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July 21, 2014

Acts 25

From the last verse of the previous chapter, we learned that Festus was sent by Niro to replace Felix as Governor of the province which was predominately Galilee. As you recall, Felix was not well liked by the Jews due to corruption and overbearing elitist attitude toward them. They had complained apparently to Niro so that when Felix was sent to Roma he went as a prisoner to stand trial for his misdeeds. He was eventually released by Niro due to Felix's brother being well thought of by Niro.

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.

This last verse in Acts 24 also tells us that as a favor to Jews who were not happy with Festus's predecessor Festus kept Paul incarcerated.

Paul's Trial Before Festus

[1](#)Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem.

Three days after assuming command of the area, Festus immediately goes to Jerusalem. Felix had a good understanding

of the Jewish culture because he was married to a Jewess. Festus was not educated on the Jewish people so he would have to get advice.

2Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him, 3And desired favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him.

If you recall Paul was removed from Jerusalem by the Roman Captain because there was a plot to kill Paul. In Caesarea, Paul was out of the reach of the killers. However, the Jewish leadership played on what they thought was the naiveté of the new Governor Festus. Apparently, they thought if they could get Paul back to Jerusalem, they could carry out their plan to kill him.

4But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly *thither*. 5Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with *me*, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him.

Festus was likely briefed on the previous murder plan by the Roman Guards and did not fall for the invitation to bring Paul to Jerusalem but instead told the Jewish leaders that they would need to come back to Caesarea to conduct a hearing in (his) Festus's Court.

6And 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.

So, 13 days after first coming to Jerusalem Festus is ready to hold court for Paul in Caesarea.

7And 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.

Mark did not revisit the allegations that were so well covered in previous chapters, he simply states that the false witnesses again made their baseless accusations against Paul. The testimony did not influence Festus to find Paul guilty. But the intrigue would continue.

8While 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.

Paul plead innocent to all allegations against him.

9But 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?

Political appeasement is usually never a good thing unless it is done to correct a previous political wrong. But in reality, politics never seems to actually harm a political wrongdoer, at least not of

the party in power at the time. Festus would not be harmed by having a trial in Jerusalem by the Jews against Paul. Festus would be making friends of the Jews by doing this. The Jews would not be hurt by doing this trial in Jerusalem as they would get what they wanted, the death of Paul or at least access to him in Jerusalem. The only one hurt would be Paul.

Paul is now forced into a political position that he did not want to enter. His only life goal is to share the Good News, but now he is forced to deal with political lies and religious malfeasants from his fellow Jews.

Paul knows the Jews want to kill him and the best place to do that is Jerusalem. Festus likely knows Paul does not want to go back to Jerusalem and would likely refuse so Festus makes a political move to appease the Jews. He offers Paul the chance to defend himself, but he will have to do it in Jerusalem where he will likely be killed by his own people.

Paul knows he has a trump card to play that takes it out of the hands of the Jews and even of Festus. It plays well for Festus to have this burden shifted from him to Rome which he had probably calculated when telling Paul he could have his trial in Jerusalem.

Paul Appeals to Caesar

10Then 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.

Politically the best of both worlds for Festus. Paul claims his right to go before Caesar in Rome. Festus now looks good to the Jews as he invited Paul to Jerusalem which is what the Jews wanted and he is unburdened in trying an innocent man and Paul now will go before Caesar.

Perhaps the real victory here is the Lord's. Paul will now go to Rome and share the Good News with thousands as he does so. As Joseph said in Genesis.

Genesis 50:20 But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.

The Jews and Festus meant this for evil, but God will turn it into Good.

11For 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. 12Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go.

Festus Consults King Agrippa

Before we read vs 13 there is much debauchery to learn of about King Agrippa. This is King Agrippa the 2nd. His father was King Agrippa the 1st. This from Pulpit Commentary.

*“Verse 13. - **Now when certain days were passed for and after certain days**, A.V.; **Agrippa the king and Bernice arrived at for King Agrippa and Bernice came unto**, A.V.; and **saluted for to salute**, A.V. and T.R. **Agrippa the king**. Herod Agrippa II., son of Herod Agrippa I. ([Acts 12.](#)), and consequently brother of Drusilla ([Acts 24:24](#)). He was only seventeen at his father's death, and so not considered by Claudius a safe person to entrust his father's large dominions to. But he gave him Chalets, and afterwards, in exchange for it, other dominions. It was he who made Ismael the son of Phabi high priest, and who built the palace at Jerusalem which overlooked the temple, and gave great offence to the Jews. He was the last of the Herods, and reigned above fifty years. **Bernice** was his sister, but was thought to be living in an incestuous intercourse with him. She had been the wife of her uncle Herod, Prince of Chalets; and on his death lived with her brother. She then for a while became the wife of Polemo, King of Cicilia, but soon returned to Herod Agrippa. She afterwards became the mistress of Vespasian and of Titus in succession (Alford).”*

13And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus.

King Agrippa was King over the province that Festus was now overseeing for him. It was normal for the King of the area to visit the newest provincial ruler. Even though appointed by Nero, Festus would report to King Agrippa on most local matters.

14And 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:

As a reminder, Felix who is now a prisoner in Rome was married to Drusilla the sister of King Agrippa II. And King Agrippa II is married to his other own sister Bernice. These people were messed up to say the least.

Each designated King was given a specified area from Rome's Ruler (Caesars) to govern. Often loyal military men would be given King status along with land that they would manage for Rome. After that if the King was not disposed of by Rome, the land would begin following the family tree and son's would become new kings at the death of their fathers.

Within each of these Roman Kingdoms were what they called Provinces or smaller parts of the overall Kingdom under each King. In this case Agrippa II was given a smaller portion of his Father's kingdom when his father died at age 44. Nero the Roman ruler did not feel Agrippa II at age 17 was able to rule such a large and conflicted area as his father Agrippa I. Agrippa I controlled most of what is now Israel, Lebanon, and Syria, to include part of what is now Jordan. When Agrippa II took over at 17 years of age the southern part of his father's kingdom was taken back under

control of Rome. In time Agrippa II would receive all of his father's former kingdom plus more.

As to Provincial rulers like Felix and Festus they would be appointed by Caesar from Rome's and work under the local King but always have to answer to Rome on matters of national security.

When Festus took over as provincial ruler under King Agrippa II he had to learn about the Jewish culture and how to manage them. Festus was looking for advice from King Agrippa as he did not want to send Paul to Caesar in Rome without specific charges. Everything he had been told so far by the Jews was unsubstantiated and not chargeable under Roman Law.

Both King Agrippa II and his wife/sister Bernice were both Roman Jews from their grandfather King Herod. King Herod was converted a Jew from his father and mother. He ended up killing his wife, mother-in-law and two of his sons out of paranoia of them taking his kingdom.

Roman ruler Augustus Caesar was quoted as saying about Herod after giving Herod permission to put his sons on trial and eventually kill them:

“It is better to be Herod’s pig (Greek: hua) than son (Greek: huia).^[14]”

He also ordered all babies that were 2 years old to be killed when Jesus was born.

Matthew 2:16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wrath, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.



Agrippa II's Kingdom After 54/5 CE



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. **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. **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. **18** Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed: **19** But had certain questions

against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. [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. [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. [22](#)Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. Tomorrow, said he, thou shalt hear him.

It is clear from these verses that Festus had nothing to send to Rome with Paul as a Roman charge. He hoping to get some guidance from King Agrippa whose Jewish heritage gave him insight into the Jewish mindset.

He of course missed the critical issue here and that was the Messiah having been crucified by the Roman guard was now declared alive. How many people miss that point?

Paul Before Agrippa and Bernice

[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.

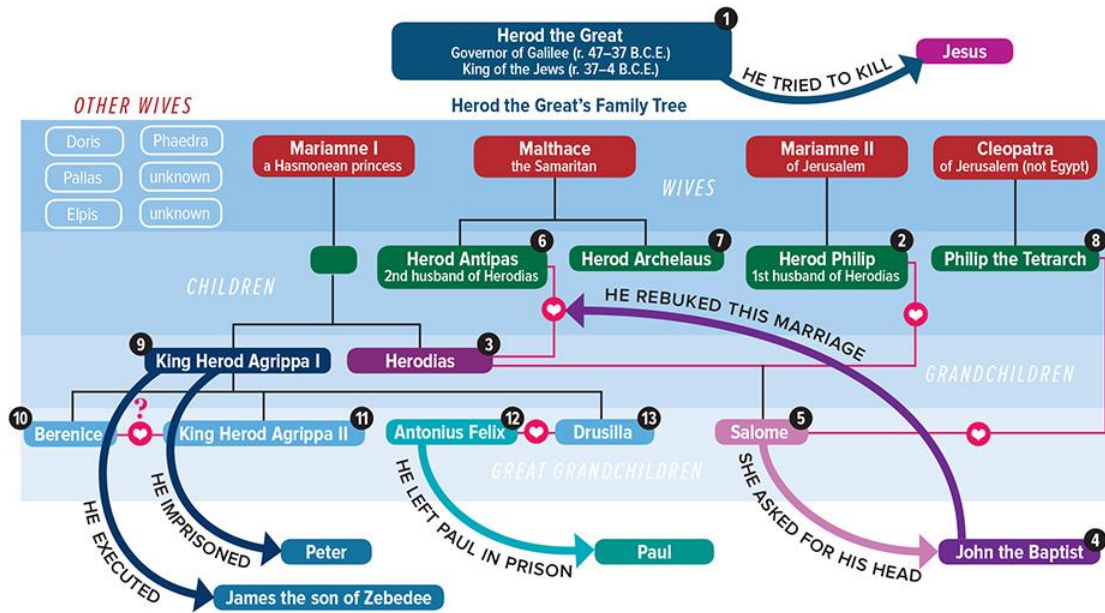
Kings were always afforded great honor when brought in as was Agrippa and his sister/wife.

24And 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 *a/so* here, crying that he ought not to live any longer. 25But 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. 26Of 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. 27For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes *laid* against him.

Festus confesses before Agrippa and all those present including the Jews and Paul that he finds no charge against Paul, certainly no charge worthy of death. However, due to Paul as a Roman Citizen claiming his right to be heard by Caesar, Festus needs help from King Agrippa in defining a charge that he can forward to Caesar.

God will use this time of Paul in Rome to spread the Gospel even further.

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The Herodian Dynasty (much abbreviated)

