

Having been away from the book of Acts for a few weeks, let me begin by reminding you where we are at. If you remember, having been arrested in Jerusalem, Paul was brought to Caesarea by way of a Roman escort. Eventually the Jews came to Caesarea to testify against him, and Felix, the Roman Governor, kept him under house arrest. This is where we last left Paul, and come now to chapter 25 and our theme: Paul Before Festus.

- I. Festus Interviews Paul (vv1-12)
- II. Festus Appeals to Agrippa (vv13-22)
- III. Festus Introduces Paul to Agrippa (vv23-27)

- I. Festus Interviews Paul (vv1-12)

1. V1—"Now when Festus had come to the province, after three days he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem."
2. According to 24:27, after Paul remained under house arrest for two years, Festus replaced Felix as governor of Judea.
3. Having spent three days in Caesarea (which was home base for the governor), he went up to Jerusalem (a distance of about 40 miles).
4. It seems likely, one of the reasons Festus traveled to Jerusalem was to speak to the Jews about his prisoner Paul.
5. He basically inherited him when he replaced Felix as governor, and so he needed to know more about him.
6. Thus we read in v2, that "the high priest and chief men of the Jews informed him against Paul"—that is, they accused him.
7. Not only did they inform him about his supposed crimes, but according to v3 they asked him a favor.
8. V3—"Asking a favor against him, that he would summon him to Jerusalem—while they lay in ambush along the road to kill him."
9. In other words, they were asking him to go along with their wretched scheme to ambush and kill Paul.
10. If you remember, the Jews had earlier plotted a similar scheme (ch.23), that was spoiled by Paul's nephew.
11. To Festus' credit, he "answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself was going there shortly" (v4).
12. V5—"Therefore, he said, let those who have authority among you go down with me and accuse this man, to see if there is any fault in him."
13. Thus within vv6-12, we find Paul before Festus: he's summoned (v6), accused (vv7-9), and appeals to Caesar (vv10-12).
14. (1) He was summoned, v6—"And when he had remained among them more than ten days, he went down to Caesarea. And the next day, sitting on the judgment seat, he commanded Paul to be brought."
15. All governors (as they functioned as magistrates or judges) had judgment seats placed within judgment halls.
16. This was similar to what we understand today courtrooms—they were the official place for legal hearings.

17. Festus (as governor) would array himself with a formal garment, and would sit on the elevated judgment seat.
18. (2) He was accused (vv7-9)—here we find that the Jews came to Caesarea along with Festus the governor.
19. V7—"When he had come, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood about and laid many serious complaints against Paul, which they could not prove."
20. Luke says they "laid many serious complaints against Paul" the identity of which can be gleaned from Paul's response (v8).
21. He then added—"which they could not prove"—this simply means, the accusations leveled against him were false.
22. V8—"While he answered for himself, 'Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all.'"
23. Paul never said anything against the law (he rightly interpreted it), nor did he ever profane the temple.
24. But neither did he ever transgress any of the laws of Rome—he never started a social riot or uprising.
25. And yet, because Festus wanted to do the Jews a favor, he asked Paul if he was willing to go to Jerusalem to be judged by him (v9).
26. Seemingly, he wanted to judge him before the Jews, who were the only ones that actually accused Paul.
27. Festus knew there was no evidence Paul violated any Roman law, and so he wanted to judge him before the Jews.
28. At this time, tension was building between the Jews and Romans, and so Festus was trying to appease them.
29. (3) He appealed to Caesar (vv10-12)—here we find Paul's response to Festus' desire to judge him before the Jews.
30. V10—"So Paul said, 'I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know.'"
31. In other words, it wasn't right for him to be judged by the Jews or to be Judged by Festus (who was unjust).
32. But he appealed to his right as a Roman citizen of standing at Caesar's judgment seat (which was in Rome).
33. V11—"For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar."
34. Because the Jews were falsely accusing him, it was wrong for Festus to listen to them or try to appease them.
35. Thus, the issue here is the character of Festus and injustice of his actions in collaborating with the Jews.
36. V12—"Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, 'You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!'"

## II. Festus Appeals to Agrippa (vv13-22)

1. V13—"And after some days King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to greet Festus"—King Agrippa was the son of King Herod.

2. His house (or palace) was in Jerusalem where he lived with his wife Bernice (who was actually his half-brother).
3. Again, we learn, there was a close connection between the Roman rulers and the corrupt Jewish rulers.
4. V14—"When they had been there many days, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying"—and then all the way through v21, Festus recounts the events of Paul's arrest.
5. (1) The request of the Jews (vv14-16)—Festus recounts to Agrippa how the Jews asked him to render a judgment against Paul.
6. (2) The accusations of the Jews (vv17-20)—Festus recounts how the Jews came to Caesarea and formally accused Paul.
7. V18—"When the accusers stood up, they brought no accusation against him of such things as I supposed, but had some questions against him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who had died, whom Paul affirmed to be alive."
8. (3) The appeal of Paul to Caesar (vv21-22)—Festus recounts how Paul refused to be tried by Festus in Jerusalem and appealed to Caesar.
9. V21—"But when Paul appealed to be reserved for the decision of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I could send him to Caesar."
10. The term Augustus simply means "worthy of honor and reference" and was applied generally to all Caesars (who at this time was Nero).
11. I think most of us have heard about Nero and his persecution of the Jews (a fact proven by history books).
12. These persecutions began in the mid-60s, which would have been about 8-10 years after Paul's appeal.
13. Thus, here I would like to answer the question—Why would Paul appeal to August Caesar in Rome?
14. (a) Because he knew that he would never get a fair trial under Festus (who wanted to stay friends with the Jews).
15. (b) Because he knew chances were good he would receive a fair trial before Caesar (far removed from his Jewish accusers).
16. Remember, with all its problems, the Roman Empire prided itself on treating its citizens fairly and justly.
17. And so, appealing to Caesar was similar to appealing to our Supreme Court (which is the highest judicial court in our country).
18. Thus Paul didn't think it was certain he would receive justice, but was willing to leave the results with God.

### III. Fesus Introduces Paul to Agrippa (vv23-27)

1. V23—"So the next day, when Agrippa and Bernice had come with great pomp, and had entered the auditorium with the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at Festus' command Paul was brought in."
2. Now I think it's important to notice the contrast Luke describes—Agrippa and Bernice had entered the auditorium (where the judgment seat was located)—"with great pomp, and with the commanders and the prominent men of the city."
3. This means they were dressed with their royal garments and thus were arrayed in splendor and majesty.

4. Furthermore, they entered the auditorium with "the commanders and the prominent men of the city"—that is, with the Roman generals and politicians.
5. All of this is stark contrast with the apostle Paul was again was commanded to be brought before Festus.
6. V24—"And Festus said: 'King Agrippa and all the men who are here present with us, you see this man about whom the whole assembly of the Jews petitioned me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying out that he was not fit to live any longer.'"
7. In contrast to Fesus, Agrippa, and Bernice, Paul was no doubt a rather pitiful picture (remember, he's been beaten and imprisoned over the past few years).
8. Festus then admits that a primary purpose of introducing him to King Agrippa was to get some help on what he was to write to Caesar.
9. V26—"I have nothing certain to write to my lord concerning him. Therefore I have brought him out before you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the examination has taken place I may have something to write."
10. V27—"For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him."

#### IV. Lessons

1. Here I want to summarize this entire chapter under one broad principle and then descend to suggest several lessons from it.
2. Here's my primary and broad principle—as Paul was a citizen of two distinct nations (so is every NC member).
3. Now, the relation of the state and church is a rather complex one that has been debated for 2000 years.
4. And yet, for the past 10 years this relationship has been increasingly, hotly, and often uncharitably debated.
5. Thus, I'm under no delusion that I will be able to end this debate today (this is a subject Christians disagree on).
6. But what I want to do in the remainder of our time is merely give a brief survey of what Scripture teaches about these two nations.
7. (1) Their identity—here I simply want to briefly define what I mean by being citizens of two nations.
8. (a) Earthly nation—by this I mean, as Paul was a Roman citizen so we are all citizens of an earthly nation.
9. As we learned a few weeks ago, Paul earned his citizenship through birth (which was rather rare in the first century).
10. Furthermore, keep in mind that Rome was the greatest Empire on the entire planet in the first century.
11. It not only had developed educational and travel systems, but also a rather developed judicial system.
12. Now at least three things must be true if there's to be a nation—there must be a ruler, there must be rules, and there must be citizens.
13. This was true of first century Rome and it remains true the US (and for almost every other nation on earth).

14. (b) Heavenly nation—by this I mean, as a Christian Paul was also a citizen of the church or nation of God.
15. 1Pet.2:9—"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people."
16. The church is a nation made up of nations—it's a heavenly nation as it's different from every earthly nation.
17. Jn.18:36—"My kingdom is not of this world"—it's not founded on worldly wisdom or worldly principles.
18. This of course doesn't deny His kingdom is on earth, but it seems, distinguishes it from all the others.
19. Furthermore, we can say that this nation is "heavenly" in that our King is presently (bodily) in heaven.
20. Phil.3:20—"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."
21. Furthermore, it's a heavenly nation because a part of its citizenship is in heaven (Eph.3:15 – 'the whole family in heaven and earth').
22. Now again this doesn't mean that Christ's kingdom is not presently on earth (because the church is His kingdom).
23. Thus, a part of this nation is presently on earth (church militant) and the other part in heaven (church triumphant).
24. (2) Their purposes—here I want to briefly consider the primary purposes of these two nations (earthly and heavenly) (state and church).
25. (a) Earthly nations—God has established magistrates and governments within nations as a kindness to mankind.
26. 2LBC (24:1)—"God, the supreme Lord and King of all the world, has ordained civil magistrates to be under Him, over the people, for His own glory and the public good; and to this end has armed them with the power of the sword, for defense and encouragement of them that do good, and for the punishment of evil doers."
27. Our confession suggested two basic purposes for earthly nations—His own glory and the public good.
28. It then provides three ways the magistrate is given for the public good: first, for defense—it's to protect its citizens from invaders; second, to reward those who do good; third, punish those who do evil.
29. These are three fundamental ways they promote the public good and to the extent they fail in these, they defy the purpose of their existence (and they will be held personally accountable to the King of kings).
30. (b) Heavenly nation—God has established the church, His holy nation on earth, to glorify Him and proclaim His gospel.
31. Thus, the church has everything a nation has—Christ is its king, elders are rulers, and members are citizens.
32. Does the church have a constitution, yes, the Scriptures, and does it have laws, yes, the law of Christ (or TC).
33. And thus, the church, if its operating rightly, functions as a nation with defined constitution, laws, rulers, and citizens.
34. And so these two nations have distinct purposes—each have rulers, constitutions, laws, and citizens.

35. (3) Their connection—here in closing I want to suggest three things about how these two nations relate.
36. (a) Christ has authority over them both—by this I mean, Christ has authority over every nation on earth.
37. Now, this authority isn't merely His because He is God, but also in reward to Him as the obedient Godman (Ps.2:7-9; Ps.110:1-2; Dan.7:13; Matt.28:18; Jn.17:2).
38. Thus, while Christ has authority over every nation (including His church), He does not rule them the same.
39. He rules over the nations of this world with power, and He rules over His people with love and grace.
40. (b) There will always be tension between them—this means, these will always remain distinct from each other.
41. And here is why—because the kingdoms of this world will always be comprised of a mixture of people.
42. Remember brethren, the church is God's holy nation, which means, we are to remove any who are unholy.
43. Every citizen in this kingdom must personally bow to King Jesus (and profess Him above every king).
44. But this isn't so with regards to earthly kingdoms—earthly kingdoms are intended for earthly (worldly) people.
45. Now dear don't misunderstand me—we should pray and labor to elect Christian people to rule this country.
46. But the Scripture is very clear, that in general, the kings and rulers of this world will remain hostile to God.
47. Remember, this is exactly what's happening to Paul—he's being judged by the kings and rulers of this world (Lk.21:12).
48. Rev.17:1-2—"Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication (18:1-20)."
49. By the great harlot is meant Babylon or this world system as influenced by Satan (this is a description of what happens when Christ returns).
50. (c) Our allegiance is supremely in the heavenly nation—and here's why—because this is the only nation that will always endure.
51. Earthly kingdoms come and go—earthly rulers come and go—but the only nation that has God's promise of preservation is the church (what I have called the heavenly nation).
52. Brethren, let me be plain—Scripture forewarns us about what is to come and it's the same thing our Father's have endured for the last 2000 years.
53. The kings and rulers of this world hated our Master and hated almost every faithful servant of His since.
54. There is coming a time when we too will be hated by the kings and rulers of this world just as Paul was (and just as he was brought before their judgment seat so shall we).
55. But keep in mind dear brethren, that there's coming a time when every king and ruler will be summed to another judgment seat (and guess who will be seated upon that throne).