δει/dei) be before a Roman court, you yourself know thoroughly that I have done no wrong." (See Festus' comments in verses 18-20.)
 - v. 11 Note Paul's clear approval of capital punishment. Knowing the motivation of the Jews, Paul appeals to _____. "Caesar" = Nero (reigns 54-68 AD) - not anti-Christian until ca.63 AD.

25:12 Festus' Decision: You Will Be Sent to Caesar

- v. 12 "After conferring with the _____" ("council," KJV) - a specially selected group of advisors to the Governor (OVER)

This meeting was to determine whether Paul's appeal to Caesar was to be allowed. Provincial governors made the determination based upon the seriousness of the charge coupled with the evidence. Festus, too, could have acquitted Paul, but that would have given Jews cause against him. Festus, though confused, seems fair and objective. "PAUL, YOU WILL GO TO ROME AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE."

25:13 Enter King Agrippa II

v. 13 KING AGRIPPA II

- Son of Agrippa I (of Acts 12:20 fame); great-grandson of Herod the Great
- Vassal (to Rome) King of north Palestine in 48 AD; Nero expands his domain after 54AD.
- Reigns to 100 AD, but dies childless; last of the Herods
- Very pro-Roman; tries, but fails, to stop the Jewish revolt in AD 66

BERNICE

- Sister of Agrippa II; one year his junior; accused of living in incest with him by contemporaries
- Married and mother of two sons to her uncle Herod, King of Chalcis (he died 48 AD)
- Very pro-Roman; she, too, fails to stop the Jews uprising in 66 AD
- Sometime after the destruction of Jerusalem (AD 70), she became the mistress of General Titus (some say Emperor Vespasian, too). They never marry due to negative attitudes of the Romans.

25:14-22 Festus Seeks King Agrippa's Input

BACKGROUND, HUMAN: Governor Festus determined that Paul's case should be heard by Emperor Nero. This required a summary statement regarding the specific charges and brief history of the case. But what specifics could he delineate for the Emperor? He decides to enlist King Agrippa's perspective in view of his reputation as an authority on the Jews' religion.

BACKGROUND, DIVINE: Unseen and beyond all these human machinations and decisions is the sovereign will of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, when He saved Paul, spoke the words of Acts 9:15 some 24 years earlier! Paul will give his testimony and most detailed defense before K. Agrippa and the highest potentates of Judea.

v. 14-21 Festus rehearses the case to King Agrippa II; his sense of fairness and frustration are apparent.

v. 22 Agrippa II agrees to hear the case the next day.

25:23-27 The Setting for Paul's Defense Before Agrippa II

v. 23 THE PRINCIPALS GATHER (The Trappings of Grandeur!)

- Agrippa and Bernice come with great _____ *?"
*φαντασία/phantasia = fantasy, pageantry, decorations
- "chief captains" = chilarchs, military commanders; five, according to Josephus
- "principal men of Caesarea" = dignitaries, authority figures
- Festus, Procurator (Roman Governor)

BEFORE THESE POMPOUS PERSONAGES STANDS A HANDCUFFED JEW WHO HAD CONVERTED TO CHRIST – UNOSTENTATIOUS AND PLAINLY CLOTHED. BUT, HISTORY FROM DIVINE VIEWPOINT RECOGNIZES THEM ONLY AS THEY RELATE TO HIM AS GOD'S MAN.

Compare Luke 3:1-2 for a similar thought.

v. 24-27 Festus: "Gentlemen, I have to write a report to Rome about this case. As far as I am concerned, the accused has committed no capital offense; please help me with something objective to write."

NEXT WEEK: Paul testifies of Christ and his power before the highest potentates of the Roman Province of Judea!