

# CHAPTER 25

## INTRODUCTION TO ACTS 25

**Ver. 1.** *Now when Festus was come into the province*, etc.] Of Judea, which was a Roman province, over which he was made governor by Nero, the Roman emperor, in the room of Felix; he now being landed in some part of the province, namely, at Caesarea, and so might be said to have entered upon the government of it, as the phrase will bear to be rendered;

*after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem*; he very likely came by sea from Italy to Judea, and landed at Caesarea; for though Joppa was the nearest port to Jerusalem, yet Caesarea was the safest, and most commodious port, being made so by Herod; (see Gill on “~~4182~~Acts 18:22”), and besides, it seems to have been very much the residence of the kings and governors of Judea, (~~4129~~Acts 12:19, 23:23,33) here Festus stayed three days after his landing, to rest himself after the fatigue of the voyage, and then went up to Jerusalem, the metropolis of the province of Judea.

**Ver. 2.** *Then the high priest*, etc.] Ananias, as in (~~4212~~Acts 23:2, 24:1) the Alexandrian copy, the Vulgate Latin version, and all the Oriental versions, read, “the chief priests”, the whole college of the priests:

*and the chief of the Jews*; their rulers and elders, the members of the Jewish sanhedrim;

*informed him against Paul*; they took the first opportunity of waiting upon him, when he was come to Jerusalem; hoping it might be a favourable one to them, since he was just entering upon his government, and might be willing to gratify the chief of the nation, and gain their affection and esteem, and since as yet he was not acquainted with their wicked dispositions and artifices; and brought a bill of information against Paul, and gave a large account of him, what a wicked man he was, and what evils he had committed; they laid many things to his charge, and very heavily accused him, and endeavoured to prepossess the governor, and prejudice him against him:

*and besought him*; that he would grant them the following request.

**Ver. 3.** *And desired favour against him*, etc.] Paul; they asked what would be a favour to them, and a prejudice to him: or “of him”, that is, of Festus; they asked a favour of him, and desired it as such, as what would be gratefully accepted and acknowledged by them; which sense is confirmed by the Syriac version; the Arabic version renders it “to”, or “upon them”; that is, they asked him to grant a favour to them, or bestow one on them, which is as follows:

*that he would send for him to Jerusalem*; that his case might be heard before him, and he might be tried and judged by him, as they pretended:

*laying wait in the way to kill him*; this was their design, though they concealed it, and pretended no other view than that justice might take place: their scheme was, that if they could have prevailed upon Festus to have sent for Paul to Jerusalem, from Caesarea, they would have provided men, perhaps the same forty and upwards as before, in (~~44312~~ Acts 23:12,13) to have laid in wait for him in the way as he came, and to have killed him: the whole of this shows the malice of these men, the badness of their cause, the indefatigableness and diligence to attain their end, the danger the apostle was in, and the care of Providence over him.

**Ver. 4.** *But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea*, etc.] Or that he was kept there, and was in proper custody, under the care of a centurion, and should continue there; nor was there any reason why he should be removed, especially since he should return thither speedily, as he adds:

*and that he himself would depart shortly thither*; the answer was a very wise and prudent one, and the reasons given were just and strong; as that Paul had been sent to Caesarea, was left bound by his predecessor there; there he found him, and there he was under a proper guard, and there it was right for him to continue; and besides, he himself should make no stay in Jerusalem, but should depart for Caesarea in a few days, and therefore it was very improper to send for Paul thither.

**Ver. 5.** *Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able*, etc.] Who are at leisure, can spare time, and to whom it will be convenient, without interrupting other business, to take such a journey; and who are able to bear the expenses of it, without hurting their families, and whose health and age will admit of it; and above all, who are masters of this affair, and are

capable of forming charges, and of supporting them with proper proofs and evidences: let such

*go down with me*; from Jerusalem to Caesarea: and accuse this man: in proper form, according to the rules of law, of what he is guilty, and can be proved upon him:

*if there is any wickedness in him*; or committed by him, anything that is absurd and unreasonable, notoriously flagitious and criminal; that is, contrary to the rules of reason, the common sense of mankind, and the laws of God and men; and especially of the Roman empire, or that is blasphemous or seditious.

**Ver. 6.** *And when he had tarried among them more than ten days*, etc.] The Alexandrian copy, and three of Beza's copies, and some others, and the Vulgate Latin version read, "no more than eight or ten days"; and the Syriac and Ethiopic versions leave out the phrase "no more", and read "when he had stayed there", as the former; that is, at Jerusalem; or "when he had remained among them", as the latter; the Jews, chief priests, and others, "eight or ten days"; the historian, not being certain to a day, expresses himself in this manner:

*he went down to Caesarea*; from whence he came, and where Paul was:

*and the next day sitting in the judgment seat*; the day after he was come to Caesarea, he sat upon the bench in the court of judicature, to try causes, and particularly the apostle's, which he was very desirous of knowing, for which reason he so soon took the bench: and

*commanded Paul to be brought*; from the place where he was kept a prisoner, to the judgment hall where Festus was.

**Ver. 7.** *And when he was come*, etc.] Into court:

*the Jews which came down from Jerusalem*; along with Festus, perhaps the high priest with the elders, and Tertullus the orator, as before:

*stood round about*; either the Apostle Paul, or the judgment seat; the witnesses and accusers were to stand, as well as the person accused; (see Gill on "<sup>41157</sup>Mark 14:57").

*And laid many and grievous complaints against Paul; which they could not prove*; for his moral conversation, both before and after conversion,

was very strict and conformable to the laws of God and man; and yet as pure and inoffensive as he was, he was not exempt from the calumnies of men; and these many and very grievous; but it was his happiness, and to his honour through the grace of God, that his enemies could not make good anyone thing against him.

**Ver. 8.** *While he answered for himself*, etc.] As he was allowed by the Roman laws to do, he pleaded his own cause, and showed the falsehood of the charges exhibited against him; by observing, that as the crimes alleged against him were reducible to three heads, neither of them were just and true:

*neither against the law of the Jews*; the law of Moses, whether moral, ceremonial, or judicial; not the moral law, that he was a strict observer of, both before and since his conversion; nor the ceremonial law, for though it was abolished, and he knew it was, yet for peace sake, and in condescension to the weakness of some, and in order to gain others, he submitted to it, and was performing a branch of it, when he was seized in the temple; nor the judicial law, which concerned the Jews as Jews, and their civil affairs: neither against the temple; at Jerusalem, the profanation of which he was charged with, by bringing a Gentile into it; which was a falsehood, at least a mistake:

*nor yet against Caesar, have I offended at all*; for he was charged with sedition, (~~Acts~~ Acts 24:5). Caesar was a common name to the Roman emperors, as Pharaoh was to the kings of Egypt; and which they took from Julius Caesar the first of them, who was succeeded by Augustus Caesar, under whom Christ was born; and he by Tiberius, under whom he suffered; the fourth was Caius Caligula; the fifth was Claudius, mentioned in (~~Acts~~ Acts 11:28, 18:2) and the present Caesar, to whom Paul now appealed, was Nero; and though succeeding emperors bore this name, it was also given to the second in the empire, or the presumptive heir to it: authors are divided about the original of Caesar, the surname of Julius; some say he had it from the colour of his eyes, which were “Caesii”, grey; others from “Caesaries”, his fine head of hair; others from his killing of an elephant, which, in the language of the Moors, is called “Caesar”: the more common opinion is, that he took his name from his mother’s womb, being “Caeso”, cut up at his birth, to make way for his passage into the world; in which manner also our King Edward the Sixth came into the world.

**Ver. 9.** *But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure*, etc.] As did his predecessor Felix, (<sup>4027</sup>Acts 24:27) he being just entered upon his new government, and having met with some caresses and civilities from the Jews at Jerusalem, by whom he had been much pressed and urged about the affair of the apostle:

*answered Paul, and said, wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?* meaning by the Jewish sanhedrim, he Festus being present: this was what the Jews had requested of him when he was at Jerusalem, that he would send for Paul thither, and there let him be judged, and which request he had denied; but having been solicited and importuned by the Jews, perhaps as, they came down together, he was inclined to gratify them, and to admit of it that he should be tried at Jerusalem, before the sanhedrim, he being present; and yet he was unwilling to do this without the prisoner's consent, he being a freeman of a Roman city; fearing he should be charged with delivering up a Roman into the hands of the Jews, which might be resented by the emperor and the Roman senate, should it come to their knowledge.

**Ver. 10.** *Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat*, etc.] Not that here was a seat in the judgment hall built by Herod for Caesar himself to sit in, should he ever come there, as some have thought; but the seat on which Festus sat is called Caesar's judgment seat, because it was in a Roman court of judicature, and because Festus, who filled it, represented Caesar himself:

*where I ought to be judged:* being a Roman citizen, and not at Jerusalem by the sanhedrim of the Jews, who had nothing to do with him:

*to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest;* it may be by his predecessor Felix, who had informed him of this case; or by Lysias's letter, which might come to his hands; or by the apostle's answer and vindication of himself, which he now made.

*have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest;* it may be by his predecessor Felix, who had informed him of this case; or by Lysias's letter, which might come to his hands; or by the apostle's answer and vindication of himself, which he now made.

**Ver. 11.** *For if I be an offender*, etc.] Against the law of Moses, or the temple at Jerusalem, or Caesar the Roman emperor:

*or have committed anything worthy of death*; by the laws of the Romans, as sedition, murder, etc.

*I refuse not to die*; signifying that he did not decline going to Jerusalem, either through any consciousness of guilt, or fear of death; for if anything could be proved against him, that was of a capital nature, he did not desire to escape death; he was ready to die for it; this was no subterfuge, or shift, to evade or defer justice:

*but if there be none of these things*; to be found, or proved, and made to appear:

*whereof these accuse me*; pointing to the Jews, that came down to be his accusers, and had laid many and grievous charges against him:

*no man may deliver me unto them*; not justly, or according to the Roman laws; suggesting that Festus himself could not do it legally;

*I appeal unto Caesar*; to this the apostle was induced, partly by the conduct of the governor, who seemed inclined to favour the Jews; and partly by the knowledge he might have of their intention to lie in wait for him, should he go up to Jerusalem; and chiefly by the vision he had had, which assured him that he must bear witness of Christ at Rome, (<sup>421</sup>Acts 23:11).

**Ver. 12.** *Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council*, etc.] Not with the Jewish sanhedrim, or any part of it that came down on this occasion; but with Roman counsellors, which he had to assist him in judgment, when any difficult matters were before him; the Syriac and Ethiopic versions render it, “with his counsellors”; and the Arabic reads in the singular number, “with his counsellor”; with these he advised, whether it was proper to admit of Paul’s appeal, or not; and having had their opinion,

*he answered, hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go*: the question is put, partly for the more certain knowledge of the thing, that there might be no mistake in it; and partly on account of the Jews, that they might see that though he was disposed to do them a favour, it was not in his power, because of this appeal; and it may be with some resentment in himself, since it carried in it a sort of reflection upon him, as if he was incapable of issuing this affair, or would not be just and faithful in it.

**Ver. 13.** *And after certain days*, etc.] Several days after the above appeal made by Paul:

*King Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus*: this King Agrippa was the son of Herod Agrippa, who killed James the brother of John, and of whose death mention is made in (~~Acts~~ Acts 12:1,2) the Jewish chronologer<sup>f1208</sup> calls him Agrippa the Second, the son of Agrippa the First, the fifth king of the family of Herod: he was not king of Judea, this was reduced again into a province by Claudius; and upon the death of his uncle Herod, king of Chalcis, he was by the said emperor made king of that place, who afterwards removed him from thence to a greater kingdom, and gave him the tetrarchy, which was Philip's, his great uncle's; namely, Batanea, Trachonitis, and Gaulanitis, to which he added the kingdom of Lysanias; ((see ~~Luke~~ Luke 3:1)) and the province which Varus had; and to these Nero added four cities, with what belonged to them; in Peraea, Abila and Julias, and in Galilee, Tarichea and Tiberias<sup>f1209</sup>. The Jewish writers often make mention of him, calling him, as here, King Agrippa; (see Gill on "~~Acts~~ Acts 26:3"), and so does Josephus<sup>f1210</sup>. According to the above chronologer<sup>f1211</sup> he was had to Rome by Vespasian, when he went to be made Caesar; and was put to death by him, three years and a half before the destruction of the temple; though others say he lived some years after it: and some of the Jewish writers affirm, that in his days the temple was destroyed<sup>f1212</sup>. Agrippa, though he was a Jew, his name was a Roman name; Augustus Caesar had a relation of this name<sup>f1213</sup>, who had a son of the same name, and a daughter called Agrippina; and Herod the great being much obliged to the Romans, took the name from them, and gave it to one of his sons, the father of this king: the name originally was given to such persons, who at their birth came forth not with their heads first, as is the usual way of births, but with their feet first, and which is accounted a difficult birth; and "ab aegritudine", from the grief, trouble, and weariness of it, such are called Agrippas<sup>f1214</sup>. Bernice, who is said to be with King Agrippa, is not the name of a man, as some have supposed, because said to sit in the judgment hall with the king, but of a woman; so called, in the dialect of the Macedonians, for Pheronice, which signifies one that carries away the victory; and this same person is, in Suetonius<sup>f1215</sup>, called Queen Beronice, for whom Titus the emperor is said to have a very great love, and was near upon marrying her: she was not wife of Agrippa, as the Arabic version reads, but his sister; his father left besides him, three daughters, Bernice, Mariamne, and Drusilla, which last was the wife of

Felix, (~~400b~~ Acts 24:24). Bernice was first married to her uncle Herod, king of Chalcis <sup>f1216</sup>, and after his death to Polemon, king of Cilicia, from whom she separated, and lived in too great familiarity with her brother Agrippa, as she had done before her second marriage, as was suspected <sup>f1217</sup>, to which incest Juvenal refers <sup>f1218</sup>; and with whom she now was, who came together to pay a visit to Festus, upon his coming to his government, and to congratulate him upon it.

**Ver. 14.** *And when they had been there many days*, etc.] Indulging themselves in pleasure, and spending their time in conversing on various subjects; and in order to carry on the conversation, and pass away time,

*Festus declared Paul's case unto the king*; in the following manner:

*saying, there is a certain man left in bonds by Felix*; the former governor in Caesarea, meaning Paul.

**Ver. 15.** *About whom, when I was at Jerusalem*, etc.] Quickly after he came to his government:

*the chief priests and elders of the Jews informed me*; brought an accusation to him, exhibited to him charges against him, presented to him a bill of information, setting forth various crimes he had been guilty of:

*desiring to have judgment against him*; not barely to have his cause tried, but to have a sentence of condemnation passed upon him; some copies read "condemnation", as the Alexandrian copy, and two of Beza's; and that punishment is designed, and even death itself, is manifest from the following words.

**Ver. 16.** *To whom I answered*, etc.] As follows:

*it is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die; or to give any man to destruction*; to pass sentence of death upon him, without hearing his cause, and purely at the request of another, and merely to gratify him:

*before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face*; so as to speak to his face, or before him, what they have to charge him with:

*and have licence to answer for himself, concerning the crime laid against him*; and this was also according to the law of the Jews, (~~405b~~ John 7:51) though Festus, from such an application to him by the chief priests and



elders, might conclude that their manner was different, he being ignorant of their laws and customs; but their prejudice to the apostle carried them to act such an illegal part, or at least to desire it might be acted: it is one of the Jewish canons, that it is unlawful for a judge to hear one of the contending parties, before the other is come in.

**Ver. 17.** *Therefore when they were come hither*, etc.] To Caesarea, namely the chief priests and elders of the Jews:

*without any delay on the morrow, I sat on the judgment seat*: that is, the next day after they came down, Festus went into the judgment hall, and took his place there, in order to hear this cause; which circumstance he mentions, to show how expeditious he was:

*and I commanded the man to be brought forth*: from his place of confinement, to the hall, to answer for himself.

**Ver. 18.** *Against whom when the accusers stood up*, etc.] As they were obliged to do, whilst they were exhibiting their charges, bearing their testimonies, and producing their proofs; (~~42xv~~ Acts 25:7).

*They brought none accusation of such things as I supposed*: for by his being left in bonds, and by the information of the chief priests and elders, and their violence against him, he imagined he must be chargeable with some notorious capital crime.

**Ver. 19.** *But had certain questions against him of their own superstition*, etc.] Or religion; as about their law, which they said Paul had spoke against; and about their temple, which they pretended he had polluted; and about the resurrection of the dead, which he asserted, and some denied:

*and of one Jesus which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive*; for it seems more was said on each side, than is recorded by Luke: the Jews objected to him among other things, his belief in Jesus of Nazareth, whom they traduced as an impostor and deceiver; Paul on the other hand argued, that he was the true Messiah; and in proof of it, affirmed that though they had put him to death, he was risen from the dead, and so was declared to be the Son of God with power: Festus, it is very likely, had never heard of Jesus before, and therefore speaks of him in this manner; or if he had, he had entertained a contemptible opinion of him, as well as of the Jewish religion; and which he expresses, even in the presence of the king, who had outwardly at least embraced it.

**Ver. 20.** *And because I doubted of such manner of questions,* etc.] Or was ignorant of them, and knew not what to make of them, or to say to them, and was at an entire loss what to do in this affair:

*I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters;* before the Jewish sanhedrim, who best understood them.

**Ver. 21.** *But when Paul had appealed to be reserved,* etc.] In custody at Caesarea:

*unto the hearing of Augustus;* to have his cause heard, tried, and judged of, by the Roman Emperor Nero, here called Augustus; for as it was usual for a Roman emperor to be called Caesar, from Julius Caesar, the first of them, so to be called Augustus, from Octavius Augustus, the second emperor: his original surname was Thurinus, but this being objected to him as a reproachful one, he afterwards took the name of Caesar, and then of Augustus; the one by the will of his great uncle, the other by the advice of Munatius Plancus; when some thought he ought to be called Romulus, as if he was the founder of the city, it prevailed that he should rather be called Augustus; not only this surname being new, but more grand, seeing religious places, and in which anything was consecrated by soothsaying, were called “Augusta, ab auctu, vel ab avium gestu, gustuve”, according to Ennius<sup>f1219</sup>: in the Greek text the name is Sebastos, which signifies venerable and worshipful.

*I commanded him to be kept;* in Caesarea, by a centurion, and not sent to Jerusalem:

*till I might send him to Caesar:* till he could have an opportunity of sending him to Rome, to take his trial before the emperor.

**Ver. 22.** *Then Agrippa said to Festus,* etc.] After he had given him the above account:

*I would also hear the man myself;* Agrippa being a Jew by profession, and knowing more of these things than Festus did, and very likely had heard much concerning Jesus Christ; and if not of the apostle, yet however of the Christian religion; and therefore he was very desirous, not only out of curiosity to see the man, but to hear him; and get some further information and knowledge about the things in dispute, between the Jews and Christians, in which Festus was very ready to gratify him:

*tomorrow, said he, thou shall hear him*: and sooner things could not well be prepared for an affair of this kind, and for so grand a meeting.

**Ver. 23.** *And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come*, etc.] Into the hall, or court of judicature:

*and Bernice*; his sister, along with him:

*with great pomp*: in rich dress, with the “regalia”, or ensigns of royalty carried before them, and attended with a large train and retinue of servants:

*and was entered into the place of hearing*; the causes that were tried in court, that particular part of the hall, which was assigned for that purpose; for as there were the proper places for the judge and council, and for the plaintiffs and defendants, so for those that came to hear:

*with the chief captains*; or tribunes, who had the command of the Roman soldiers; and who had each of them a thousand men under them, as their title signifies:

*and principal men of the city*; that is, of Caesarea; the magistrates, and chief inhabitants of the place:

*at Festus’s commandment Paul was brought forth*; and became a spectacle to a vast number of men, as he himself says; and which in part fulfilled what Christ had foretold to his disciples, that they should be brought before kings and governors for his sake; (see ~~4008~~ 1 Corinthians 4:9 ~~4008~~ Matthew 10:18).

**Ver. 24.** *And Festus said, King Agrippa*, etc.] He addressed himself to him in the first place, as being the principal person, and of great dignity, as well as knowledge:

*and all men which are here present with us*; the chief captains, and principal inhabitants of the city:

*ye see this man* the prisoner at the bar, meaning Paul:

*about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me*: applied unto him, interceded with him, and very importunately pressed and desired him to give judgment against him:

*both at Jerusalem and also here*; at Caesarea, whither they came from Jerusalem to accuse him:

*crying*: in a very noisy and clamorous way:

*that he ought not to live any longer*; as they did before Lysias the chief captain, (<sup>4072</sup>Acts 22:22) and so in the hearing of Festus; for it was his death they sought, and nothing else would satisfy them.

**Ver. 25.** *But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death*, etc.] Which was a public testimony of the apostle's innocence, to the great mortification of his enemies, some of whom might be present; a like testimony was given of him by Lysias, (<sup>4073</sup>Acts 23:29).

*And that he himself hath appealed unto Augustus*; the Emperor Nero; (see <sup>4074</sup>Acts 25:21).

*I have determined to send him*; having had the opinion of his council upon it.

**Ver. 26.** *Of whom I have no certain thing*, etc.] No certain crime, charge, or accusation; nothing of any moment or consequence, no particular thing, nothing but a heap of confused notions, of I know not who or what:

*to write unto my lord*; meaning the Roman emperor, under whom he served as governor of Judea:

*wherefore I have brought him before you*; the whole company then present:

*and especially before thee, O King Agrippa*; as being not only a man of eminence, dignity, and authority, but of knowledge in such matters, which the Jews accused Paul of; (see <sup>4075</sup>Acts 26:2,3).

*That after examination had*; of Paul, and his case;

*I might have somewhat to write*; concerning him, and the charges exhibited against him to the emperor.

**Ver. 27.** *For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner*, etc.] A man bound as if he was a malefactor, and guilty of some heinous crimes, to Rome, to be tried before Caesar:

*and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him*; for which he is a prisoner, and for which he is sent to the emperor: it seemed to Festus an absurd thing, and what might be justly looked upon by his master, a foolish, silly, and stupid piece of conduct, and void of common sense and

reason, mere madness and folly; to send him a prisoner, and not signify in his letter to him, what was laid to his charge; and yet this was so dark and obscure, that he could not tell what to make of it, nor what to write to his lord about it; and hoped therefore, upon this re-examination of Paul before Agrippa, he should come to a more certain knowledge of this affair, and be better furnished to give Nero an account of it, to whom the apostle had appealed.