

- ¹ Now when Festus had come to the province, after three days he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem.
- ² Then the high priest and the chief men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they petitioned him,
- ³ asking a favor against him, that he would summon him to Jerusalem--while *they* lay in ambush along the road to kill him.
- ⁴ But Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself was going *there* shortly.
- ⁵ "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."
- ⁶ 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.
- ⁷ 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,
- ⁸ 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."
- ⁹ But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me concerning these things?"
- ¹⁰ 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.
- ¹¹ 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."
- ¹² Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, "You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!"
- ¹³ And after some days King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to greet Festus.

King Agrippa was Herod Agrippa II, son of Herod Agrippa I, and a descendant of Herod the Great, the last of the Herod dynasty that ruled parts of Palestine from 40 B.C. to A.D. 100. Like great-grandfather, like grandfather, like father, like son—Agrippa inherited the effects of generations of powerful men with flawed personalities. Each son followed his father in weaknesses, mistakes, and missed opportunities. Each generation had a confrontation with God, and each failed to realize the importance of his decision.

At this time (A.D. 60) Agrippa II was a young man of about thirty-three. He ruled the territories northeast of Palestine, bearing the title of "king." With power over the Temple, he controlled the Temple treasury and could appoint and remove the high priest. **Bernice** was his sister. When she was thirteen (A.D. 41), she had married her uncle, Herod Chalcis, who died in A.D. 48. Then she became a mistress to her brother, Agrippa II. In A.D. 63, she married King Polemon of Cilicia, but in the early 70s, she became mistress to Emperor Vespasian's son, Titus. Here Agrippa and Bernice were making an official visit to Festus, **to pay their respects.**

Agrippa and Festus were anxious to cooperate in governing their neighboring territories. The relationship between the Herodian dynasty and the Roman governors had always been sticky (remember Herod Antipas and Pontius Pilate, for example, sending Jesus back and forth—[Luke 23:1-12](#)). This state visit was an extended one, giving Festus an opportunity to discuss **Paul's case with the king.** Agrippa, of Jewish descent, could help clarify Paul's case for the Roman governor.

¹⁴ When they had been there many days, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying: "There is a certain man left a prisoner by Felix,

¹⁵ about whom the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed *me*, when I was in Jerusalem, asking for a judgment against him.

¹⁶ To them I answered, 'It is not the custom of the Romans to deliver any man to destruction before the accused meets the accusers face to face, and has opportunity to answer for himself concerning the charge against him.'

¹⁷ Therefore when they had come together, without any delay, the next day I sat on the judgment seat and commanded the man to be brought in.

¹⁸ When the accusers stood up, they brought no accusation against him of such things as I supposed,

¹⁹ but had some questions against him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who had died, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

²⁰ And because I was uncertain of such questions, I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there be judged concerning these matters.

²¹ 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."

Here and in verse 25, Festus refers to Nero by his title (note the marginal reading "the Augustus"). A contemporary equivalent to this title would be "his majesty." The title "Augustus" was first conferred on Octavian in 27 B.C., and thereafter he was called Caesar Augustus, the name which Luke uses in the narrative about the birth of Jesus. 22 After Octavian's death, the title was given to his successors in office, and so Festus uses it of Nero. It had the connotation of divinity being attributed to whoever was called "Augustus" (i.e., venerable, worthy of reverence), and Tiberius didn't like to have the title applied to him; but the other emperors seemed to have no scruples about being called a divinity. **New Testament History – Acts** by Gareth L. Reese pg. 866-867

²² Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I also would like to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," he said, "you shall hear him."

²³ 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.

When Agrippa and Bernice heard Paul, it was not in a quiet, private setting; it was before an audience of dignitaries gathered in an atmosphere of royal pageantry. **Pomp** is a translation of *phantasia*, a word denoting a showy appearance, a display, pageantry. The use of this term to describe Agrippa and Bernice's entrance indicates that they were dressed in elaborate attire and accompanied by an impressive entourage. Military leaders were present. **Chief captains** is from *chiliarch*, which denotes an officer over a cohort, which consisted of 1000 soldiers. There were probably five of these officers present, for Josephus informs us that there were five cohorts in Caesarea (*Antiquities* 19:9:2). The principal men of the city must have included government officials. In addition to Agrippa, the dignitaries who were present could perhaps offer some helpful advice (v. 26). It seems strange that the occasion of Agrippa's hearing Paul was made into such a grand event. Kistemaker suggests that Festus was using the occasion as an opportunity to honor the visiting King Agrippa, giving him a chance to display his royal power (877). When everyone in the grand assembly was in place, Festus called for Paul to be brought forth.

Truth Commentaries – Acts by Johnny Stringer pg. 518-519

