

## Chapter 25-26: The Kingdom before a King

Application: Do not be afraid to speak of the Kingdom to Power

Turning the World Right-side Up: Study 19 , Acts 25-26

Acts Studies for Teens by Mike Apodaca, MA



Begin with prayer for wisdom from God and for the presence of the Spirit.

Note: In a Bible Study, as much as possible ask the questions and let the students answer. Where they

cannot, you supply the answer and keep everything flowing.

Introduction: What do we do when the world brings political power against us?

### The Kingdom to Power Chapters 25-26

#### Section 1: Appealing to Caesar Acts 25:1-12

Three days after arriving in the province, Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup>where the chief priests and the Jewish leaders appeared before him and

presented the charges against Paul. <sup>3</sup>They requested Festus, as a favor to them, to have Paul transferred to Jerusalem, for they were preparing an ambush to kill him along the way. <sup>4</sup>Festus answered, "Paul is being held at Caesarea, and I myself am going there soon. <sup>5</sup>Let some of your leaders come with me, and if the man has done anything wrong, they can press charges against him there."

<sup>6</sup>After spending eight or ten days with them, Festus went down to Caesarea. The next day he convened the court and ordered that Paul be brought before him. <sup>7</sup>When Paul came in, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him. They brought many serious charges against him, but they could not prove them.

<sup>8</sup>Then Paul made his defense: "I have done nothing wrong against the Jewish law or against the temple or against Caesar."

<sup>9</sup>Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges?"

<sup>10</sup>Paul answered: "I am now standing before Caesar's court, where I ought to be tried. I have

not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well. <sup>11</sup>If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!”

<sup>12</sup>After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared: “You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!”

It is not uncommon for Christians to die for their faith. Paul could have been killed many times—if it had been God’s will. But God had other plans for Paul, for now.

Here we see the Jews doing the very same things they did against Jesus. They are accusing him of crimes without evidence. They are trying to kill him. Jesus warned that those who walked in Him could expect the same treatment from the world that He got.

The Jews wanted to ambush Paul. At first this doesn’t work out because of logistics (Festus came to Jerusalem and invited them back to Caesarea). But the Jews are persistent. They plead with Festus to send Paul to them. It is Paul who sees through their scheme and appeals to Caesar.

## **Section 2: Acts 25:13-27 Festus and Agrippa**

<sup>13</sup>A few days later King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to pay their respects to Festus. <sup>14</sup>Since they were spending many days there, Festus discussed Paul’s case with the king. He said: “There is a man here whom Felix left as a prisoner. <sup>15</sup>When I went to Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews brought charges against him and asked that he be condemned.

<sup>16</sup>“I told them that it is not the Roman custom to hand over anyone before they have faced their accusers and have had an opportunity to defend themselves against the charges. <sup>17</sup>When they came here with me, I did not delay the case, but convened the court the next day and ordered the man to be brought in. <sup>18</sup>When his accusers got up to speak, they did not charge him with any of the crimes I had expected. <sup>19</sup>Instead, they had some points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a dead man named Jesus who Paul claimed was alive. <sup>20</sup>I was at a loss how to investigate such matters; so I asked if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem and stand trial there

on these charges. <sup>21</sup>But when Paul made his appeal to be held over for the Emperor's decision, I ordered him held until I could send him to Caesar."

<sup>22</sup>Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I would like to hear this man myself."

He replied, "Tomorrow you will hear him."

<sup>23</sup>The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and entered the audience room with the high-ranking military officers and the prominent men of the city. At the command of Festus, Paul was brought in. <sup>24</sup>Festus said: "King Agrippa, and all who are present with us, you see this man! The whole Jewish community has petitioned me about him in Jerusalem and here in Caesarea, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. <sup>25</sup>I found he had done nothing deserving of death, but because he made his appeal to the Emperor I decided to send him to Rome. <sup>26</sup>But I have nothing definite to write to His Majesty about him. Therefore I have brought him before all of you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that as a result of this investigation I may have something to write. <sup>27</sup>For I think it is

unreasonable to send a prisoner on to Rome without specifying the charges against him."

Festus is not just flattering Agrippa. It was not wise to send a bogus court case to Caesar.

Agrippa is intrigued. He is a Jew, so he will be able to explain to Festus the Jewish perspective.

### **Section 3: Acts 26 Paul's Defense**

Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself."

So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense: <sup>2</sup>"King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, <sup>3</sup>and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently.

<sup>4</sup>"The Jewish people all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup>They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that I conformed to the strictest sect of our religion,

living as a Pharisee. <sup>6</sup>And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our ancestors that I am on trial today. <sup>7</sup>This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. King Agrippa, it is because of this hope that these Jews are accusing me. <sup>8</sup>Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?

<sup>9</sup>“I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. <sup>10</sup>And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the Lord’s people in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. <sup>11</sup>Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. I was so obsessed with persecuting them that I even hunted them down in foreign cities.

<sup>12</sup>“On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. <sup>13</sup>About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my

companions.<sup>14</sup>We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’

<sup>15</sup>“Then I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’

“ ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied. <sup>16</sup>‘Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me. <sup>17</sup>I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them <sup>18</sup>to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’

<sup>19</sup>“So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. <sup>20</sup>First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds. <sup>21</sup>That is why some Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. <sup>22</sup>But God has

helped me to this very day; so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen—<sup>23</sup> that the Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles.”

<sup>24</sup>At this point Festus interrupted Paul’s defense. “You are out of your mind, Paul!” he shouted. “Your great learning is driving you insane.”

<sup>25</sup>“I am not insane, most excellent Festus,” Paul replied. “What I am saying is true and reasonable. <sup>26</sup>The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. <sup>27</sup>King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.”

<sup>28</sup>Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?”

<sup>29</sup>Paul replied, “Short time or long—I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me

today may become what I am, except for these chains.”

<sup>30</sup>The king rose, and with him the governor and Bernice and those sitting with them.<sup>31</sup>After they left the room, they began saying to one another, “This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment.”

<sup>32</sup>Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

Paul begins his defense before Agrippa by pointing to his life as a Jew. He was a Pharisee—the strictest of all Jews. The Pharisees were looked up to for their strict adherence to the Law of God. “Pharisees . . . maintain rigid standards of purity and celebrate religious meals together.”<sup>1</sup> Paul was such a strong defender of the faith he tried to stamp out Christianity.

Paul explains that he is on trial for believing that God keeps His promises. He is on trial for the hope of Israel.

Paul goes on to share his experience with Jesus on the Damascus Road. It was only an encounter like this that could possibly explain how Paul could go from being the enemy of Christianity, receiving the praise of all the Jews, to the great advocate of Christianity, and a life of persecution and suffering. Jesus commissions Paul to share the gospel.

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<sup>1</sup> *Paul’s Idea of Community*, by Robert Banks, pg. 18

Paul declares to Agrippa that he was not disobedient to Jesus. But he followed orders and preached in Damascus, Jerusalem, Judea and beyond.

This is the reason the Jews are attacking him. They want to stamp him out the same way they did Jesus.

Paul explains that this is not something new. This is what the Old Testament said would happen. The Scriptures said that:

The Messiah Would Suffer: Isaiah 53, Psalm 22, Genesis 3:15

The Messiah Would be the First to Rise from the Dead: Psalm 16:8-11, Isaiah 53: 8-12

The Messiah would bring a message of light to the Jews and to the Gentiles: Isaiah 9:2, Isaiah 11:10, Isaiah 42:6, Isaiah 49:6-9, Isaiah 51:4

At this point, Festus comes out of his chair. He tells Paul he thinks his great learning has driven him insane. Paul counters with one of the most important Scriptures in Acts. He tells Festus that Agrippa knows of these things because they did not happen in a corner. Consider this. Many religions of the world begin either in a man's mind or in a special spiritual place. But Christianity happened right in the middle of the people, right in the midst of thousands of witnesses. Consider Luke 7. Jesus raises the boy who has died right in front of the people of his town and all His followers. There must have been thousands there. Jesus taught and performed miracles and raised the dead right in front of thousands of eyewitnesses.

Agrippa scoffs at the idea that he might become a Christian. Paul states that he wishes all men would be like him—a believer in Christ, living a new life in Him.

In the end, both men agree that Paul has done nothing against the law, nothing that deserves death. Paul would have been set free had he not appealed to Caesar. Now he must be sent to Rome.

## What have we learned?

Paul had an excellent defense to give to Festus and Agrippa.

Firstly, he had everything that had happened to him personally in Christ. He had gone from being a Pharisee persecuting the church, to a believer who stood up for Christ in the midst of persecution and suffering. How had this change happened? Paul met Jesus. The One Who had been crucified had met him on the Road to Damascus and had told him what he had to do for Him.

Paul also explains that Jesus was not something new. He did not just appear on the scene with a new religion, as many believe. Jesus is the fulfillment of the plan of God to save mankind, a plan that was conceived before the foundation of the earth (1 Peter 1:20).

In Romans, Paul explains what God was doing with Israel (see chapter 3). God called the Jews and gave them His revelation and Law, not so that they could live up to it, or achieve perfection through it. God called the Jews to do the very opposite. The Jews demonstrated that mankind cannot live up to God's Law. Therefore, He provided another way to Him, a way through Jesus. Through faith in Jesus' death mankind can be forgiven for sins. Through the resurrection of Jesus, we are all resurrected in Him. And through Jesus, God fulfills His promise that the Messiah would be a light to the Gentiles.

We need to follow Paul's example, being ready to share our testimonies as to what God has done in our lives and to share what the Scriptures say about God's plan to save the world through the Messiah.

## What the Text Says

### Section 1 Acts 25:1-7

The Jews want to kill Paul. They are thwarted by Festus coming to Jerusalem and then inviting them to Caesarea. When they arrive they have all kinds of accusations to make against Paul, but none of them really hold water. Festus, wanting to establish good relations with the Jews probably would have allowed Paul to be sent to them, but the Apostle appealed to Caesar.

### Section 2 Acts 25:8-27

Festus is meeting the local dignitaries. Since Agrippa is a Jew, he feels he can get some advice as to what to do with Paul. Festus is at his wit's end as to what to write to Caesar to explain Paul's case and why he is being sent to Rome.

### Section 3 Acts 26

Paul gets a chance to explain his position to Festus and Agrippa. He tells them of his life as a Jew. He was a Pharisee and a persecutor of the church. Then he met the resurrected Jesus on the Road to Damascus. This encounter changed his life. He repented of everything he was and became a believer in Jesus and was commissioned to serve Him and to testify to His name. Paul was obedient. He goes on to explain that this is all according to the Scriptures and not against them. They say that God will provide a suffering Messiah that will overcome death and become a light to the Gentiles.

Agrippa and Festus agree that Paul is innocent.

## Connecting to the Scripture

Even when before rulers, Paul does what he always does—he witnesses to what he has experienced in Christ. This is a perfect model for us.

When put into positions where we are called upon to defend our faith (in classrooms, with unbelievers, etc.) we need to stick to what Jesus has done for us.

I was 17 years old. I had been raised a Catholic, but had left the faith as soon as my parents said I could. I lived a life of selfishness and sin. I saw all others as means to my ends. I was building a huge altar to myself. And then I was told the gospel. Jesus had paid for my sins on the cross and that if I believed in Him, I would be saved. I believed.

At this moment, my life changed. When I woke up in the morning, it was as if the world had color for the first time. There was an overwhelming force of love that started inside my heart and flowed to everyone I saw. I experienced true joy for the first time in my life.

From that day to this I have walked with Jesus. He has given me hope and meaning. He has made sense out of life and history. Best of all, I have grown close to God through Him and His Spirit. I know what and for whom I was created for.

Study has brought me to understand that Jesus' death was God's plan from all eternity. The entire Old Testament builds up to it.

When questioned about our faith, we simple need to explain how God has changed us.

## Questions to Ask During the Study

### Section 1 Read Acts 25:1-7

1. Paul is hated by the Jews and they want to kill him. Does Paul have to sit still and let it happen without a word? What does that tell us about our options when we are persecuted today?
2. In what ways can we, as Christians, make enemies today? When we do, how are we to respond?

### Section 2 Read Acts 25:8-27

1. It certainly appears that Festus and Agrippa are in control here—are they? If not, who is really in control?

### Section 3 Read Acts 26

1. How does Paul treat Agrippa? What does this tell us about how we should treat those in earthly positions above us?
2. What does Paul tell Agrippa about first? Why is it important to share our history before we became Christians?
3. Paul shares his encounter with Christ. Share with the group how you became a Christian.
4. Paul tells Festus that Agrippa knows that he is telling the truth about Jesus because these things did not happen in a corner. Why is this important?
5. Paul explains that the salvation that has come through Christ is not something new, but God's plan from the beginning, revealed in the Old Testament. Why is this important?