

THE BOOK OF ACTS | GOD'S REVELATION OF TRANSITION

SESSION 74 | ACTS 25:1-12

ACTS 25:1-12 | PAUL BEFORE FESTUS

- Verse 1 –
 - Felix and Festus were in a quick line of governors leading to the Jewish revolt. In *Wars of the Jews*, Flavius Josephus names chapter 14 of Book 2, “Festus succeeds Felix, who is succeeded by Albinus, as he is by Florus; who, by the barbarity of his government, forces the Jews into war.”
 - Of Festus, Josephus says very little: “Now it was that Festus succeeded Felix as procurator and made it his business to correct those that made disturbances in the country. So he caught the greatest part of the robbers, and destroyed a great many of them.” (Wars, 14, 2, 271).
 - In chapter 25, Festus is beginning to investigate “those that made disturbances” and ends up investigating Paul. Recall that Lucius had originally mistaken Paul as an insurrectionist (Acts 21:38).
- Verses 2-5 –
 - In Jerusalem, the leaders attempted to get Festus to bring Paul to Jerusalem (retaining their plot to kill him), but Festus did not “take the bait.”
- Verse 6 –
 - Modern versions, using the *Critical Text* rather than the *Textus Receptus* read, “not more than eight or ten days.”
 - Because nothing changes in the interpretation, it is not worth the time to investigate.
 - It is worthy of note, however, that the two texts are ideologically opposed to one another: one claims less than 10 days, the other **more than ten days**.
 - One is wrong, one is right. One is therefore not the Bible.
 - Festus was **sitting on the judgment seat**. The word βῆμα [bema] is sometimes translated *throne*, but always implies a place of judgment. Paul is brought into the courtroom, so to speak.
- Verse 7 –
 - The Jewish leadership certainly had **many and grievous complaints against Paul**, but under any rule of law, both the number and the magnitude of complaints are meaningless.
 - The Romans would require that a law be broken, and that this be proven. The Jewish leaders could not provide such a charge.
- Verse 8 –
 - Paul’s defense should not be read quickly and overlooked. Because it goes against much of the common theological belief, the truth and clarity of the verse must be considered carefully.
 - Paul claimed that he had done nothing which would offend **the law of the Jews, neither against the temple**. Either Paul is a liar, or he is living under the law. This forces us to make one of the following conclusions:

- Paul was under the law, and thus we are as well. This is the conclusion of much of Covenant Theology, but disregards the clear teachings of the book of Galatians.
 - Paul was not under the law, and was not speaking honestly in this verse. This is simply unacceptable.
 - Paul was under the law because the mystery of grace had not yet been revealed. This is the approach of “Acts 28” dispensationalism.
 - Paul was under the law because he was a Jew living in an age when the Kingdom was being offered to Jewish nation. Paul also taught personal salvation from all sins outside the law of Moses (Acts 13:38-39).
 - In my estimation, neither an Acts 2 nor a mid-Acts dispensationalism adequately solves the problem of Paul’s obedience to the Law (and continued Kingdom proclamation), and Acts 28 dispensationalism shifts the problem to clear proclamations of grace prior to Acts 28. Therefore, a period of transition in which Israel slowly *diminishes* (see Rom. 11:12) rather than a sharp divide between dispensations is required (i.e.: a period of overlap).
- Verse 9 –
 - It appears that Festus knows that Paul is innocent. However, he wants the favor of the Jews, and thus asks Paul to **there be judged of these things**. It is uncertain whether **these things** are the **many complaints** of the Jews (v. 7) or the matters **against the law of the Jews** (v. 8).
 - Here Festus clearly shows his political side. He is fully able to make a judgment. A trial in Jerusalem will only make frivolous matters worse, but he is willing to risk it for the political favor of the Jews.
- Verse 10 –
 - Once again, Paul insisted on the rule of law and the full privilege of his political rights. He will not be part of a legal charade. His legal rights were **at Caesar’s judgment seat** (represented in the powers of Festus), and thus there was no need for any further trial.
 - Paul “called a spade a spade” when he said, **to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest**. Festus was well aware that there were no legal grounds upon which to continue the trial.
- Verse 11 –
 - Once again, Paul makes a strong assertion of his rights and the rule of law. He also gives clear testimony that he is not guilty of **these things whereof these accuse me**. Paul makes his **appeal unto Caesar**, a right which was given to all Roman citizens.
- Verse 12 –
 - The **council** is not the Sanhedrin (as in other places in Acts), but rather the συμβούλιον [sumboulion], the judicial council. Doubtless, Festus had little choice but to allow the appeal.