

Acts (Part Twenty-Five)

Acts 25-26 Paul's Appeal to Festus and His Testimony to King Agrippa

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We are going to go into something here that again comes up in what we are going to be covering tonight in the book of Acts and this particular subject has to do with the resurrection of the dead.

I think most of us are at least reasonably familiar with the teeming populations in today's large cities. We have, I believe, it is over six million people here in the Los Angeles basin, let us say, the greater Los Angeles area. That is an awful lot of people. I think New York City has somewhere around seven to eight million people there, and who knows how many people are in Shanghai or some of those areas in the Far East. Those teeming masses of people in China are almost beyond description. I believe that there are somewhere close to around a billion people in China. I do not know that anybody knows for sure. I do not know whether the Chinese have accurately counted it for a good while. But at any rate we will just estimate that there are about one billion people in China, just to give you some sort of an idea of how many people are alive on earth, and how many may be alive in the future when we get to the second resurrection.

But if we stood all these Chinese in a straight line and allowed two feet for each person, that one billion people would make a line that is 378,787 miles long. Now fortunately, all the Chinese do not just stand in a line like that. But that is enough people to reach all the way to the moon and halfway back again. And maybe to describe it or illustrate it in another way: If you stood all these people with their two feet of space at the equator, it would go around 11 times.

I do not know whether you heard the lady that takes Charles Osgood's place every once in a while. She was describing a gridlock situation that she got into in New York City just a few weeks ago. And her brother called her and told her that he was coming in to Kennedy Airport and would she please meet him because he wanted to be able to talk to her while they were in the

car. So she said sure, she would do that, and he was coming in at such a time that she would be able to leave work at a normal time, go out to Kennedy Airport, and meet him there. Well, it was not a very long drive from downtown New York City to Kennedy Airport but she got in this gridlock situation and she did not move for two hours.

Well, she was describing how this fellow behind her, a truck driver, just lost it. He just passed over the line of sanity, you might say. He got out of his truck and came up to her car and was beating on her windshield, swearing at her to move the car. Where was she going to go? Well, she finally did. There was enough of a break that she was able to make a U-turn. I do not know how she did it. You cannot make U-turns out here on the freeways, but in this one in New York City, she could make a U-turn. The freeway was going all right in the other direction. And she went to a train station, got on the train, and she went out to meet her brother on the train. She was able to call him at the airport and tell him that she was on her way, and she was going to come on the train. The train hit a car! It took her five hours to get to the airport from downtown New York City to the Kennedy Airport. And it was just a mass of people in a situation, a bottleneck occurred, and you could not move.

We are going to have situations like that. In just another 10 years or so here in Los Angeles, it is going to get that bad and it is just being caused by tremendous masses of people all being concentrated in one place. Well, if we took these six and a half million people in Los Angeles and, and gave them the same amount of space and stretched them out like we did the Chinese, the people here in Los Angeles would reach 2,200 miles. That is just one city. The third largest city, nonetheless, but one city.

I think that you are pretty well aware that the earth has gotten to the place where it cannot support a very much larger population than we already have. And yet apparently, the population is growing worldwide. And if you look at the way the world is today, with droughts and famines and polar ice caps; deserts on large parts of the earth's surface—North Africa, the western Soviet Union and over into China, a great deal of the western United States is a desert. And though we grow enough food for ourselves here, and we even export some, we are coming very close to capacity. Given the amount of land that we have that is tillable and the weather patterns that we have,

there is no way, the way things are now, the world is going to be able to support the populations that are envisioned that are going to be coming up in the second resurrection.

Let us go back to Revelation 20, verse 5. After mentioning the first resurrection, he says,

Revelation 20:5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

Revelation 20:11-12 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

What we see in verses 11 and 12 are the rest of the dead referred to there in verse 5.

From all indications that we see earlier in the book of Revelation, those who are going to be in the first resurrection are very, very small in number in comparison to the number of people who have lived and died from the time of Adam. If we begin with a figure of 144,000, you could stick 144,000 people in Glendale. I think the population of Glendale, on the signs anyway, is around 155,000 people. Now, if that is any kind of a measurement, you compare that to the four to five billion people that they are supposed to be on earth now, that is a very tiny number; and that is just the number of people who are living now and you add to that the populations that have preceded us, even say from the time of Christ, and that 144,000 is a very small number.

Now we know for sure that it is going to be larger than 144,000 because Revelation 7 makes it very clear that there was a very large multitude in addition to the 144,000. But even that large multitude is going to be tiny in comparison to the present population of the earth and even tinier still in comparison to the potential number of people that can come up in that second resurrection. So subtracting, then, those people who will come up in

the first resurrection from the potential that there is to come up in the second resurrection, and we are dealing with one huge, colossal number of people coming up in that second resurrection.

How in the world is the earth ever going to be able to support that many people? Now, how many people are we talking about? Well, I have seen estimates that have been calculated by mathematicians in the church. And they feel that a pretty conservative figure would be maybe about 40 billion people. That is about 10 times the number of people that are on earth right now. Now that is for a number that is just a guess. And there are an awful lot of assumptions that have to be made in order to arrive at that 40 billion people figure. And that is if conditions have always been somewhat similar to what we have today. But if that is a possibility, why, we are dealing with an awful lot of people. Obviously, then, the earth cannot be left in the condition it is now after the tribulation, or we are going to have trouble.

Let us go back to the Old Testament to Isaiah the 40th chapter. We will begin in verse 1 so we can get the context and the time frame.

Isaiah 40:1-2 "Comfort, yes, comfort My people!" says your God. "Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended [we are talking here about a time after the tribulation], that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins."

Isaiah 40:4-5 "Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill shall be made low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth; the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

What we are seeing here is the massive landscaping job that God is going to do, just a little bit of an insight into one anyway, what is going to have to be done during the tribulation and the Day of the Lord. The whole earth is going to have to undergo massive changes in order for it to support the populations that are eventually going to be here.

Go back to Isaiah the 2nd chapter. Again, we will pick this up in its context.

Isaiah 2:12-19 For the day of the Lord of hosts shall come upon everything proud and lofty, upon everything lifted up—and it shall be brought low—upon all the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan; upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up; upon every high tower, and upon every fortified wall; upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all the beautiful sloops. The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; the Lord alone will be exalted in that day, but the idols He shall utterly abolish. They shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, from the terror of the Lord and the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake the earth mightily.

Now we might speculate as to how such a thing would occur. You might recall, if you have done any reading in regard to the Flood, that it said that the waters not only came down from above for 40 days and 40 nights, but it also says that the fountains of the great deep were broken up. The only way that could occur would be massive earthquakes that smashed all the rocks together and just propelled the water that is being held under the earth right up on the top of the soil. And so the earth was literally squeezed, as it were, and the water that is being held down there in the rocks came up in order to supply the water that was necessary to cover the whole earth.

Let us go back to the book of Revelation. Now that is one way that something like that could occur. In Revelation, in the 16th chapter and in verse 17 we have the seventh vial or bowl of God's wrath. And my Bible has a subheading. It says The Earth Utterly Shaken. Now possibly what we are looking at here is what Isaiah was prophesying of a little bit earlier there.

Revelation 16:17-20 Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" There were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. Now the great city [Jerusalem] was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God [Now the great city there, on second

thought, may have been Babylon.], to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

There is one other earthquake that is mentioned. It is not quite as significant as that one.

Revelation 6:14-15 Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains.

Now there is another prophecy that says that the earth is going to go to and fro. It seems as though it is going to be rocking in its orbit. And perhaps we might speculate that the tilt of the earth's axis might even be altered. Instead of being, what is it? 23 degrees now, and maybe God will straighten it up so that it is straight up and down. I do not know. But such a thing would create havoc on earth, you know, suddenly being put up like that and you can imagine all the waters in the oceans and lakes rolling and the skin of the earth would just be stretched all out of its present conformity. So there would be no more Himalayas. There would be no more Cascades or Sierras or Andes mountains. Those things would just come tumbling down so that the continents, I am sure, would no longer look like they do now. The configuration of them would change.

So you have under the earth, the earth being squeezed there and the valleys being pushed up, and then you have the whole thing shaking and the mountains tumbling down, and you just wonder how anybody could survive in such a situation. But hopefully, God is going to provide for those people who are left alive at that time.

Now back to the book of Isaiah once again, this time in chapter 35.

Isaiah 35:1-2 The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; and it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it.

Isaiah 35:7 The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; in the habitation of jackals, where each lay, there shall be grass with reeds and rushes.

In addition to the change in the topography of the earth, God is also then forecasting that He is going to change the weather patterns on earth too so that what was formerly desert is going to spring forth with life and of course once it begins the cycle, it will, as long as it is empty, and it is going to be empty for a good while because He prophesied already that the land is going to have its Sabbaths, the Sabbaths that have been denied it, those 7th-year Sabbaths, the land is going to have them and it is going to rest. And when it rests, you are going to see the earth begin to blossom forth with green all over the place because the rain patterns are going to be there.

I wonder if any of you saw the article that was in *National Geographic* regarding Mount St. Helens, that once it blew the whole landscape around there was covered with ash. But in a very short time, little things began to grow, grasses began to come up, and now the area is turning green again. And the cycle starts again. As long as there is sufficient rain, the seeds are there and they will begin to spring forth with life, and it will not be long before there is bushes and then big trees will be there. It will not take very many generations, and those things will contribute to the stability of the weather patterns on earth.

Now let us go back a little bit further in the book of Ezekiel to chapter 47. See, God is going to supply something else.

Ezekiel 47:1-3 Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and there was water flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east, for the front of the temple faced east, and the water was flowing from under the right side of the temple, south of the altar. And he brought me out by way of the north gate, and led me around on the outside to the outer gateway that faces east; and there was water running out on the right side. And when the man went out to the east with a line in his hand, he measured one thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the water came up to my ankles.

Do you know how far 1,000 cubits is? Well, even using the small cubit, which is 18 inches, that is three and four-tenths miles. Now, just to give you a little bit of a grasp on the dimensions of this river that is flowing out from under the throne, the water for the first three and one-half miles is only up to the ankles.

Ezekiel 47:4-9 Again he measured one thousand [another three and four-tenths miles] and brought me through the waters; and the water came up to my knees. Again he measured one thousand and brought me through; and the water came up to my waist. [Now we are up to a river that is ten and two-tenths miles wide and the water is only up to his waist.] Again he measured one thousand, and it was a river that I could not cross; for the water was too deep, water in which one must swim, a river that could not be crossed. He said to me, "Son of man, have you seen this?" Then he brought me and returned me to the bank of the river. When I returned, there, along the bank of the river, were very many trees on one side and the other. Then he said to me: "This water flows toward the eastern region, goes down into the valley, and enters the sea. When it reaches the sea, its waters are healed. And it shall be that every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live. There will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there; for they will be healed, and everything that will live wherever the river goes.

And so forth and so on. Then he goes on to say that the swamps and marshes will not be healed because they play a vital part in the ecology of the earth, that those things apparently are necessary swamps and marshes because they help support life. So you can see that God is providing for the tremendous populations that are going to come so that the earth will be able to support the populations.

Right now, there are approximately 50 million square miles of land on the continents. Now, unfortunately, most of it cannot be used. There is not much will grow there, at least not much that is useful for food. Now, even if things would stay exactly the same way, that is, in terms of the size of the land mass of the continents, we would still have 50 million square miles at the

end of the Millennium. And let us say that there was a population of 40 billion people. A little bit of mathematics will show you that that would give about 5 acres for every family of four to six people for 40 billion people. Now, maybe for you city folks, you may think that that is not enough, but that is enough. In fact, it is more than enough.

I once read a book in which a man calculated (I never had the opportunity to try it), but even with today's weather conditions and so forth, he said that you can grow enough food, including meat, on two acres to feed a family of four. Now you add to that the fertility that God indicates is going to come and the beautiful weather patterns. . . By meat he meant something small like a sheep or a goat. A cow needs more room than that, but there is enough in two acres that is well managed and kept fertile to supply enough food for a family of four. So that is a pretty good indication that God has things pretty well plotted out.

Incidentally, this calculation of 50 million square miles plus the four or the five acres for every family of four to six, still leaves massive amounts of land left over for industrial use, parks, and things of that nature, use preserves. So the earth is going to be able to take care of them. God will provide. And it certainly makes possible what Micah said here in Micah 4, verse 4 of what is coming, even beginning in the Millennium. He says,

Micah 4:4 But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid [neither animal nor man, or the fear of not having enough to eat]; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken.

Let us go back to the book of Acts. We are going to begin in Acts 24 again, just to get a little bit of a running start. I am sure you remember some of the actors in the drama here that was unfolding. Felix, the freed slave, the man who was a friend of Emperor Claudius and had been elevated to that position as governor of Samaria and Judea in 52 or 53 AD I believe it was. And he happened to be sitting in this seat of authority when this case was brought before him involving the apostle Paul.

So we have the freed Roman slave Felix, we have his wife Drusilla, who was a Jew. You remember her, she was the one who was married as a teenager to

a minor king, King of Emasa, I guess it was. It was somewhere in a city in its suburbs somewhere there in what is present day Syria. She did not like being up there in Emasa married to this Azizus. She had bigger ideas for herself, and she ingratiated herself to Felix. Felix was her kind of guy, ruthless and difficult to get along with, but she had the visions of grandeur. He liked her looks, and so it was a perfect match. I do not think we can say that it was a match made in heaven, but as far as they were concerned, it was perfect. It seems to be entirely built upon lust and greed and this desire for grandeur.

But at any rate, they were governor and wife of the area whenever Paul and his case was brought before them. And so Paul used that as an opportunity to make a witness of the gospel of the Kingdom of God before Felix and whenever the case was over, why, Felix put his finger on the heartbeat of the case and that is that Paul was really innocent of any charge that was brought against him, but Felix felt that he was between a rock and a hard place. He was having a very difficult time with the Jews. They did not like him and yet he wanted to make a good impression on the Roman government and not allow this place to degenerate into anarchy. And so Paul then was the one who had to suffer because Felix's judgment then was that in order to appease the Jews, Paul had to be held over and so Felix apparently held him over for two years under house arrest.

Apparently in the palace Paul had a great deal of liberty, but he was not really free to go. I mean, he had liberty in the sense that people were able to visit him and he was not under the constraint apparently of just being confined to one room, but he was not allowed to leave the grounds. And so we find him as chapter 25 opens up, now awaiting another trial because a change had taken place in the governorship of that area and a man by the name of Festus is now the governor of Judea.

Now, it is interesting to me that here was this one man, Paul. Two years have gone by, and yet the Jews had not forgotten it. And they wanted justice to be done to this man who they felt was an enemy of their religion. But Festus came into this position and Festus was really a welcome relief from Felix. He was a man of a great deal more wisdom, apparently a great deal more experience. He had more justice in dealing with people and it took a man like

Festus to at least calm things down. And he kept the lid on things while he was alive in those two years that he was in office there between I believe 60 and 62.

Acts 25:1-3 Now when Festus had come to the province, after three days he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem. [So he jumped right into his responsibilities there. It did not take much time to get into the groove.] Then the high priest and the chief men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they petitioned him, asking a favor against him, that he would summon him [that is, Paul] to Jerusalem—while they lay in ambush along the road to kill him.

So they put together a plot, another hairbrained idea that Felix did not fall for and they wanted again to have an opportunity to take advantage of the new governor and kind of slide this right by him before he knew what was going on.

Acts 25:4-5 But Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself was going there shortly. "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."

So he did what was the legally responsible thing to do, and that is, called them, the Jews, to come back to Caesarea and that he would hear the case there.

Acts 25:6-8 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. 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, 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."

But Festus, again like Felix before him, could see right through this. But there must have been a great deal of political pressure being brought to bear on Festus' mind because,

Acts 25:9 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?"

In all truth, the trial should have ended right here. But the political pressures got to the man. Even though he was a better governor than Felix, the pressure of having to govern a province that seemed to be constantly in a state of turmoil, must have been pretty great. The Jews, of course, were in the majority and that carried a lot of weight, especially if there were innuendos that if things did not go their way, there was going to be a great deal more trouble on the streets.

Now Festus, like any normal person, wanted to get ahead in the world. He wanted to impress his superiors. He wanted Claudius to promote him to a higher office and he certainly was not going to get promoted to a higher office if he was a man who was noted for being in the midst of anarchy and turmoil all the time. And so the pressures of that situation, which were exactly the same as the pressures that came on Pilate and the same as the pressures that came on Felix, made those men back away from what would have been a right and responsible decision, a judgment that would have set Jesus free or the apostle Paul free. And so they weighed the legalities against the practical realities.

And so it was one man, Paul, who was part of a small group against the Jews who were by far and away the majority. And so he made a political decision. His decision was, you see, to try to send Paul to Jerusalem. Now, I do not know exactly what his thinking was here. If they went to Jerusalem, what would they be hearing? They would be hearing exactly the same testimony that Paul had given before Lysias in Jerusalem. They would go over the same testimony that was given to Felix. They would go over the same testimony that was given to Festus. And that would be the fourth time that

that they would have gone through this. Now why he felt more progress could be made there, I do not know. But whatever it was, Paul saw right through it, that it was not a wise thing to allow himself into.

Acts 25:10 So Paul said, "I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged."

He told Festus, "Look, you represent Caesar. The charge against me, that you are capable of judging, is whether I have been seditious to Rome. Am I stirring up riots? You decide that, Festus, and I go free." So, as we would say today, Paul stuck it right to him.

Acts 25:10-11 "I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong. [Why do you want me to be sent back to Jerusalem to be judged by a people that I have done nothing against?] For if I am an offender, or have committed anything worthy 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."

So Paul was stating here that, "Look, if I have been seditious, if I have broken Roman law, I am willing to face the punishment." Now if the charges are baseless, why should he, Paul, be a pawn for Festus to appease the Jews? So that left Paul with only one option and that was to use his Roman citizenship to appeal to Caesar.

Acts 25:12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, "You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!"

The reason that Festus conferred with the council is that very likely there was some doubt in his mind as to whether he had jurisdiction to do such a thing and whether an appeal by Paul applied in this case. So apparently the counsel of this council was that yes, it did apply. And so then, Festus had his out. And the out was that he could just get rid of the case by allowing it to go through to Rome. Now, Festus still could have given Paul a verdict of acquittal, even after he appealed. But again, the politics of the situation came into play.

Now just because Paul appealed did not mean that Festus could not acquit him. All Festus had to decide was whether to allow the appeal to go through or to acquit him. If he acquitted him, it was over. If he allowed the appeal to go through, then Paul had to go through with it, see. So he made the decision, I am sure, based on the political situation. Grant Paul his appeal. That way the Jews would be appeased that the man was still on trial and they would make Festus look at least reasonably good that he did not just give him an acquittal. So he was very happy, I am sure, to get rid of the problem. He was probably quite relieved that Paul did that because he was between a rock and a hard place.

Well, we are going to find in the remainder of this chapter and in chapter 26, that Festus got rid of one problem, but now he gained another one. The problem was that if he sent Paul to Rome, he had to send with Paul a charge. You see, what was he guilty of? And he could not just send him there on a whim. Because if he sent him there, and he comes before Claudius and Claudius says, "What are you here for?" Paul shrugs his shoulders and says, "I don't know. I didn't do anything." And so there had to be a charge from Festus stating why Paul was there.

Now the charge had to be a reasonable one because Claudius could come back and say, "This is stupid, Festus. Are you so dumb that you couldn't decide this case and see this man was innocent?" So it would make Festus look bad if there was not a substantial enough charge to send Paul there on.

This is where Agrippa comes into the picture. Because King Agrippa just happened to visit with Festus at just the right time. Or maybe there were letters going back and forth, I do not know. But ostensibly, the visit was made because Festus was new in the area. Agrippa was king of the adjoining area and it was a courtesy call and but it was most propitious as far as Festus was concerned.

Acts 25:13 And after some days, King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to greet Festus.

We need to introduce these two characters here because there is something else too. This is Agrippa the Second and he comes from a long line of Herod's who did not seem to have a very good reputation as kings. This

Agrippa was the son of Agrippa the First. You have read of him before in Acts the 12th chapter. He was the one that the worms ate up. So you might say, a nice family, nice family background. Now when that occurred, that was around 44 AD, Agrippa the Second was only 17 years old. And so the Romans decided that Agrippa the Second was too young to be given a kingship, the same kingship that his father held, and so they waited a while until Agrippa did a little bit of maturing. So six years later, in 50 AD, he was made king of a small area to the northeast of Judea, in a place called Chalcis. In 53 AD, apparently he had done reasonably well, Claudius added a much larger part of that area to him in 48 AD. In 56 AD, by this time, Nero was now emperor and Nero added to Agrippa the Second's area, a large part of the province of Galilee. So now he was ruler of the area that adjoined Felix and Festus. Felix first and then Festus after.

Now, Festus was just new in the area, only been there about a month or so, and so it was natural for Agrippa to pay a visit to Festus since Festus was really somebody of greater authority being a Roman. And over an area, though he was not entitled king, he still had an area that was of greater importance than the area that Agrippa the Second had.

Agrippa was very strongly pro-Roman. However, he was a Jew and he was pretty well schooled in Judaism. Whenever the Jews began to revolt more seriously, especially around 66 AD, Agrippa the Second came down solidly on the side of Rome. He tried in vain to try to get the Jews to stop their rioting because he could foresee that it was going to be useless. There was no way that they were going to win their battle against the might of Rome, but he was unsuccessful and so the war went on. Now after the war though was over, Vespasian, who was now emperor, confirmed him as king of those areas, and he added more area on to Agrippa the Second's lands.

It is interesting that the Talmud says that Agrippa the Second had two wives, but Josephus, who wrote much of the history during that era, makes no mention of him having a wife or of having any children. Whenever Agrippa died, that was the end of the Herodian dynasty.

Now enter Bernice. Bernice is called here, in some cases (I do not know whether they do it in the New King James), but the implication is that she was his wife. See, they are mentioned together as Agrippa and Bernice.

Actually she was his sister, full-blooded sister, one year younger than Agrippa. And when she was a little bit younger than she is when she appears here, she was engaged to a man by the name of Marcus.

If you have ever done any biblical research at all, you will run across Marcus' father being quoted quite frequently. He was the very famous Jewish philosopher named Philo. But she never got married to Marcus. Instead, she married her uncle, also named Agrippa, which is quite interesting, and he died around 48, 49 AD. After he died, she went to live with her brother, Agrippa the Second.

Now the rumors that there was an incestuous affair going on here flourished in both Rome and Jerusalem. In an effort to silence them, she married a king by the name of Palermo. He was king of Cilicia where the apostle Paul was from. However, she could not stand it with him. In 66 AD, she returned and lived with her brother again. Unfortunately, that is just when the war broke out between the Jews and the Romans. And in that period of time, she met and fell in love with Titus. You know who Titus was? He was the son of Vespasian. And Vespasian began the war, but he was recalled to Rome, where he became emperor, and his son Titus became the general then over the Roman armies in the area of Palestine. It was Titus who directed the siege and the destruction of Jerusalem. Well, she became Titus' mistress.

Titus hung around the Middle East there for quite a while. But in 75 AD she went to Rome with him as his mistress. But the affair (they never married) became a public scandal which seems rather strange. I mean, Rome was really loose by this time, but it became a public scandal and so Titus sent her away. Now, in 79 AD, Vespasian died and Titus became emperor so she returned to Rome. But he was obliged to send her away and she returned to the Palestine and she just disappears then from the scene.

Well, you know, you can tell by these backgrounds that I give you that life then was not too much different from the way life is today. I mean, everybody is playing it to the hilt, to get as much as they can in as little time as they can. And who gets hurt in the meantime does not seem to matter a great deal.

At any rate, we have Agrippa and Bernice. And they are visiting Festus, and it just so happens that the apostle Paul is there.

Acts 25:14 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, . . .

A very interesting arrangement here. Though Festus was ruler over Judea and thus also ruler over Jerusalem, I do not know why, but for some reason the Romans made Agrippa the Second—we would call him today a curator—curator of the Temple. And the Temple was Agrippa the Second's responsibility. It was like a little enclave right inside of Jerusalem and he had jurisdiction over that area. It was a jurisdiction that was really greater than Festus'.

It is a strange arrangement. Agrippa the Second had authority to install or remove high priests. He was responsible for the property itself and the maintenance of it and the maintenance of all the priestly vestments as well. And so I guess Festus must have thought, well, this is really a stroke of fortune for me, that here is Agrippa here and we have got a case that involves something that took place at the Temple and Agrippa was looked upon by the Romans as being an expert in Judean affairs, the Jewish religion, and so this was just propitious.

Acts 25:15 . . . about whom the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, when I was in Jerusalem, asking for a judgment against him.

It is interesting that now we are going to get another recounting of this story, only this time we are going to get it from a Roman point of view and Festus is telling how he got involved in this case.

Acts 25:16 To them I answered, 'It is not the custom of the Romans to deliver any man to destruction before the accused meets the accuser face to face, and has opportunity to answer for himself concerning the charge against him.'

Festus refused their demand for death in order to provide a fair trial. Now, what Festus is explaining here is that whatever had happened under Felix, Festus felt that he had to reopen the case in order to satisfy himself that justice was being done because Paul was a Roman citizen.

Acts 25:17 "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.

It is interesting to compare here the way Luke approaches this. He wrote about both Felix and Festus. But he is contrasting Felix's lackadaisical approach to things with Festus' businesslike approach. I mean, Felix just let Paul languish there in jail for two years without doing anything about it. Festus comes there and within about two weeks he has jumped on the case brand new.

Acts 25:18-19 "When the accusers stood up, they brought no accusation against him of such things as I supposed, but had some questions against him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who had died, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

Now, whenever Festus was given this case by the Jews down there in Jerusalem, he must have suspected that Paul was guilty of some very grave crimes. But on hearing the case, he was surprised to find that the charges were theological and therefore, as far as he was concerned, were trivial. He was no theologian. To him, religion was very largely nothing more than a superstition. In fact we find that that is the word that Luke used to describe Festus' approach to this. It was about the Jews' superstition. So Festus could not comprehend the anxiety about these Jews' argument over superstitious things.

Another thing that is interesting here is that from Festus' point of view, the charge of desecrating the Temple is now nowhere in sight. He does not even bring it up because it is of no concern to him. The only thing that he is concerned about is whether there has been sedition. And if there is been sedition, then he has to protect himself against a bad reputation that might be brought up for allowing anarchy to exist.

And it is also interesting that, brought into the subject by Festus is the resurrection of Jesus, that He is alive. Now the Jews, we can see from the case that they had against Jesus, that they had turned a theological argument into a political case, and succeeded. And Jesus was put to death. They were attempting to do the same thing here with Paul, and they were not succeeding. They did not prove the one with Jesus and they were having less success even with Paul.

Acts 25:20-21 "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. [So Festus was humble enough to admit his inadequacy.] But when Paul appealed to be reserved for the decision of Augustus, . . .

I can interject something here. Augustus was long since dead. But the word in the Greek is *sebaste*. That is the equivalent of Augustus in Latin. Now the reason the name Augustus appears here is because that is the word that the Latin used for the word emperor. An august one. That translates into our English word emperor which means one who is elevated above, the one who is lifted above his fellows. So that is why the name Augustus appears here. If they were going to use the real name of the emperor, it would have had to be Claudius because he was emperor then.

Acts 25:21 . . . I commanded him to be kept until I could send him to Caesar."

When Paul refused and appealed to Caesar, what Paul in effect was saying is that I want to be kept in Roman custody. So what he was actually doing was appealing for Roman protection from the Jews until a high court could set him free. So it was a move by Paul that, of course, worked in his favor two ways. It enabled him to have the protection of Rome, and it also enabled him to get to Rome.

Acts 25:22 Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I also would like to hear the man myself tomorrow." Festus said, "You shall hear him."

So Agrippa's curiosity was aroused and instead of giving advice, he says I want to hear this man too. You can see God is just manipulating things here, and Paul was being brought before kings.

Now, what we are going to see here is another repetition of Paul's defense. This is the fifth one that actually appears and it is the third time for this particular one. But Luke apparently feels that it is the most important one. We do not even have his defense before Caesar but we do have this one and Luke apparently felt it was the most important one. It is the longest, it is the best constructed, and it is possible that maybe Luke was even in the audience chamber whenever this thing occurred, and so he was able to get a great deal more of it.

There are three things in here that Luke is going to show. Number one, this is important in the overall sense of the purpose for the book. Evidently part of the purpose of the book is to prove to readers that Christianity was a religion that was accepted in the Roman Empire. So, Luke then shows that Paul's relations with the Roman government did not end in dissonance but with an acknowledgment of his innocence. So we are going to see that they decide that he is innocent. And with Paul being innocent, then Christianity is innocent. In Paul, the whole group was being tried.

The second thing was that Herod, the Jewish king, that his judgment was also innocent. And number three, that Paul's innocence was also demonstrated before other high ranking officers and leading men. It is very likely that almost all of these were Gentiles, Romans.

One more thing before we go into this, and that is, you will recall that Christ appeared to Paul at the beginning of this in order to encourage him, and He reminded Paul that what Paul was going to do is be a witness for Him. Now, that is what he is doing here. It is not just a defense. It is also a preaching of the gospel. Paul was enabled by God to do both of them at the same time.

Acts 25:23 So the next day, when Agrippa and Bernice had come with great pomp, and entered the auditorium with the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at Festus' command Paul was brought in.

What Festus did is he made a state occasion out of this. And so all of the the muckety-mucks were there in all of their royal finery. They had their robes on. And they were probably there by command of both the Roman government and also King Agrippa. So they were really making a big deal out of that. Now it is very likely, if you ever see any movies and ancient Rome is a part of it, there is always a big parade, when the Legionnaires or whatever they call them, they come marching in and the drums are beating and the crowds are roaring and so forth. Apparently the Romans were a great deal like the British. They really know how to put on a party, do it with all kinds of pomp and circumstance and carriages and drums and bands and the whole schmear. And apparently, that is what they did here.

Now, undoubtedly, there was a reason behind this, and that was to assert Roman authority, the officialdom, in contrast to the inferiority of the man who was about to be tried. Because here is going to come this singular individual, and he is chained, manacled, and he is going to be standing before these people in all of their royal regalia. But is it not interesting that the way history has evaluated things, the tables were turned. And the only person of royalty there was the man who was in chains and defending himself. Because he is the one, you might say, who really made a name that has lasted all of these centuries.

Acts 25:24-26 And Festus said, "King Agrippa [he is going to begin the the proceedings this way with an address] and all the men who are here present with us, you see this man about whom the whole assembly of the Jews petitioned me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying out that he is not fit to live any longer. But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself had appealed to Augustus [there is that word again], I decided to send him. I have nothing certain to write [Here is his problem. Remember I told you that when he made that decision to allow Paul to go to Rome, he got rid of one problem, but he picked up another problem.] to my lord concerning him. Therefore I have brought him out before you, . . .

Now he is telling them the purpose of this is to hear what Paul has to say, and then he wants advice from these people as to what he is going to write

the emperor as to the reason why Paul is being sent to him. You know, Festus did not want to be called an incompetent. But he was stuck between a rock and a hard place here. Everywhere he turned, the Jews were on one side, and there was Paul with his appeal to Rome on the other.

Acts 25:26-27 . . . King of Agrippa, so that after the examination has taken place I may have something to write. For it seems to me unreasonable . . .

Is that not an interesting word? He *had* to send a report. It was not reasonable, he had to do it. Otherwise it would be a dereliction of duty if Paul showed up in Rome without any report from Festus, Festus was in hot water.

Acts 25:27 "For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him."

Chapter 26. From here to the end of this chapter, Luke is going to concentrate on what Paul says to Agrippa. Now we have reduced this whole crowd of people down to two. It is Paul and Agrippa. Paul has already spoken to the others. And Agrippa is the main character here to whom Paul was addressing himself so Luke concentrates on him. And the reason that Paul concentrates on Agrippa too, is because Agrippa represents the Jews and as far as Paul is concerned, he has already cleared himself before the Romans. Now he wants to clear himself before the Jews too, and he is going to do that through Agrippa.

Acts 26:1 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for yourself." So Paul stretched out his hand and answered for himself.

So it looks as though Agrippa is kind of acting as chairman of the group. And though Paul was manacled, as we are going to see when we get to the end of the chapter, apparently the chains were loose enough that he was able to swing his arm and make gestures. Now Paul's approach here is to make

his defense autobiographical and his main point in weaving his life through this is to show that the hope of Israel is the reason why he is being held in prison here.

Acts 26:2-3 "I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because today I shall answer for myself before you concerning all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, especially because you are expert in all custom and questions which have to do with the Jews. Therefore I beg you to hear me patiently.

Undoubtedly, waiting for 2 years, Paul was longing for the opportunity to do this. Because the man was a preacher. I do not think he did much preaching for two years. And he was like a bottle that was all corked up and ready to explode. And it is no wonder that he said he was happy to get this opportunity to do something like this.

Now he felt that he had before him, and I do not think that it was flattery, that he had a knowledgeable judge. And in addition to that, he did not have an inherently antagonistic audience. Because most of these people were undoubtedly Gentiles, and they were unfamiliar and did not have any bone to pick with somebody who had strange theological ideas. If the audience had been Jews, that would have been entirely different. He would have had an antagonistic audience. So Paul felt that he was in probably the best kind of situation that he could possibly be in considering the circumstance.

He probably asked for patience because his defense was going to be rather long. Now, this was a man who could talk all night and not have to pause too much to catch his breath. What we have again here is probably just the essence of what he said. And I am sure that he filled in with a great deal more detail, but nonetheless, we have the essence of it and it is very good.

Acts 26:4-5 "My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know. They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

He goes all the way back to his early life in order to establish that his custom of obedience to the God of the Jews was something that was established from the very beginning. And these people knew what kind of life that he lived. So, what he is doing, he is building a foundation. He is saying in effect that he was there before these people, not in spite of his Jewish heritage, but because of it. That he believed and proclaimed what he did. In other words, what he is saying that his Jewishness laid the foundation for what he believed.

Acts 26:6-7 "And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers. To this promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain. For this hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews.

So what he is doing is he is drawing together his Pharisaic background, together with his Christian commitment, and he is arguing here that the Jewish hope and the Christian message are inseparable. What he is proclaiming is what the Jews hope for. And so he is actually saying that it is ironic that he was there before those people for his adherence, his sticking to his commitment to the hope of the fulfillment of God's promise to establish His Kingdom on earth through the Messiah.

Now the specific hope is, of course, the resurrection, which enables us to have salvation. You might recall in Romans 5:9-10, where it says that we are justified by the blood of Christ, that we are saved by His life. If He had not been resurrected, there would be no High Priest to administer the Spirit of God and to be responsible for the church. And so the specific hope is the resurrection.

You see, in the background of all this, we are going to get to it a little bit more plainly, is the resurrection specifically of one person, the resurrection of Christ.

Acts 26:8 "Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?

That was something that was directed to any Jews that were there. Now the Romans, to them the resurrection of the dead would probably be weird to even think about such a thing. That was not a part of their paganism. But now we know that the Pharisees believed in a resurrection. And so if there were any Pharisees there, they would quickly relate to the idea of a resurrection. But why would any Sadducee, even if they did not believe in the resurrection as a theological point, think it incredible that God could not raise the dead?

So he is appealing there, that even if there are any Jews who do not believe in the resurrection, and God created everything that is, and God gave everything life, why could not that God possibly raise people from the dead? Well, certainly that ought to be something that people could at least admit to, even if they did not believe as a theological point, that God was going to do it. I am sure that was something that was also directed right at Agrippa, being a Jew and being familiar with Jewish theological points. And very likely that if he had any religious leanings at all, they were very likely to be Sadducean rather than Pharisaical.

Acts 26:9 "Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

He is harkening back on his Pharisaism. And he is saying here that Pharisee though he was, he once shared these opposing points of view. I mean, the point of view that he is now proclaiming, he was once against. That is, Christianity.

Acts 26:10 "This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them.

What he is saying here is that I was so zealous against this way that I was not passively against them. I attacked. It says that he gave his vote. That can mean two things. In its most general form, it can mean that he gave approval to what was going on. But it also has use as being a confirmation that he was part of the Sanhedrin. He voted as a part of a parliament.

Now, also, he says, I cast and when *they* were put to death, I cast my vote against *them*. The only ones we see put to death are Stephen and James. But the indication here is that there were others beside them.

Acts 26:11 "And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

He used very strong measures to get them to recant. And probably the kind of punishment that he dealt out was the kind of punishment that he himself later received. Remember when he was in those Gentile cities and went to the synagogues and they beat him with stripes five times. I was mentioning this to my wife today that today the church of God disfellowships people. But then, it appears as though the synagogue had authority not only to disfellowship, but to actually beat people, and we know that the Sanhedrin had the authority from Rome to actually put people to death for blasphemy or crimes against religion. Now the church does not have anywhere near that authority today.

It is interesting. Have any of you read in the book of Ezra, toward the end, that he was contending with those people who had married the foreign wives, and it says that he went out and he beat them and he pulled their hair and everything. Kind of interesting.

Acts 26:12-13 "While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday [now comes the decisive moment in Paul's life, see, his conversion], O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun shining around me and those who journeyed with me."

This is the third time that this story is being told, but there are things in this accounting of it that are not in the other two. Even as the last time we went through it, there were some things in there that were not in the other one. Now, part of the reason for that is not that Paul keeps shifting his story, but rather, he keeps adjusting it because of the audience, because of the emphasis of what he wants to put on.

Here we find at least four things that are not included in the other two accounts. Number one is that the light was brighter than the sun. Number two is that it blazed around both Paul and his companions. Number three is in verse 14, and "we had all fallen to the ground." That was not mentioned in the other. And also number four, "I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language," probably Aramaic. Now none of those four things are in the other two.

Acts 26:14 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

Now, in this account, the stress is on the heavenly voice. So from this point on the rest of this account is given over to what Christ said. And so what he is saying in effect here, when he says, "Why are you kicking against the goads?" it seems to indicate that there was a struggle going on in Paul's mind. That he was not sure that what he was doing was the right thing. And so we can say maybe one of two things: Either he was struggling against his conscience or he was beginning to realize that he was on the wrong side. And this was just the final thing.

Acts 26:15-16 "So I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of these things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you.'

To stand up indicates, go to work. Now you will recall that after he stood up before he was blind and he went into the city and the episode with Ananias unfolded. Well, none of that is in this account because he is stressing his conversion. He is stressing what he was told to do because it is the basis for why he was before these people on trial, because he was following a command.

So his calling here is very similar to what we see in the Old Testament with some of the prophets. You can look back in Ezekiel. Ezekiel was called in much the same way. Jeremiah, very similar.

Acts 26:17 'I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, . . .

He was promised a measure of safety until his work was over. You might wonder about that safety considering the number of times that he was beaten up. But each time though, he was delivered. He got up and went on and continued his work.

Acts 26:18 . . . to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'

So, what we see here is something that is very similar to the prophecies that begin in Isaiah 42 and are generally called the Servant Prophecies, and that Paul would be delivered and that those who would respond would receive forgiveness.