

## THE BOOK OF ACTS | GOD'S REVELATION OF TRANSITION

### SESSION 75 | ACTS 25:13-26:8

#### ACTS 25:13-22 | AGRIPPA INTRODUCED TO THE PAULINE PREDICAMENT

- Verse 1 –
  - **Agrippa** is Agrippa II. His father, Agrippa I, is the one who killed James and died of worms (Acts 12). Herod the Great was his grandfather. Josephus gives quite a bit of information about him, including a lengthy speech to the Jews given a few years after Acts 25, in which he encourages the Jews against revolt. In the Jewish revolt, he eventually sided with Rome and was the king at the fall of Jerusalem. He died in Rome about 100 AD.
  - **Bernice** was Agrippa's sister, though rumors were that she and Agrippa were in an incestuous relationship. Josephus said that after a "report went that she had criminal conversation with her brother," she had an arranged marriage for publicity sake (Antiquities of the Jews, XX, vii, 3).
- Verses 14-17 –
  - Festus introduces Agrippa and Bernice to the situation concerning Paul. Festus explains and defends his course of action.
  - He also helps us (yet again) to see some of the foundations of western thought, such as the right to meet your accuser(s).
- Verses 18-19 –
  - This account affirms some of our conclusions from the episode with Festus, and also gives more insight.
    - Confirmed is the fact that there were no substantive charges. Additionally, we now know that the discussion of resurrection of the dead which was present in the trial before Felix was also present before Festus (though not specifically mentioned in the account).
    - We also know that before Festus the center point of the discussion was **Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive** (v. 19).
  - Note that Festus considered this to be a matter of **superstition** and that he personally considered Jesus to be dead.
    - Note that Paul used the word **superstitious** in Acts 17:22, referring to the Athenians. Both there and here, the modern word carries a more negative connotation than the ancient word. Agrippa, after all, was a Jew himself.
    - The Greek word had the meaning of recognition of the spirit world.
- Verses 20-22 –
  - Festus further explains that he **doubted of such manner of questions**. That is, he had no idea how to investigate matters of religion.
  - Agrippa expressed desire to **hear the man myself** and the meeting was set up.

#### ACTS 25:23-27 | THE POMP OF PAUL'S HEARING

- Verse 23 –
  - With all the **great pomp** one would expect with a king, Agrippa and Bernice **entered into the place of hearing**, along with the dignitaries. Paul is then **brought forth**.

- While we cannot know for certain, the **place of hearing** was very likely the theater of Caesarea, a spectacular building that stands to this day.
- Verses 24-26 –
  - Festus makes known the purpose of the gathering: so that he **might have somewhat to write** to **Augustus** when he sends Paul.
  - Once again, as we have suspected all along, it is perfectly clear now that there is no charge of criminality. At the same time, there is no release from house arrest.
    - Paul, faced with the options of a mock trial before the Jewish leadership or an indefinite stay in house arrest.
    - Since neither was a viable option, Paul opted for his appeal to Caesar.
    - Festus seemed to know that the system was going to punish him for allowing this appeal without cause when the rule of law would have forced him to release, so he was searching for some reason to present to Caesar.
    - Though there is much in the Roman system that is the foundation of western civilization, the system also had an appeasement policy that likely ultimately caused its decline. When justice is not blind, the country crumbles.
- Verse 27 –
  - As previously stated, this is the main purpose of the gathering: **to signify the crimes laid against him**. Festus uses the word ἄλογος [alogos], translated **unreasonable**. We get the English word *illogical* from this root.
  - Truthfully, with is unreasonable is that Paul has had numerous trials and *they still don't have a crime*.

#### ACTS 26:1-8 | PAUL BEFORE AGRIPPA: PART 1 - PAUL'S INTRODUCTION

- Verses 1-3 –
  - Assuming that Agrippa was anything like his grandfather, he indeed was an **expert in all customs and questions which are among Jews**. The word **customs** is εθος [ethos].
  - The Herodian dynasty was originally Idumean, but converted to Judaism and held to it scrupulously...when it benefited them politically.
- Verses 6-7 –
  - As Paul has consistently done, he brings the issue down to *resurrection*. Notice that he never brings it to the issue of law-abiding, unless he is defending himself, explaining that he is law-abiding. Those who view Paul as *not* observing Torah misunderstand him.
  - Note that Paul speaks of **our twelve tribes**. It is also a misunderstanding to believe that ten of the tribes were lost. The northern Kingdom fell and was not re-formed, but the tribes existed then (and now).
- Verse 8 –
  - Paul can speak directly to Agrippa this way, because he would have (at least publically) taken a pro-resurrection position.
  - Paul will use the faith position of Agrippa, even if that position is purely political.