

Paul in Caesarea

Acts 24:22–26:8

Paul had been in Jerusalem for 12 days following the end of his third apostolic journey. During that time he was able to visit with the Little flock of believers at the Hebrew church, had taken an Nazarite vow by following what is written in Numbers 6, and he also paid for the sacrifice of four other men who took that same vow. He had taken the vow on order to prove himself innocent that he had told the Little Flock believers that they were to forsake Moses by not circumcising their children or not follow the Law. This is what he preached to those saved into the Church, the Body of Christ, but he never told those saved under the Gospel of the Kingdom what they should do, in accordance with his agreement with Peter (Galatians 2:7–10).

Having been warned of a plot formed against Paul by the unbelieving Jews, the chief captain took him out of Jerusalem with a contingent of at least 470 soldiers. He was brought to Caesarea, a city on the Mediterranean Sea about 75 miles from Jerusalem. There, he was given the opportunity to stand before his accusers and be judged by the governor of the region, Felix.

Felix (24:22–27)

Marcus Antonius Felix was the Romans official who had jurisdiction over a large area extending from Phoenicia to the north and Idumea (region south of Judea) to the south. He had grown up in an aristocratic family and was related to Marc Anthony and the Emperor Augustas. He was apparently a cruel and morally corrupt leader.

Felix was married three times. The first two wives were named Drusilla, and the last wife's name is unknown. The middle wife, Drusilla of Judea, was about 19 years old when we see her in Acts 24:24. She was the daughter of Herod Agrippa I and sister of Bernice and Herod Agrippa II. Drusilla died in the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79.

After hearing Paul's accusers and then his defense of himself, Felix decided he would wait for the chief captain to come and give his testimony about the situation. Paul was kept in custody, but was given much freedom so that he could see those who wanted to visit with him. During this time of imprisonment, Felix would call for Paul to come before him so that he could hear what he had to say about his faith in Jesus Christ. Paul was often called before Felix because he was curious about what Paul had to say, but he also hoped Paul would pay him a bribe so that he could be set free. This continued for two years. Felix wanted to do the Jews a favor, to help keep the peace, so he kept Paul imprisoned even after he was replaced by Festus.

Festus (25:1–12)

When Felix stepped down from his position as governor of the region, Porcius Festus was assigned to take his place. Unlike Felix, Festus was a much more fair and reasonable ruler. Paul had been in the hands of Felix for at least two years, and now he was being passed on to the new governor. Shortly after taking office, he traveled to Jerusalem to find out first hand why Paul was in custody. In talking with the leaders in Jerusalem, he found that they wanted Paul brought back to Jerusalem to be tried, but they were actually trying to get him released so that they could kill him. Festus said he was going to retain custody of Paul, and if they wanted to accuse him then they needed to come to Caesarea and do it before him.

After meeting with the leaders in Jerusalem for 10 days, Festus was ready to hear the arguments of Paul and the Jews who wanted him dead. They were unable to present a viable case against Paul. All of their accusations were groundless and unprovable. Paul answered his accusers without going

against the Law, or the temple, or against Caesar. There was no credible reason to hold Paul after this hearing, however, to do the Jews a favor, and help keep peace within the province, Festus refused to make a judgement against Paul, and instead asked him if he would go to Jerusalem to be tried according to Jewish Law.

Since Paul had done nothing wrong, which was made clear with this examination, Paul refused to be unfairly judged by the Jews and instead made his appeal to Caesar. This was the right of any Roman citizen and is similar to our judicial system where we are able to appeal our case before a high court if we feel we have been unfairly treated. Paul was appealing his case before the highest court of the Roman empire.

King Agrippa II (25:13–22)

Herod Agrippa I was the father of Herod Agrippa II and along with his son, Agrippa, had three daughters including Drusilla, the second wife of Felix, and Bernice. Herod Agrippa I died when his son was only 17 years old. Agrippa and Bernice (or Berenice) were very close, and it was rumored that they were living together inappropriately. Earlier in her life she was married (again inappropriately) to her uncle about four years. They were ruling together and she unofficially had as much power as he had. They are always seen together in Scripture (Acts 25:13, 23; 26:30).

After a number of days, Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to see Festus. During the many days that they stayed there, Festus presented them Paul's case. He told them the Jews wanted Paul to be condemned, but Roman law dictates that a man cannot be condemned until he is able to make a defense before his accusers. This is why he did not allow the Jews to try Paul in Jerusalem. Festus told King Agrippa that Paul's accusers did not present him with any charge worthy of death, only some disagreement about their religion and the dead man, Jesus, whom Paul asserted to be alive. King Agrippa was quite knowledgeable in the customs of the Jews because he had married a Jew. He was quite intrigued about Paul's case and desired to hear from him personally.

Paul before Agrippa (25:23–26:8)

Festus set up a meeting between Paul and King Agrippa the next day. It was a great spectacle done with much pageantry as King Agrippa and Bernice came in to the auditorium. Anybody who was somebody was present. Festus introduced the event stating that he had examined Paul and found no reason to condemn him, and because Paul had appealed to the Emperor, he agreed to do so. This hearing before King Agrippa was meant to bring out some reason that Paul was being accused and needed to be brought before the Emperor.

As Paul stood before King Agrippa, he began to review his life and how he came to be condemned by his own people. From his youth, he was fully a Jew and trained as a Pharisee, living strictly by the Law. Now he was standing trial for the hope promised to the fathers of Israel.

The hope of Israel (26:6–8)

Paul brings together the nation of Israel with the Church the Body of Christ by saying his hope is the same as the hope of Israel. Paul had already expanded on what this hope is in Acts 24:15. Their hope, and our hope, is in God fulfilling His promise of life after death. We are both looking forward to our resurrection. Israel is looking forward to being resurrected into the Kingdom and we in the Church, the Body of Christ are looking forward to the Rapture and serving Christ in the heavenly places. We are both looking forward to the same hope, but fulfilled in different ways. Paul emphasized the common element between Israel and the Body, Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

For previous notes and additional mid-Acts materials please visit www.MidActsTruths.com