

ACTS CHAPTER TWENTY FIVE

The time is now about A.D. 60. It has been about 27 years since the book of Acts began with Pentecost. In another ten years Jerusalem will be destroyed by the Romans. Throughout the book we have seen the gospel presented to the Jewish nation. In the beginning, many of them were being saved. Nationally, however, they do not accept Christ as their Messiah and as the book of Acts has progressed, fewer and fewer of them are being saved.

The book, which began with the Jewish nation and the apostle Peter in the spotlight, has now almost completely turned to the Gentiles and the apostle Paul. The door that was wide open to the Jews at the beginning of Acts has now almost totally swung shut. Individual Jews can be saved even today, but God has turned His back to them as a nation. During these 2000 years that has occurred since Christ was here, we see God calling people from every nation to be a part of His church. Romans chapter eleven has much to say about God's plan. He has not rejected the Jewish nation forever, but He will not deal with them again until the "fullness" of the Gentiles has come in. Then God will turn again to His people and finally, they (the Jews) will turn to Him and recognize Christ as their promised Messiah. See Romans 11:25 & 26

Read vs. 1-12

1. *How long has Paul now been in prison? (from 24:27)*

During Paul's imprisonment, Felix has been demoted and succeeded by Porcius Festus. When Festus arrives in the province he is immediately involved in the controversy involving Paul. This tells me that Paul has stayed actively involved in getting the gospel out even in prison. The Jews are still feeling threatened by him. They ask Festus to send Paul back to Jerusalem for a trial, but once again they are planning to kill him during the trip. God intervened in this plan and Festus tells them that they should just come to Caesarea if they want to pursue this.

2. *Why do you think the Jews still planning to ambush Paul? (vs. 2-3)*

They knew that their case against him was so weak; it would probably be dismissed, so they planned to kill him instead. They didn't really care who presided over the trial. They don't intend for it to ever happen!

3. *Why do you think they hated Paul so vehemently?*

There could be many reasons. Jealousy may have entered into it or the fact that he convicted them of their own unrighteousness. Jesus told the disciples that they should expect the world to hate them because it hated Him first. John 15:18 & 19

4. *What does verse 7 say about the charges that the Jews brought against Paul?*

One would think that with two years to prepare their case, they would have come up with

something more solid. They still have no evidence and no witnesses and their charges still involve religious matters that Rome doesn't want to be involved in.

During this hearing, Paul maintains his innocence and requests that he be sent to Rome to appear before Caesar. This would be comparable to appealing to the Supreme Court. The idea appeals to Festus. He didn't think that Paul was guilty, but if he released him, he would stir up trouble with the Jews. His job was to keep the peace in the province. He certainly didn't want to cause any rioting to start, so Festus agrees to send Paul to Rome. This would take the burden off of him and end this issue with the Jews. Paul was happy to take advantage of these circumstances to force the issue. His case could have continued to be stalemated for years in Caesarea. He is remembering God's promise that he would witness in Rome and now he is finally being sent there.

5. *Whose idea was it that Paul should stand trial before Caesar? (vs. 10-12)*

The Caesar at this time was Nero, but he had a reputation at this point of being a fair-minded ruler, although he was completely immoral. It was later that madness seemed to consume him and he would turn so vehemently against Christians.

Read vs. 13-27

During this time before preparations could be made to send Paul to Rome, Festus had visitors. King Agrippa and his lover Bernice (who was also his sister) came to welcome him and get acquainted with the new governor. Agrippa ruled the northern part of Palestine. He came from a long line of rulers that are mentioned in scripture, but never for a good reason. It was his great grandfather, Herod the Great, who murdered the baby boys at the time of Jesus' birth (Matt. 2:1-19). His great uncle, Herod Antipas killed John the Baptist and tried to kill Jesus. He also conducted the trial just before the crucifixion (Luke 23:7-12). His father, Agrippa I, was the man who had James killed and arrested Peter (Acts 12:1 & 2)

6. *How did Festus sum up the accusations that the Jews had against Paul? (vs. 19)*

While visiting with Agrippa, Festus told him about this interesting case that he was involved with. He no doubt told him how he had inherited the prisoner Paul from Felix and about the potential trouble with the Jews. Then he summed up the allegations made against Paul.

7. *What was Agrippa's reaction when Festus told him Paul's story? (vs. 22)*

Festus didn't understand the Jewish religion very well and didn't even know what charges to write to send to Rome with Paul. Agrippa was very knowledgeable about Jewish affairs and could advise him. Festus had little knowledge of Jesus, but Agrippa apparently knew the details and was very interested in hearing from Paul himself. Festus arranges for Paul to appear before Agrippa and Bernice the very next day. He probably considered this a way to entertain his visitors.

8. *In vs. 24-27, Festus asks Agrippa to help him figure out something. What was it?*

Festus has Paul brought before Agrippa and Bernice, who had made quite an elegant "arrival". He gives another quick review of the case and humbly asks for Agrippa's help. This was a smart political move and a way to make friends quickly! Our friend Paul is going to have another opportunity to witness and to share the gospel with kings and officials. Refer back to Acts 9:15 & 16. When Ananias was being sent to restore Paul's vision after his conversion on the road to Damascus, God had told Ananias that Paul was going to carry His name before the Gentiles and their kings. God's word is being fulfilled in these last chapters of Acts.