



THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

The Record of the Beginning of Jesus' Reign

Chapter Twenty-Five

INTRODUCTION

IN THIS CHAPTER we find Paul under attack by the Jerusalem establishment. The Jews in Jerusalem were causing such a commotion that Roman officers had to take Paul into protective custody to rescue him from a Jewish mob. Also, the Sanhedrin was attempting to persuade Festus to turn Paul over to them. Festus, Caesar's new governor in Judea, was willing to indulge the Judeans, but thus far he had not found lawful cause to charge Paul in a Roman court.

Paul's concern was that he did not want to be turned over to the Pharisees in Jerusalem. If he was to be tried he preferred to be tried in a Roman court, under Roman law rather than be subjected to the maniacal Jews in Jerusalem.

As this drama continues to unfold please notice that three distinct law systems are at issue. First, the Roman law system is obviously a factor since Rome ruled in that part of the world. Secondly, Jerusalem's law system is represented by the members of the Sanhedrin who were seeking Paul's life. Thirdly, the question of Bible law (the law of God) eventually became a consideration because at some point in history people began to wrongly assume that first-century Jerusalem and the Sanhedrin were operating according to the Old Covenant. But they weren't!

A working knowledge of God's law is vital if we are to sort out the truth about the Babylonian Jewish system, Paul's predicament, and the state of affairs in Jerusalem in that day. A working knowledge of Bible law will show that the Jewish priesthood (the Sanhedrin) was consistently outside of God's law.

The truth is that neither Rome's system nor Jerusalem's system of that day honored God's law. They were both heathen in nature. The context of this chapter proves this without question. First-century Jerusalem with its Sanhedrin operated under an anti-Christ law system imported from Babylon – it did not come from the Word of God. The law system Yahweh gave to Moses had been abandoned by Jerusalem centuries earlier, before Israel went into captivity. What remained in Jerusalem was a system of mixed teachings comprised of a base of Babylonian politics with a touch of Moses' words sprinkled in here and there to disguise its true nature.

As we begin chapter 25, Paul has been transferred to Caesarea and he fears that he might be sent back to Jerusalem to stand before the Sanhedrin again. He therefore told Festus that as a Roman citizen he preferred to be tried in a Roman court. His appeal, along with the fact that Festus was at odds to know what to do with Paul, convinced Festus it would be best to send Paul to Rome to be tried. That journey will entail yet another adventure in the life of the Apostle Paul – one which we'll study in later chapters.

NOTE: Uncovering Bible truths is exciting and rewarding, plus it builds faith in God's word ... our connection to reality.

Our understanding of the Book of Acts requires that we deal with some church-taught errors and intentional deceptions.

Keep a watchful eye for these, and expect to find some with each chapter.

ACTS 25:1-5 FESTUS REPLACES FELIX AS PROCURATOR OF JUDEA

Therefore when Festus had arrived in the province, after three days he went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea.

Then the chief priests and the high-ranking Jews entreated him against Paul,

And they requested a favor from him to send after Paul to come to Jerusalem; laying in wait along the road to do away with him.

But Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart soon for there.

Therefore, he said, if you have anything against this man let the ones in power among you go down with me and accuse him.

FESTUS arrived at the governor's headquarters in Caesarea, and then went up to Jerusalem. There, the high priests petitioned him turn Paul over to them, saying, "*We need you to send for Paul to bring him to Jerusalem to be examined.*" Meanwhile, they

secretly planned to place assassins along the road to lie in wait for Paul, to ambush and kill him.

But Festus answered and said he preferred to keep Paul in Caesarea for now, and he suggested that the high priests return with him to make their accusations there.

ACTS 25:6-7 FALSE CHARGES AND ANTI-CHRIST LAW SYSTEMS

Then after no more than eight to ten days, he went down to Caesarea; and the next day sat on the judgement seat and commanded Paul to be brought.

And when Paul arrived, the Jews who came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and heavy charges against him, which they could not prove.

FESTUS returned to Caesarea to look into the charges against Paul. In verse seven we see the familiar pattern of hatred against all things Christian ... the Jews were plotting against Paul.

Paul had been taking the gospel to the nations, and as he went he met

bands of Jews (devils) conspiring to destroy him.

False accusation is a typical political/religious strategy. The method is to accuse a man of numerous outrageous crimes, knowing that the public will assume he must be guilty of something,

"otherwise why would there be so many charges against him?" This is the way the media and the courts work even today. They assassinate your character knowing that the public will assume you must be guilty of something to have incurred such wrath. The false accusation ploy is not new. It is an old and well-known technique ... and it works well to manipulate public thinking and get rid of political enemies.

For societies living under God's law, however, the ploy of false accusation is dangerous. It backfires upon the accuser.

In Deuteronomy we read about the law of witnesses:

15. One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sins: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be settled.

16. If a false witness rises up against a man to charge him with an offense;

17. Then both the men who have the dispute shall stand before Yahweh, before the priests and the judges who shall be in those days;

18. And the judges shall inquire carefully: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and has testified falsely against his brother;

19. Then you shall do to him as he plotted to do to his brother: and you shall cut off the evil from among you.

20. And those who remain shall hear, and fear, and shall not commit thereafter any such evil as this among you.

21. And your eye shall not pity; life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

Deuteronomy 19:15-21

Here is yet another proof that the first-century Jerusalem system was non-Biblical. Many people today ignorantly assume that the Jews who made these false charges were living under Old Testament Biblical law at the time. If that had been the case, the members of the Sanhedrin would have been condemned by their own actions. Biblical Law is very strict

concerning false witness.

1. *You shall not raise a false report: put not your hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.*

2. *You shall not follow the many to evil; nor shall you testify in a cause to follow after the many to wrest judgment:*

Exodus 23:1,2

To “wrest” means to distort. God’s law forbids not only giving false reports, being a false witness, or twisting the truth, it also forbids us from having anything to do with any group that uses this ploy. It doesn’t matter if they are the majority. It doesn’t matter if they are a Democracy. And it doesn’t matter if they prayed and fasted over their course of action. If what they’re doing is wrong, we cannot join or condone them. We are supposed to stand for the right, and against the wrong. If the conspiracy is large (like the government) we may not be able to force them to stop. But we can opt to not participate, and not be accomplices.

That’s the law of God! If these Jews had been living under the law of God their false accusations, stated clearly in Acts 25:7 (“*which they could not prove*”), would have been a death sentence back upon them.

Therefore, since they got away scott free with their false accusations, the logical conclusion is that their law system in Jerusalem was NOT GOD’S SYSTEM. In fact, we know that Jerusalem’s law system was a bastard system inherited mostly from Babylon. Jesus called this system “the tradition of the (Babylonian) elders,” and it was later canonized in the Babylonian Talmud.

Jesus told the Scribes and Pharisees of Jerusalem,

6. *Thus have you nullified the commandment of God by your tradition.*

Matt. 15:6

The Roman law system was evil ... but it was not as evil as the Jewish Jerusalem system.

QUESTION: Conspiracies are hard to prove. And yet this account of an alleged conspiracy against Paul relates it as if it were an unquestioned fact that the Jews tried to use Festus to do their bidding, to arrange for Paul to be ambushed on the road. But the assassination never happened, so how can the author of this story state with such certainty that this is what the Jews were trying to do? Isn’t this just another unproven, paranoid conspiracy theory?

ACTS 25:8-12 PAUL’S DEFENSE AND APPEAL TO CAESAR

And Paul answered in defense, “Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar, have I sinned in anything.”

But Festus, willing to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul, and said, “Will you go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?”

Then said Paul, “I stand at Caesar’s judgment seat where I must be judged: I

have done no wrong to the Jews, as you well know.

“For if I have done wrong, or have done anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if none of these things are real whereof they accuse me, then no one may deliver me into their hands. I appeal to Caesar.”

Then Festus, when he had conferred with the Sanhedrin, answered, “You have appealed to Caesar. Therefore to Caesar you will go.”

PAUL said he had done no wrong worthy of death – neither by Jewish law nor Roman law.

In spite of this Festus was “*willing to do the Jews a favor.*” That phrase, “*willing to do the Jews a favor,*” is an all too familiar sentiment in media and politics today. It seems that politicians and newsmen are always willing to do the Jews a favor ... even to the detriment of all others.

Festus asked Paul if he would agree to be tried in Jerusalem. But Paul did not want to find himself back in the courts of Jerusalem ... and no wonder. He chose the lesser of the two evils. Considering the nature of these two choices, neither was good. But, given this choice, we see why Paul chose Caesar’s court rather than being subjected to the serpents in Jerusalem.

ACTS 25:13-27 AGRIPPA ALSO HEARS PAUL

And after some days King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea and greeted Festus.

And while they were there several days, Festus acquainted the king with Paul's cause, saying, "A certain man is left in bonds by Felix:

"About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the high priests and the elders of the Jews entreated me, calling for vengeance against him.

"To whom I answered, It is not the custom of the Romans to release any man before the accused faces his accusers and makes his defense against the charge.

"Therefore, when they came together here, on the following day I made no delay and sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth.

"About whom when the accusers stood up, they brought no cause of wicked things as I expected:

"But they had certain questions for him about their own fear of demons and about one Jesus, who was dead, whom Paul was asserting to be alive.

"But being perplexed about these questions, I asked him if he wanted to go to Jerusalem, and there be judged in these things.

"But when Paul appealed to be held over to be tried by Augustus, I commanded him to be held until I might send him to Caesar."

Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I wish also to hear of this man." "Tomorrow," said he, "you will hear him."

Therefore on the next day, when Agrippa and Bernice had come with much show, and had entered into the hearing chamber together with the military rulers and eminent men of the city, Festus commanded that Paul be led in.

And Festus said, "King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, you see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have besought me in Jerusalem as well as here, crying that he ought not to live any longer.

"But when I perceived that he had done nothing worthy of death, and that he had appealed to Augustus, I determined to send him.

"But concerning him I have nothing certain to write to my lord. Wherefore I have brought him before you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, that after your examination I might learn what I should write.

"For it seems unreasonable to me to send a prisoner and not also to signify the causes laid against him."

HEADQUARTERS for Rome's officers in Judea (also the Herodian kings) was at Caesarea. When Paul arrived in Caesarea, King Agrippa came out and wanted to hear about his case.

Herod Agrippa II was an Edomite Jew, the son of Herod Agrippa I. It appears he was in an incestuous relationship with his sister Berenice.

As king it was protocol for him to salute Festus in his new position as procurator. Festus was happy to lay the problem before Agrippa. He said, "Look, I can't try Paul in Jerusalem since he claims his defense according to Roman law. On the other hand the Sanhedrin is pushing me to do something. I'm between a rock and a hard place here."

Obviously, Festus was unsure about the charges and didn't know how to proceed against Paul. The Jews were so vehement, and had thrown so many accusations at Paul, that Festus felt obligated to do something. The Jews knew (and still know) how to assassinate a man's character. As we said earlier, that's the way the strategy works. By making a big commotion they can create the illusion of substance ... though nothing is really there.

But when Festus heard the accusations he realized they lacked substance under Roman law. The accusations were only about tenets of Judaism (like the fear of demons, and hatred of Jesus).

The King James Bible, in verse 19, uses the word "*superstition*." The

correct wording is “*demon-fearing*” or “*demon worshipping*.” In other words, “demonism.” The Jews had issues against Paul based upon their own religious beliefs based in Babylonian DEMONISM.

Remember, this was the same term Paul used in Acts 17:22, where he accused the Athenians of having a great “fear of demons” (demon worship). Now, Festus suspected the Sanhedrin of being demon-worshippers.

Furthermore, the Sanhedrin wanted Paul killed for believing that Jesus is alive. These were their charges against him. These were not crimes in Roman courts.

Verse 24 says the Jews were “*crying that he ought not to live any longer.*”

Festus tells Agrippa he wants to send Paul to Rome to stand before Caesar, but he doesn’t know what to write down as his charges. The Jewish accusations against Paul were off-point and irrelevant in a Roman court. In Rome it was not a crime for Paul to believe Jesus is alive.

It would have been a mistake for Festus to send a prisoner to trial before Augustus Caesar without sending records listing the charges against him. It would have reflected badly on Festus’ governing ability.

Festus couldn’t find anything specifically wrong with Paul, but he didn’t want to release him for fear of an outcry from the Jews. He feared they would riot in the streets ... which would have also reflected upon his reputation as a governor. And so he wanted King Agrippa to step in and take some of the pressure off him.

The critical point in all of this political maneuvering is that it was obvious - even to Festus - that Paul had committed no crime! And yet the Sanhedrin was up in arms. Two law systems (Jerusalem’s and Rome’s) were in

conflict ... with Paul caught in the middle.

There was also a third law system in this mix. Paul believed and adhered to the law system of God. Neither the Jews nor the Romans believed in God’s laws.

QUESTION: Aren’t you forgetting the following verses?

9. Then he (Jesus) called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases.

Luke 9:1 (KJV)

19. Thou believest that there is one God: thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

James 2:19 (KJV)

Don’t these verses and many others plainly say there ARE devils and demons? How can you ignore this plain teaching of the Word of God? Just because demon-fearing was not against Roman law doesn’t prove that demons didn’t exist!

END OF CHAPTER 25

FOR ANSWERS AND NOTES, SEE ENCLOSED "ANSWER SECTION."

These lessons are produced by ACM, PO BOX 740, GRANGEVILLE, IDAHO 83530.

POINTS TO REMEMBER:

1. Paul had been arrested while Felix was still Roman procurator (governor) of Judea. When Festus took over as the new procurator Paul's case fell to Festus ... who then had to figure out what to do with him. After being held more than two years under Felix, Paul was passed over to Festus.

Paul had made it known that he was a Roman citizen and was therefore protected by Roman law. That meant that Festus could not turn him over to the Jewish Sanhedrin. But Festus was unsure what to do with Paul.

2. Judea was a Roman province and therefore under Caesar's control. Felix had been Caesar's procurator (governor) in Judea. Jerusalem had its own government as well, but it was under Roman jurisdiction – much as the American Colonies operated under British jurisdiction. Jerusalem's high court, the Sanhedrin, along with Agrippa, the king of Judea, were allowed to make some of their own political decisions as long as those decisions did not interfere or countermand Roman law.

3. The Jewish law system in Jerusalem was Babylonian with a hint of Old Covenant flavor thrown in. It was a confused law system established in Jerusalem during, and after, the Babylonian captivity.

It was NOT Biblical law. Churchgoers like to assume it was the Law of Moses, but it was not. It was a system Jesus referred to as *"the tradition of the elders."* It was the product of men. Gods' law, in contrast, was NOT created by men.

4. Paul found himself in a position where he was going to be tried in a foreign system one way or another. He had to choose between a court at Jerusalem or a court at Rome. Both were foreign, but he chose Rome rather than Jerusalem. Roman law was not good, but it was much better

than the maniacal Jewish courts of Jerusalem.

5. After Paul was held for two years in custody, and after Festus had tired of the problem of trying to figure out what to do with him, the decision was made to send him to Rome and let the case be settled in a court of Caesar.

ANSWERS:

pg.3

First, this is the Word of God. We cannot dismiss it by calling it "rumor" or "theory."

Furthermore, conspiracies are not necessarily hard to discern ... unless they are government conspiracies and covered up by government courts. Government courts are for hiding truth, not for revealing it.

Knowing that a conspiracy exists does not mean you can prove it in a government court. This passage describes a conspiracy ... it does not attempt to prove it in a Roman court.

For example, the conspiracy surrounding the 1963 assassination of JFK was successfully hidden by government courts. It was obvious even though it was never admitted by the American court system [which is designed to hide truth, not uncover it].

The Jewish conspiracy against Paul was not difficult to detect by those whose eyes were opened.

pg. 5

I never said that devils and demons don't exist. I said devils and demons are not what the churches claim them to be.

Both "devil" and "demon" are viable Bible words. They have real meanings and are part of the Bible record.

A "devil" ("diabolos" in Greek) is

anyone, or anything, that tries to hurt or destroy you unjustly. "Diabolos" means *"one who thrusts through (as with a sword)."* In other words, a "devil" is one who seeks to harm you.

Thus, there are MANY "devils" – the devils in Jerusalem wanted to hurt Paul. Today, there are great "devils" in Washington D.C., and they are bedeviling ("thrusting through") millions of Americans and others around the world.

Also, the word "demon" has a specific meaning. A "demon" is *"a minor (i.e., lesser) god."* By extension, in the Roman/Jewish world of Paul's day, "demons" (small gods) were thought to be supernatural agents doing the bidding of the big gods. Thus, "demons" were products of superstitious pagan minds looking for something to blame for their misfortunes and diseases.

At the same time, the term "demon" in common use came to be a by-word used to designate any malady, physical or mental. The term was used by the common man without thinking of its origin and its mythical roots.

For example, today people use the terms "lunacy" and "pandemonium" without thinking about their origins and pagan religious roots. "Lunacy" means, literally, *"moon madness."* And "pandemonium" means, literally, *"demons everywhere."*

"Pandemonium" was the name Milton gave to "the capital of Hell" in his *Paradise Lost*. This term that he used to mean *"an abode of demons"* is used in common conversation today to mean a chaotic situation.

By the same token, the term "demon" in Paul's day was used by common people without thought to its literal pagan roots and meaning. Certainly, when this term was used by Jesus, Paul, or any of the disciples, they were NOT verifying that they believed in mythology and demonology.