

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Acts 25:1-12 | Session 68 | Paul's Second Trial in Caesarea | A.D. 62

Verse 1—

Felix is no longer governor. While Paul thought him to be a fair judge, Felix never followed through with his justice and left Paul bound for two years (24:27) Festus has now been appointed to the position, and appears to be a better governor and judge. The historian, Josephus (Wars, 14.2.271) wrote, “Now it was that Festus succeeded Felix as procurator, and made it his business to correct those that made disturbances in the country. So he caught the greatest part of the robbers, and destroyed a great many of them.” It appears that is exactly what Festus plans to do just three days after assuming office. [As a side note, after Festus, Albinus came into power, and then Gessius Florus as bad or worse than Albinus succeeded him, eventually leading to the Jewish Wars; We can see similarities in our own leadership. History does repeat itself]. **Ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem**, although Jerusalem was south east of Caesarea, we would say, he *went down to Jerusalem*, the Bible always describes Jerusalem as up.

Verses 2,3—

It is two years later and the high priest is no longer Ananias. Again, according to Josephus (Antiquities, 20.179) the new high priest was Ismael, the son of Fabi, and there was sedition occurring in Jerusalem which may be a reason for Festus to make a quick visit there. Perhaps the high priest explains to Festus the reason for the unrest in the city: “It is Paul’s fault!” It seems amazing that after two years of Paul being out of circulation, the Jews are still obsessed with him. [They had PDS, Paul Derangement Syndrome.] We don’t know what Paul was doing during his two years of *semi-confinement* in Caesarea, but he did have relative freedom and was evidently still preaching the gospel and influencing many. The Jews want Paul dead, so they attempt to get Festus to have Paul brought to Jerusalem where their plan was to kill him along the way. It is unknown if Festus is even aware of who Paul is at this time.

Verses 4,5—

Was Festus wise to their plot? Regardless, he rules that Paul will be kept in Caesarea. The Jews would have to make their accusations against Paul in Caesarea.

Verses 6,7—

After **ten days** Festus returned to Caesarea with the Jews who were Paul’s accusers. Festus immediately got to work the next day, **sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought**, and the Jews **laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove**. Nothing had changed from two years ago. Their complaints, which included 1) Paul being pestilent; 2) He was a mover of sedition; 3) He was a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes; 4) Paul spoke out strongly about the resurrection of the dead. While the latter was true, all the other complaints were unfounded.

Verse 8—

In which Paul again, as he had done two years prior, defends himself saying 1) He was not **against the law of the Jews**; 2) Nor was he **against the Temple**. This is more evidence that Paul was living under the Law of Moses. How could this be since Paul preached salvation by grace through faith and not of yourselves...? I think the clearest way to resolve this is to realize there is an overlap, or a transition, between the dispensation of the Law, and the dispensation of Grace, unlike some who say there was a point in time when the Law ended and Grace began. Paul even mentions this diminishing of Israel and the riches of the Gentiles because of Israel’s decay (Romans 11:12); 3) **Nor yet against Caesar**, which is a charge we have not heard before, except in Acts 17, when Paul was in Thessalonica, this was one of the accusations the Jews had against him (in particular Jason) there (see 17:2-7). This charge is still making the rounds, but Paul makes it clear in his defense, I have not **offended** (Greek: *harmatano, sinned*) **anything at all**.

Verse 9,10, 11—

Festus, willing to do the Jew a pleasure (a favor). Here we see a typical political move, trying to please the elite. I don’t think Festus is against Paul, he seems to primarily be interested in keeping the Jews at peace. It is unclear if Festus was even aware of the plot, two years ago, to kill Paul. **Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?** Another reason to believe Festus was not against Paul; he gives him a choice. But, of course, it seems Jerusalem would be hostile territory for Paul to receive a fair trial (this seems to be a hearing more than a trial). Paul understands this by answering, **I stand at Caesar’s judgment seat, where I ought to be judged**. The only charge the Romans would have been concerned with was the accusation that Paul was against Caesar. **To the Jews have I done no wrong**, and Festus, you know that! Blasphemy against Caesar would have been punishable by death and if he is guilty of that **or have committed anything worth of death, I refuse not to die**. He is so certain that he has not sinned against Caesar that he is ready to appeal to him, **I appeal to Caesar**. [The emperor to whom Paul appealed was a man named Nero. He was unbalanced and later accused Christians of burning down the Circus Maximus and a large portion of the city of Rome; some believe Nero himself set the fire in order to use Christians as a scapegoat. Whether Paul actually stood before Nero is unknown].

Verse 12—

It is possible that Festus could have simply dismissed the case, but he **conferred with the council** before deciding to grant Paul’s appeal request. The **council** here is not the Jewish council (the Sanhedrin), rather it would have been his legal advisors, those experienced in case law. The decision: **Hast thou appealed to Caesar—unto Caesar shalt thou go**. Thus, setting the stage for the fulfillment of the prophecy Jesus announced to Paul in Acts 23:11, *Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome*. We don’t know what Paul’s emotions were while he was being kept in Caesarea for two years, but we don’t get any sense of him being depressed or beat down. Apparently, he took Jesus at His word to be of good cheer. We should to do the same!