

# ***The Book of Acts***

## ***Confinement in Caesarea***

Lesson #12 for September 22, 2018

Scriptures: Acts 24-26; 1 Corinthians 1:23.

1. Paul was transferred by that secret contingent to Caesarea Maritima after his arrest in Jerusalem and those two somewhat disastrous attempts to get his message across to the riotous crowd on the steps of the Antonia Fortress and then in the session before the Sanhedrin. Caesarea Maritima was the beautiful palace headquarters for the Roman governor located on the northern coast of Palestine, facing the Mediterranean Sea. Caesarea Maritima was originally built by Herod the Great in honor of Caesar Augustus who had helped him so much in becoming king over Judea. As we will see, during those two years of house arrest in Caesarea Maritima, Paul gave three main defenses: (1) Before Felix, (2) Before Festus, and (3) Before Festus and King Herod Agrippa II and his sister, Bernice. Thus was fulfilled the prophecy given to Ananias for Paul that he would testify before kings. (Acts 9:15)
2. Paul never wavered in his claim of innocence. No evidence could be produced against him, and no actual witnesses testified to any crime that he was supposed to have committed. He should have been released by each of the people who tried him; but, none of them had the courage to face the Jewish wrath. However, those hearings did give Paul opportunity to witness for Jesus before some of the most important people in the kingdom. He was especially proud to present the truth about the resurrection from the dead.
3. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that any of the Christian leaders from Jerusalem or any other part of Judea or Galilee went to try to help Paul during those years.
4. We have discussed the situation when Paul arrived in Jerusalem and first met with the Jewish Christian leaders and poured out all that money on the table in front of them.

After the presentation of the gifts, Paul “declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.” This recital of facts brought to the hearts of all, even of those who had been doubting, the conviction that the blessing of heaven had accompanied his labors.... The men who, while numbered among those who were in charge of the work at Jerusalem, had urged that arbitrary measures of control be adopted, saw Paul’s ministry in a new light and were **convinced that their own course had been wrong**, that they had been held in bondage by Jewish customs and traditions, and that **the work of the gospel had been greatly hindered by their failure to recognize that the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile had been broken down by the death of Christ.**

... **At times they had erred in permitting the reports of his enemies to arouse their jealousy and prejudice. But instead of uniting in an effort to do justice to the one who had been injured, they gave him counsel which showed that they still cherished a feeling that Paul should be held largely responsible for the existing prejudice.** They did not stand nobly in his defense, endeavoring to show the disaffected ones where they were wrong, but sought to effect a compromise by counseling him to pursue a

course which in their opinion would remove all cause for misapprehension.—Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*\* 402.3-403.1. [Bold type is added.]

5. Five days after Paul's transfer to Caesarea, a group of leading Jews including the high priest and some members of the Sanhedrin and a professional lawyer named Tertullus went from Jerusalem to Caesarea Maritima and formally laid before Felix the case against the apostle. (Acts 24:1-9) This particular trial was unique in that it was the only trial against Paul mentioned in the book of Acts in which a lawyer was employed. Tertullus tried to butter up Felix with a lot of lies about what a wonderful leader he was. In actual fact, Felix was repressive and violent and there was enormous antagonism against him among the Jews.
6. Tertullus pressed three specific charges against Paul: (1) That Paul was an agitator and was constantly fomenting unrest among Jews throughout the empire; (Acts 24:5) (2) That Paul was a ringleader among the sect of the Nazarenes, implying that Christianity as a whole was an anti-government and disruptive movement; and (3) That Paul himself had attempted to defile the temple in Jerusalem. (Acts 24:6) None of these things were really true.
7. Read Acts 24:10-21. In these verses Paul recounted his own journey as a believer. In the process he made two absolutely telling points against Tertullus's arguments: (1) The people who supposedly had seen Paul in the temple with a Gentile were nowhere to be found. (Acts 24:18-19) That should have immediately resulted in the charges being dropped. (2) The rest of Tertullus's arguments were based on a hearing before the Sanhedrin held a week earlier. Technically, those arguments were only hearsay evidence. The main argument was that Paul had claimed that there was a resurrection of the dead! No wonder the high priest himself and others of his associates from among the Sadducees were the ones who attended the trial, but no Pharisees attended! Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead! Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. (Acts 23:8)
8. Although we have only very brief summaries of the statements of Tertullus and Paul, Felix recognized that the case against Paul was flimsy. While we do not know how much Felix knew about Christianity, his wife Drusilla was Jewish; she must have known something and may have shared it with him. Drusilla later died in the eruption of the volcano at Pompeii.
9. So, in effect, Felix said: "I'm putting off this trial until a later date." According to Scripture, he was hoping that Paul or some of Paul's friends would pay a large bribe to get him out of prison. (Acts 24:26) At the same time, Paul knowing what he did about Felix, realized that it was almost impossible to get a fair trial before Felix.

**Acts 24:24-26:** <sup>24</sup>After some days Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he talked about faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>25</sup>But as Paul went on discussing about goodness, self-control, and the coming Day of Judgement, Felix was afraid and said, "You may leave now. I will call you again when I get the chance." <sup>26</sup>At the same time he was hoping that Paul would give him some money; and for this reason he would often send for him and talk with him.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation*\* (2nd ed., Acts 24:24–26). New York: American Bible Society.

10. What do you think Paul did during those two years in prison? Did he get out from time to time to look around? What were his friends Timothy and Luke doing? It is quite possible

that Luke, maybe with the help of Timothy, was traveling around Galilee, Judea, and Perea, collecting information he needed and later used to write the Gospel of Luke. (See Luke 1:1-4.)

11. Porcius Festus became the governor of Judea in A.D. 59 or 60 and remained until A.D. 62. When he arrived, Paul was still in prison.
12. Read Acts 25:1-5. Once again, the leading Jews tried to convince the Roman governor to send Paul to be tried before a Jewish court. Of course, we know that the reason for asking for this was so that they could kill Paul.
13. Festus told the Jews to come to Caesarea Maritima and bring their charges against Paul there. The Jews were not happy about that, but they came anyway. Paul understood exactly what they had in mind. So, after responding in the same way he had responded at the earlier trial, he refused to be taken to Jerusalem, realizing it would be a death sentence. Instead, he appealed to the emperor. As a Roman citizen, he had that right.
14. But, Festus had one major problem. There were no valid or reasonable charge or charges against Paul that he could write out and send to the emperor to be used in Paul's trial in Rome. Not long thereafter, Herod Agrippa II along with his sister Bernice arrived in Caesarea to visit Festus, apparently to welcome him to his new position.

**Herod Agrippa II** (Hebrew: [Hebrew characters are deleted]) (AD 27/28<sup>[1]</sup> – c. 92 or 100<sup>[1][2]</sup>) officially named **Marcus Julius Agrippa** and sometimes shortened to **Agrippa**, was the eighth and last ruler of Judea from the Herodian dynasty. He was the fifth to bear the title of King of the Jews, but in practice he ruled as a Roman client. Agrippa was overthrown by his Jewish subjects in 66 and supported the Roman side in the First Jewish–Roman War. [His territory was called Chalcis, similar to that of Herod Phillip.]—[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herod\\_Agrippa\\_II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herod_Agrippa_II) [Bold type is in the source; words in brackets are added. Accessed June 17, 2018.]

15. Read Acts 25:13-22. When King Agrippa and his sister Bernice arrived, Festus felt that it was an excellent opportunity for him to present the case of Paul and perhaps understand better what charges there were against Paul. Agrippa agreed to this arrangement and asked for a session with Paul. Festus did not see any political or criminal charges against Paul, but instead some argument over a certain Jesus “Who was dead, but whom Paul asserted to be alive.” (Acts 25:19, *ESV*)

**Acts 25:23-27:** <sup>23</sup> The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and ceremony and entered the audience hall with the military chiefs and the leading men of the city. Festus gave the order, and Paul was brought in. <sup>24</sup>Festus said, “King Agrippa and all who are here with us: You see this man against whom all the Jewish people, both here and in Jerusalem, have brought complaints to me. They scream that he should not live any longer. <sup>25</sup>But I could not find that he had done anything for which he deserved the death sentence. And since he himself made an appeal to the Emperor, I have decided to send him. <sup>26</sup>But I have nothing definite about him to write to the Emperor. So I have brought him here before you—and especially before you, King Agrippa!—so that, after investigating his case, I may have something to write. <sup>27</sup>For it seems unreasonable to me to send a prisoner without clearly indicating the charges against him.”—*Good News Bible\** (Acts 25:23-27).

And now Paul, still manacled, stood before the assembled company. What a contrast was here presented! Agrippa and Bernice possessed power and position, and because of this they were favored by the world. But they were destitute of the traits of character that God esteems. They were transgressors of His law, corrupt in heart and life. Their course of action was abhorred by heaven.—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*\* 434.3.

16. Just imagine the charges that Paul could have brought against Agrippa's family, starting with Herod the Great's attempt to destroy Baby Jesus!
17. Agrippa and his sister Bernice were dressed in royal robes. And there was Paul, dressed simply as a prisoner. What a difference in appearance! Does appearance really matter when it comes to the need to discover truth?
18. Read Acts 26:1-23. On this occasion, Paul hoped to address Agrippa whom he knew was aware of many of the Jewish beliefs. Once again, he did an autobiographical report, starting from the time before his conversion when he persecuted Christians. Paul tried to identify with Agrippa by the use of expressions such as *us* and *our*, implying that Agrippa was well acquainted with the customs and issues related to the Jewish religion.
19. Paul's defense before Agrippa was divided essentially into three parts.
  - (1) In Acts 26:4-11, Paul described his life as a former-Pharisee and persecutor of Christians. Notice that Paul said that he "voted" against those early Christians. (Acts 26:10) That implies that he was a member of the Sanhedrin which, in turn, means that he was at least 30 years old and also that he was married.
  - (2) In Acts 26:12-18, he described how his life changed as a result of that bolt of light that hit him on the road to Damascus. Notice that Jesus told Paul that when he was persecuting Christians, Jesus considered it as if Paul were persecuting Jesus Himself.
  - (3) In Acts 26:19-23, Paul made it clear that, at least in his opinion, he had no choice but to follow the directions given to him by God Himself. He had gone to the Gentiles and preached the gospel so as to make them equal partakers in the plan of salvation.
20. Clearly, Paul's address at that time was especially to Agrippa. But, Festus was again the first to react saying: "You are mad, Paul! Your great learning is driving you mad!" (Acts 26:24, *GNB*) Paul responded with Acts 26:25-26, affirming that what he had stated about the rising from the dead was in agreement with the Hebrew prophets of the Old Testament.
21. Finally, Paul talked with King Agrippa II, asking the question that put Agrippa in a very difficult position. As a Jew he could not deny that he believed in the Scriptures. But, if he had said, "Yes" to Paul's assertions, he would have had to accept Jesus as the Messiah. So, he came up with a clever escape: "In this short time do you think you will make me a Christian?" (Act 26:28, *GNB*\*)

**Acts 26:27-32:** <sup>27</sup> "King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do!"

<sup>28</sup> Agrippa said to Paul, "In this short time do you think you will make me a Christian?"

<sup>29</sup> "Whether a short time or a long time," Paul answered, "my prayer to God is that you and all the rest of you who are listening to me today might become what I am—except, of course, for these chains!"

<sup>30</sup> Then the king, the governor, Bernice, and all the others got up, <sup>31</sup>and after

leaving they said to each other, “This man has not done anything for which he should die or be put in prison.”<sup>32</sup> And Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been released if he had not appealed to the Emperor.”—*Good News Bible*\* (Acts 26:27-32).

22. Compare other modern versions. The *Good News Bible* is a much better translation of the Greek than the traditional: “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.”—*The Holy Bible: King James Version*.\* (2009). (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version, Acts 26:28). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Did the mind of Agrippa at these words revert to the past history of his family, and their fruitless efforts against Him whom Paul was preaching? Did he think of his great-grandfather Herod, and the massacre of the innocent children of Bethlehem? Of his great-uncle Antipas, and the murder of John the Baptist? Of his own father, Agrippa I, and the martyrdom of the apostle James? Did he see in the disasters which speedily befell these kings an evidence of the displeasure of God in consequence of their crimes against His servants? Did the pomp and display of that day remind Agrippa of the time when his own father, a monarch more powerful than he, stood in that same city, attired in glittering robes, while the people shouted that he was a god? Had he forgotten how, even before the admiring shouts had died away, vengeance, swift and terrible, had befallen the vainglorious king? Something of all this flitted across Agrippa’s memory; but his vanity was flattered by the brilliant scene before him, and pride and self-importance banished all nobler thoughts.—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*,\* vol. 6, 1066.10-1067.0; *Sketches from the Life of Paul*\* 255.2-256.0.

23. Read Acts 26:29. Once again, Paul made it clear that his imprisonment and possible death were less important to him than spreading the gospel.
24. When it was all over and Paul had been dismissed, the words of Agrippa are telling. He did not see any reason to convict Paul.
25. But, Paul had already appealed to Caesar, and his request had been formally granted. Thus, Paul’s jurisdiction was no longer under Festus’s control. (Acts 25:12)
26. In all of this, to what did Paul ultimately appeal? Paul strongly believed that he had the full support of the Hebrew Scriptures for all he was stating.
27. Was it a mistake for Paul to appeal to Caesar? At the point when he appealed to Caesar, he apparently was faced with the choice of being taken to Jerusalem—in which case his life would end, probably before he got to Jerusalem—or to be taken to Rome to be tried by the despotic Emperor Nero. (Compare Acts 25:25; 26:31-32.) Did Paul remember the words of God who had told him earlier that some day he would testify in Rome?
28. What do you think Agrippa thought when Paul appealed to his heavenly vision on the road to Damascus as justification for his behavior? (Acts 26:19, *NKJV*) Are we faithfully following God’s directions for us?
29. On that occasion, King Agrippa had the privilege of hearing the gospel directly from the lips of Paul the apostle himself. Shouldn’t he have been persuaded? How clear an argument for the gospel could you make to someone that you know? Are there times when it is necessary to defend one’s own personal history? Remember that you are an expert on your personal history. Do you feel a responsibility for sharing the gospel? Should Christians

seriously attempt to defend themselves when they are accused? That may be one of the most important ways in which many people of the world will find out about Seventh-day Adventism and our beliefs. Such trials may be reported in the news.

30. **If you were on trial for being a Seventh-day Adventist Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?**
31. In our day among nominally Christian churches, there is a great emphasis on love and getting along with other Christians. In that context, is there sufficient reason for standing up for what we believe in opposition to what others believe? If we stand up firmly for our beliefs, will we be called bigots? What kind of opportunities do you get on a daily basis to share the gospel? Are you prepared when the opportunity presents itself? What could we learn as modern Seventh-day Adventist Christians from Paul's three defenses before Roman governors and kings?
32. Christianity is being attacked from every side in our day. Questions are being asked like: "Are you pro-life?" "Do you want prayer in schools?" One student responded: "So long as there are tests, there will be prayers in schools!" "Shouldn't our science curriculums include intelligent design?" Are these political issues things that we should be standing up for and about which we should be writing to our member of Congress? When faced with such questions, do we need to turn the conversation to Jesus?
33. We have seen that Paul gave three different defenses which in Greek are called *apologia* on these occasions before Felix, Festus, and then King Agrippa II.
34. Clearly, Paul gave a convincing argument against all the accusations that the Jews were able to bring. Shouldn't he have been allowed to go free? Why wasn't he allowed?
35. We know that Felix called Paul in to talk with him on several occasions, hoping that Paul would bring a bribe to earn his freedom. What do you think Paul said on those occasions?
36. Paul had brought that enormous offering from the Gentiles to support the Jewish Christians in and around Jerusalem. Shouldn't they have been willing to come and pay almost any price to get Paul out of prison? Would it be morally wrong to do that?
37. Why do you think Paul made his appeal to Caesar at the time when he did? Why didn't he do so earlier? (See Acts 23:11.)
38. Agrippa II and his sister Bernice heard the arguments of Paul. In light of what we know about these two—there are some scholars who believe that they had an incestuous love affair—do you think they were likely to be persuaded by Paul?
39. No doubt, Paul knew about some of the evils that had been perpetrated by the Herodian family in the past. Should he have mentioned some of those? Do you think that would have made any difference in his defense?
40. What issues facing the Seventh-day Adventist Church and also other Christian churches in our day might lead us to be questioned or challenged by friends or opponents?
41. What do you think of Paul's general response to such questions by telling his own personal story? Is that something that we should seriously consider doing if we are questioned? If you were not a Seventh-day Adventist Christian earlier in your life, what could you tell about your conversion story that might be convincing to others? Would it be a good idea for us to practice developing a defense that we could use, if necessary?

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