

LESSON ELEVEN

(25:1-27)

The Voyage To Rome In Caesara 25:1-27

25 *Now when Festus had come into his province, after three days he went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea. 2 And the chief priests and the principal men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they urged him, 3 asking as a favor to have the man sent to Jerusalem, planning an ambush to kill him on the way. 4 Festus replied that Paul was being kept at Caesarea, and that he himself intended to go there shortly. 5 “So,” said he, “let the men of authority among you go down with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, let them accuse him.”*

6 When he had stayed among them not more than eight or ten days, he went down to Caesarea; and the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought. 7 And when he had come, the Jews who had gone down from Jerusalem stood about him, bringing against him many serious charges which they could not prove. 8 Paul said in his defense, “Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended at all.” 9 But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, “Do you wish to go up to Jerusalem, and there be tried on these charges before me?” 10 But Paul said, “I am standing before Caesar’s tribunal, where I ought to be tried; to the Jews I have done no wrong, as you know very well. 11 If then I am a wrongdoer, and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death; but if there is nothing in their charges against me, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar.” 12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with his council, answered, “You have appealed to Caesar; to Caesar you shall go.”

13 Now when some days had passed, Agrippa the king and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to welcome Festus. 14 And as they stayed there many days, Festus laid Paul’s case before the king, saying, “There is a man left prisoner by Felix; 15 and when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews gave information about him, asking for sentence against him. 16 I answered them that it was not the custom of the Romans to give up any one before the accused met the accusers face to face, and had opportunity to make his defense concerning the charge laid against him. 17 When therefore they came together here, I made no delay, but on the next day took my seat on the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought in. 18 When the accusers stood up, they brought no charge in this case of such evils as I supposed; 19 but they had certain points of dispute with him about their own superstition and about one Jesus, who was dead, but whom Paul asserted to be alive. 20 Being at a loss how to investigate these questions, I asked whether he wished to go to Jerusalem and be tried there regarding them, 21 But when Paul had appealed to be kept in custody for the decision of the emperor, I commanded him to be held until I could send him to Caesar.” 22 And Agrippa said to Festus, “I should like to hear the man myself.” “Tomorrow,” said he, “you shall hear him.”

23 So on the morrow Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp, and they entered the audience hall with the military tribunes and the prominent men of the city.

Then by command of Festus Paul was brought in. 24 And Festus said, "King Agrippa and all who are present with us, you see this man about whom the whole Jewish people petitioned me, both at Jerusalem and here, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. 25 But I found that he had done nothing deserving death; and as he himself appealed to the emperor, I decided to send him. Therefore I have brought him before you; and, especially before you, King Agrippa, that, after we have examined him, I may have something to write. 27 For it seems to me unreasonable, in sending a prisoner, not to indicate the charges against him."

25:1 - The Greek expression used here is exactly the same as that used in reference to Jesus' resurrection and means "on the third day" as in Acts 28:17 (see Luke 18:33, 24:7; etc.)

Province - Festus was a procurator serving under the Roman ruler of Syria.

V. 3 - The remarkable thing is that even after more than two years, the Jewish hatred for Paul is as intense as ever. They really practiced loving friends and hating enemies. In ch. 23, they had agreed to help others; here they plan it themselves.

V. 5 - Festus, at least in some ways, kept the case on the right track. although he later showed that he was not above political favors either. He doubtless wanted to start out right with the Jewish hierarchy, especially since much tension then existed.

V. 6 - The Greek term for the "tribunal" is the same as in 18:12, 17, which see for discussion.

V. 7 - Although the Jews made a great attempt, Luke wrote that they did not have the strength to prove the charges. The scene was much like that with Felix and Tertullus, or Pilate and Jesus.

V. 8 - Paul used the word generally translated "to sin" in his denial of the guilt of which he was accused. He noted that no Roman law was involved, which was of special interest to Festus.

V. 9 - The true character of both Felix and Festus is seen when they attempt to curry favor with the Jews rather than doing what they both knew was just. The redeeming factor (and maybe the express will of God) was that Paul ultimately arrived in Rome, even as God had promised (23:11)

favor - From the Greek root meaning a favor or gift. See it in 24:27; 25:11 and 16 (give). It is the root word meaning to give, etc.

V. 10 - Paul said in effect, "Festus, you are to judge me here. If you will not do so, I will appeal for justice elsewhere (and not to Jerusalem!)."

V. 12 - As a general rule, any appeal to Caesar had to be granted. Some exceptions to that rule were made, so not every appeal was granted, such as those of murderers.

V. 13 - This is Agrippa II, son of Agrippa I, and brother to Bernice and Drusilla. Bernice lived with him, also was married to several others, sided with the Romans when Jerusalem was destroyed, and became a mistress to Titus, the Roman general.

V. 14 - Because of the problem Festus had (cf. v. 27), the knowledge of Agrippa might help, so the prisoner would appear before a king. Agrippa II ruled almost as much area as his great-grandfather (excepting Judea).

V. 16 - Festus made his former actions seem quite fair, even if they were not so. Notice again the Roman jurisprudence.

V. 17 - The truth of the case, Festus said, was different than he had supposed. Indeed, as Agrippa pointed out in 26:31,32, and as Festus knew well, Paul should have been freed.

V. 19 - Festus correctly stated the essence of the matter between Paul and the Jews.

The word Festus used to describe the Jewish religion was used by Paul in 17:22 in his remarks to the Athenians. The Greek word means either worship /reverence/ superstition, depending upon the context in which it occurs. It is probably better to translate religion here, as it is doubtful Festus would have wanted Agrippa to think the Jewish religion was a superstition.

V. 20 - Felix may well have been in doubt about Paul, and also attempting to gain Jewish favor at the same time. He probably wanted to have Paul appear before the Sanhedrin.

V. 22 - Some translations take Agrippa to say, "I should like..." while others take him to say, "I for some time have wanted..." Both are possible translations, and either might well be true. He was trying to be polite and yet show interest.

V. 23 - This sounds like a description by an eye-witness. Note that Festus made the occasion a grand one, which simply gave Paul a better audience to address. We can hardly appreciate the contrast between Paul in chains and his august audience of leading people, dressed finely, with all the show that politics can put on. Yet, as ch. 26 shows, Paul is one who has control. Jesus' promise in Matt. 10:17-20 was again true in Paul's life.

V. 24 - Evidently the Jews acted normally before Festus when he was in Jerusalem, v. 1,2.

V. 25 - Consideration of the statement here by Festus makes him quite hypocritical, and places him in a bad light before those who knew all the facts. He hopes that King Agrippa can bail him out. He did not have to grant Paul's request to have an audience before Caesar (note v. 12). He could simply have dismissed the case for want of evidence.

V. 26 - **nothing definite** - Imagine sending a prisoner to Caesar himself and having no reason to do so! Yet, that is what happened. Because of this fact, it is probable that Paul was released at his first appearance before Nero.

QUESTIONS

165. What would be your description of the Roman procurators Felix and Festus?

166. Did Paul always work within the Roman law system?

167. Is the case with Paul like that of many others - a matter of interpretation of the law and one's actions?

168. Why would it be a favor to change the trial of Paul to Jerusalem?

169. What was the relation of Agrippa to the other Herods of the New Testament?
170. Over what general area was Agrippa king?

171. How did Festus assess the case of Paul in his conversation with Agrippa?

172. For what reason did Festus want Agrippa to hear Paul?

173. Can you describe the trial scene?

174. How did Festus describe Caesar?

ABA REVIEW QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 11

1. Identify Festus.
2. What was the general rule regarding appeals to Caesar?
3. Identify Agrippa II and Bernice.
4. Refer to Acts 25:19. In what ways can the Greek word for “superstition” be translated, and which translation most accurately fits the text?
5. Summarize the hearings before Festus. What was Festus’ conclusion on the matter?