

ACTS 23:12 - 26:32

A. Acts 23:12-21 - And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. Acts 23:13 And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy. Acts 23:14 And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul. Acts 23:15 Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you to morrow, as though ye would enquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him. Acts 23:16 And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul. Acts 23:17 Then Paul called one of the centurions unto *him*, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him. Acts 23:18 So he took him, and brought *him* to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto *him*, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee. Acts 23:19 Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went *with him* aside privately, and asked *him*, What is that thou hast to tell me? Acts 23:20 And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to morrow into the council, as though they would enquire somewhat of him more perfectly. Acts 23:21 But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee.

1. Paul has been forcibly removed from the Sanhedrin by the Roman soldiers. He is in the castle fortress for his protection. The Romans are used by **God** here to protect His servant.
2. As Paul is safely inside, there is a group of about 40 Jews who take a **vow** to kill Paul. With the council's approval, the plot was to call Paul in the next day supposedly for more questioning, and these men would kill Paul.
3. Always remember, if religion is unchecked - religion kills!

These Jews weren't just upset with a resurrection, but against the resurrection of **Jesus the Christ-Messiah!
4. Also, Paul had some relatives in Rome and here in Jerusalem. He was brought up and taught in Jerusalem. Paul's sister's son (his nephew), having heard of this plot (being in a family of Pharisees), warned Paul and Paul had him warn Captain Lysias about the assassins' plot to kill Paul.

These Jews' conspiracy was uncovered. But remember, they believed they were doing **God's will!

B.

Acts 23:22-35 - So the chief captain *then* let the young man depart, and charged *him*, *See thou* tell no man that thou hast shewed these things to me. Acts 23:23 And he called unto *him* two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night; Acts 23:24 And provide *them* beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring *him* safe unto Felix the governor. Acts 23:25 And he wrote a letter after this manner: Acts 23:26 Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix *sendeth* greeting. Acts 23:27 This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman. Acts 23:28 And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council: Acts 23:29 Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds.

Acts 23:30 And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what *they had* against him. Farewell. Acts 23:31 Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought *him* by night to Antipatris. Acts 23:32 On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle: Acts 23:33 Who, when they came to Caesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him. Acts 23:34 And when the governor had read *the letter*, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that *he was* of Cilicia; Acts 23:35 I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall.

1. Lysias, the captain, assembled **270** soldiers - 70 rode horses and 200 marched by foot. Under the cover of night, with a letter from Lysias explaining all the events that had transpired, Paul is quickly taken away to Caesarea where Governor Felix lived.
2. Lysias' letter made things clear so that Felix could handle this problem. Lysias explains the feud between Paul and the Jews, because of some infraction about the Jewish law.

*Paul hadn't done **anything** worthy of death. Besides, Paul is a Roman citizen. Lysias said because Paul was a Roman and there was a plot to kill him, he rescued Paul and brought him to stand before "your honor Felix". Paul has to be held in Herod's judgment hall and wait for the accusing Jews to arrive (**not good**)!

- C. 1. Felix, the governor, waits for Jerusalem's Jewish high priest and council to arrive. When they arrive,

Acts 24:1-9 - And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and *with* a certain orator *named* Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul. Acts 24:2 And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse *him*, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence, Acts 24:3 We accept *it* always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. Acts 24:4 Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words. Acts 24:5 For we have found this man *a pestilent fellow*, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes: Acts 24:6 Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law. Acts 24:7 But the chief captain Lysias came *upon us*, and with great violence took *him* away out of our hands, Acts 24:8 Commanding his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things, whereof we accuse him. Acts 24:9 And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so.

they brought with them a great **orator** (lawyer) to plead their case against Paul. As a lawyer, he knew Roman law well. **They are going all out to get Paul convicted!

2. Tertullus accuses Paul of blaspheming the temple, spreading revolution, rebellion, and heresy. He also accuses Captain Lysias of not allowing the Jewish council to handle Paul and causing this bother for Felix. The whole council present agreed to Tertullus' speech being the **truth**.

D.

Acts 24:10-21 - Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself: Acts 24:11 Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship. Acts 24:12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city: Acts 24:13 Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me. Acts 24:14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:

Acts 24:15 And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. Acts 24:16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and *toward* men. Acts 24:17 Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings. Acts 24:18 Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult. Acts 24:19 Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought against me. Acts 24:20 Or else let these same *here* say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council, Acts 24:21 Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.

1. Paul is given an opportunity to give his rebuttal to the accusations. Paul, simply and gracefully, tells Felix that everything they had said was flat out **wrong!** Paul tells Felix he was not leading some revolt, but was **quietly** worshipping in the temple.
2. Paul also said that what they call heresy was Paul acting as a Jewish believer in honoring the God of his fathers. The only outburst he ever did in their midst was that he shouted that he believed in the resurrection of the dead. It was **that** statement which led to his standing before Felix at this moment.

Note: If anyone was a heretic, it was these Jewish leaders who would not believe their **own** scriptures.

- E. 1. Felix's decision was to call for Lysias and have his understanding about this matter. Paul would re-

Acts 24:22-27 - And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of *that way*, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter. Acts 24:23 And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let *him* have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him. Acts 24:24 And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. Acts 24:25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. Acts 24:26 He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. Acts 24:27 But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

main a prisoner, but was allowed certain liberties. Felix had other motives for keeping Paul. He wanted Paul's **money!**

2. Paul is called before Felix and asked to explain his faith in Christ. As Paul tells of righteousness, temperance, and judgment, Felix is **convicted**. Felix had lured Drusilla from her former husband when she was **16**. Drusilla was beautiful and Felix desired to have her. She is at this time 20 years old.

****Felix became convicted (trembled) because he was unrighteous, a sinner out of control, and facing God's coming judgment. Paul was unashamed of Christ and the truth, but evidently he spoke the truth in **love** because Felix would have several more visits with Paul. Also, Felix continued to encourage Paul to give him money to let him go. Paul had money and did not seem poor.**

3. Paul is kept for **2** years! It is toward the end of this time that Festus makes a visit to Felix's room, where Paul is being held as a prisoner, to encourage the Jews. Festus is to be the new governor.

F. Acts 25:1-8 - Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem. Acts 25:2 Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him, Acts 25:3 And desired favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him. Acts 25:4 But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly *thither*. Acts 25:5 Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with *me*, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him. Acts 25:6 And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought. Acts 25:7 And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove. Acts 25:8 While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all.

1. Festus, Felix's replacement, goes to Jerusalem, where he is approached by the **top** Jewish religious leaders. They actually ask Festus if he would **allow** them to kill Paul, as Paul would be called to Jerusalem.

*After 2 years, there is **still** hatred for Paul by the Jewish leaders.
2. Festus asks these Jewish leaders to come to Caesarea and allow him to hear their accusations against Paul. They agree and, at the judgment seat in Caesarea, they give serious, severe, but **un**provable charges against Paul.

Paul simply states he is **innocent of **all** their complaints. He had already been held for 2 years! The burden of proof is upon the Jewish leaders.

G.

Acts 25:9-12 - But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? Acts 25:10 Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. Acts 25:11 For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar. Acts 25:12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go.

1. Festus wanted to favor the Jewish leaders. **Why?** He requests Paul to go to Jerusalem (plot-vow?) and be judged by the **temple** council.

*Paul knows he would probably never make it there alive, and knowing how they felt toward him, how could that **ever** be fair! He said that being a Roman, he needed to be judged by Caesar. This statement took it out of their hands.

2. Paul declares no one has been able to prove him guilty of anything. So he, as a **Roman citizen**, had the **right** to appeal to Caesar.

H.

Acts 25:13-21 - And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus. Acts 25:14 And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix: Acts 25:15 About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed *me*, desiring *to have* judgment against him.

Acts 25:16 To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him. Acts 25:17 Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth. Acts 25:18 Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed: Acts 25:19 But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. Acts 25:20 And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked *him* whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters. Acts 25:21 But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar.

1. King Agrippa and his wife, Bernice, visit Festus the new governor. King Agrippa is last in line of the Herods. He is King Agrippa II, who ruled the northern part of Palestine during the Roman occupation. Bernice was not only his lover, but also his **sister!** Their sister, Drusilla, was the wife of former governor, Felix. This incestuous couple was the scandal and gossip in **Rome**.
2. Festus conveys the case he had inherited from Felix. He believes Paul to be an innocent man, but if he were released, there could be riots by the Jews. He tells how Paul believed the dead man Jesus was alive **again**, but he himself had no such belief. Festus tells of Paul's refusal to go to Jerusalem to be judged, his appeal to Caesar, and that he had granted Paul his request.

I.

Acts 25:22-27 - Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him. Acts 25:23 And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth. Acts 25:24 And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and *also* here, crying that he ought not to live any longer. Acts 25:25 But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him. Acts 25:26 Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write. Acts 25:27 For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes *laid* against him.

1. ****Agrippa says he will hear Paul's defense the next day.** It was Lysias, then Felix, then Festus, and now Agrippa.
2. The next day brought lots of ceremonial **pomp** because of the king. Festus had called all of Caesar's top officials to honor Agrippa, with Paul present.

****It seems incredible that all this commotion is about this little Jewish man!**

3. Festus explains who Paul is and that the Jews wished to have him killed. But Festus also states that he does not see anything Paul has done that is worthy of death. Paul, being a Roman, had the **right** to appeal to Augustus and he had. Festus then tells Agrippa that he is sending Paul to Rome, but he would **appreciate Agrippa's examination** of Paul to help clarify some charges that Rome would accept.

J. Acts 26:1-23 - Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself: Acts 26:2 I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews: Acts 26:3 Especially *because I know* thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently. Acts 26:4 My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; Acts 26:5 Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. Acts 26:6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: Acts 26:7 Unto which *promise* our twelve tribes, instantly serving *God* day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Acts 26:8 Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead? Acts 26:9 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Acts 26:10 Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against *them*. Acts 26:11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled *them* to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted *them* even unto strange cities. Acts 26:12 Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, Acts 26:13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. Acts 26:14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks. Acts 26:15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. Acts 26:16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Acts 26:17 Delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, Acts 26:18 To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Acts 26:19 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: Acts 26:20 But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. Acts 26:21 For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill *me*. Acts 26:22 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: Acts 26:23 That Christ should suffer, *and* that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

1. Agrippa gives Paul the opportunity to **defend** his case. Paul, like the statesman he was, tells Agrippa that he knew Agrippa understood customs and he was glad that he would hear him (Paul). Paul only asks him to be a **little** patient so he could truly understand where Paul was coming from (not just a sound bite).
2. Paul first gives his Jewish upbringing, his life as a Pharisee, and that his hope was in God's promises - like his Jewish fathers. For having this **hope**, he is accused of the Jews. It is not irrational to believe in resurrection, for Paul tells Agrippa **he** understood such things.
3. Paul then tells Agrippa how he was zealous for Judaism and even **persecuted** families of Jesus' followers (Acts 7, 8:1-3, 9). Then Paul shares about his Acts 9 Damascus **encounter with Christ**. He told how he was on his way, having letters from Jerusalem's religious leaders, to capture more of Jesus' followers. It was as he neared Damascus that God knocked him down, and the **risen** Jesus Christ revealed Himself to Paul. It was at that moment that Paul **believed** in Christ and was commissioned by the **living, alive, resurrected** Christ.

4. Paul shares how his message was to bring the light of God, through Christ, to the Jews - but **mainly** to the Gentiles. Paul says that he had been faithful in telling everyone, everywhere what he had seen and heard about Jesus Christ.
5. Paul says that because he proclaimed a **risen** Messiah-Savior, the Jewish leaders wanted him dead. It was only because of **God's** protection that he was standing before Agrippa.
6. Paul says that what he proclaimed, the Jewish leaders should have **known** because Moses and the prophets had foretold that Christ-Messiah should suffer, rise, and be a light - not just to Israel, but also to the Gentiles (Romans!). It is also for **you**, Agrippa.

K.

Acts 26:24-32 - And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. Acts 26:25 But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. Acts 26:26 For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. Acts 26:27 King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Acts 26:28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. Acts 26:29 And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds. Acts 26:30 And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them: Acts 26:31 And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds. Acts 26:32 Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.

1. Festus, perhaps to **cover** up his own feelings and because he hadn't believed in resurrection, interrupts Paul by telling him he had lost his mind.

****But Paul calmly and graciously responds back that what he said was absolutely true. Paul says that since Christ's D.B.R. was done so openly, even the king had acknowledged the event.**

2. Then pointblank and straight forward, Paul asks Agrippa if he didn't believe the scriptures himself that told of this event? This was a **replay** of his great-grandfather believing in Micah 5:2. These kings were not stupid. Here again, this family is faced with **truth!**

3. Agrippa's response: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

- a. Nobody had mentioned being a Christian, so Agrippa **did** understand what Paul was saying.

***Note:** Agrippa may have been trying to brush off Paul's message by responding **sarcastically**, but he was under the Holy Spirit's **conviction**. Agrippa wasn't quite persuaded to trust Christ.

- b. Paul responds that he desired for **all** those in that hall to **completely** believe in Christ the Savior, as he had.

- c. Upon discussing the matter between themselves, they all agreed that Paul was not guilty of anything. If he had not appealed to Caesar, he could at this time been set free. (That is what **they** say!)

***Festus is now responsible to see that Paul safely arrives in Rome!**

Remember:

Acts 9:15-16 - But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: Acts 9:16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

Acts 3:11 - And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.