

Do You Believe The Prophets?

Acts 25-26, KV 26:27

"King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do."

1. Summarize the events of chapter 24.

Paul stood on trial before Governor Felix and the religious leaders. Paul was not afraid. He was bold because he had an eternal hope in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because he had an eternal hope in the resurrection the priority of his actions were not for self-preservation but for the kingdom of God.

After 2 years and a new Roman governor, what can you learn about the religious leader's and the governors motives? (Acts 23:20-21, 24:1,5-8, 25:10) (John 8:39)

"He said: "Some Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul before the Sanhedrin tomorrow on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about him. ²¹ Don't give in to them, because more than forty of them are waiting in ambush for him. They have taken an oath not to eat or drink until they have killed him. They are ready now, waiting for your consent to their request.""

"Five days later the high priest Ananias went down to Caesarea with some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus, and they brought their charges against Paul before the governor."

10 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."

"39 "Abraham is our father," they answered. "If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would[a] do what Abraham did."

Here we can see that actions speak louder than words. What we do is really what we believe and what is actually important to us. Though Rome claimed to have a high regard for law and citizen's rights here we see governors not doing the right thing. Also the religious leaders were not focused on spiritual issues but focused for 2 years on killing Paul. Here we see Paul though was obedient like Abraham who obeyed God and carried out his will.

2. At the trial how did Paul use his rights as a Roman citizen to fulfill God's mission (25:10-12 and 23:11)?

"10 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. 11 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!" 12 After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared: "You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!""

"11 The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.""

Each Roman citizen had a right to appeal a death sentence to Caesar. God used Roman Law to take Paul to be able to testify in Rome.

How does this reveal God's sovereignty (Luke 2:1-4) (Romans 8:28)?

"In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while[a] Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 And everyone went to their own town to register. 4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David."

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who^[a] have been called according to his purpose."

Paul therefore appealed to Caesar not as a desperation act to save his bacon, but because he saw this as God's sovereignty. It was the best way to get to Rome and prepared by God.

3. Who came to visit Governor Festus while Paul was still in prison and what was their position (13-14)?

"13 A few days later King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to pay their respects to Festus. 14 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."

King Herod Agrippa, the son of the previous King Herod who had James the Apostle put to death, and his sister Bernice. Agrippa—through subterfuge had inherited his father's land, his uncles, and his cousins, making him truly the King of the Jews and all the lands of Israel. He grew up in the background of the New Testament—seeing all the political intrigue from the side of King Herod his father and perhaps grandfather. Agrippa was of similar age to

Paul and had witnessed Jesus' life and even Paul's life in Jerusalem. Agrippa was no stranger to Paul's testimony.

What was Governor Festus' conclusion about Paul (25:24-25)?

"24 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. 25 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."

Governor Festus found no charge deserving of death or imprisonment. He concluded that Paul was innocent—but still decided to send him on to the Emperor because of his appeal.

How had Paul lived as a Jew (4-5, 9-11)?

"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. ⁵ 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."

⁹ "I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ 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."

Paul clearly testified that everyone knew how he had lived. Paul thought that he was obedient to God in persecuting followers of Jesus. But Paul explained that he was living in darkness while carrying out these acts.

Why was he now on trial (6-7)?

⁶ And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our ancestors that I am on trial today. ⁷ 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."

Now Paul was on hope because he saw the light of Jesus and the words of the Prophets began to make sense. Paul's life changed drastically from a life of desire to destroy and

murder to a life that has an eternal hope fulfilled in the risen Son of God. Paul saw how Jesus was the fulfillment to the promises God made to his people long ago. This is why Paul is on trial.

What did the risen Jesus say to Paul (14-18)?

"14 We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic,[a] 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' 15 "Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' " 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied. 16 '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. 17 I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them 18 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.'"

2 points - First, that Jesus appointed Paul now as a servant saying, "I am sending you to open their eyes and turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God..." Second, that Jesus is truly alive, "I have appeared to you."

What was Paul's conclusion (19-20)?

"19 "So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. 20 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."

Paul believed the revelation from Jesus. Paul's eyes were opened to God's plan and Paul accepted his mission. Paul used his testimony to show that the leaders were in darkness and disobedient to what was revealed by God. Paul obeyed Jesus' revelation and brought the gospel of Jesus Christ to those in Damascus first then Jerusalem, all the Jews of Asia and then the Gentiles. From then on his conclusion was that he should preach that all should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds—this was opposite of his previous conviction of persecution.

How did Paul now view his life's work and hope (22-23)?

"22 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— 23 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.'"

Based on Paul's testimony we can clearly see that his life's work and hope are based entirely on the scripture. He clearly states that he is saying nothing beyond that the prophets and Moses said would happen. His second life's work and hope is to bring the good news of the gospel of the suffering Messiah who would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles.

What was Governor Festus' reaction to Paul's testimony (24) (1 Corinthians 1:18-19)?

²⁴ At this point Festus interrupted Paul's defense. "You are out of your mind, Paul!" he shouted. "Your great learning is driving you insane.""

"18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate." [a]"

Festus' response was correct - to hear these things and not believe in the scripture did indeed seem strange. Especially since Paul was a learned and educated man. Festus probably thought if Paul would drop all the scripture silliness Paul could have been a great philosopher, politician, or even military commander. But to those who don't believe in the words of scripture—indeed the resurrection is foolishness, but to those who do believe it is the power of God.

4. What was Paul's response (25)?

²⁵ "I am not insane, most excellent Festus," Paul replied. "What I am saying is true and reasonable."

Paul spoke and mentioned calmly that he was not insane. Indeed what Paul was speaking about was not unreasonable to the mind that has been regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

Why (8) (Genesis 1:1)?

"Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?"

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

If we believe that God created the heavens and the earth by his mighty power—why is it so difficult for him to raise the dead? Paul's response that nature testifies to God's creation power—God has the same power over life because he is the creator.

What was Paul's appeal to King Agrippa (26-27)?

²⁶ 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. ²⁷ King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.”

Paul appealed to King Agrippa because none of the events of the New Testament that had happened had escaped his notice. Paul appealed to Agrippa on the basis of the testimony of the prophets and Moses.

Why did Paul ask King Agrippa if he believed the prophets (John 5:44,46-47)?

⁴⁴ How can you believe since you accept glory from one another but do not seek the glory that comes from the only God^[e]? ⁴⁶ If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. ⁴⁷ But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?”

Paul knew that Agrippa was familiar with the gospel story and the happenings in Jerusalem regarding Jesus. Paul also knew that King Agrippa, as King of Judea, knew the scriptures and knew the words of the prophets and Moses regarding the Messiah. Paul was showing him the conclusion of knowing the prophets is faith in Jesus and the resurrection. Paul wanted Agrippa to make a decision—to look beyond the politics—and look to the promise to God's people that was fulfilled in Jesus—not the promise of power backed by Rome.

What was Agrippa's response (28)?

²⁸ Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?"

Agrippa gave a politician's answer and demurred and avoided the question with a comment back. Agrippa should have answered a clear, "yes," or a clear "no." Instead he missed a great opportunity through his non-answer.

What was Paul's counter response and hope for all those who listen to the gospel (29)?

²⁹ 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.”

Paul responded - short or long - his hope was for everyone to cross out of darkness and into the light of Jesus.

What can you learn about Festus' and Agrippa's non-decision (30-32)?

Both Agrippa and Festus commented on Paul's innocence and lack of a crime—yet they refused to set him free or comment about the real reason for his trial—his hope in the resurrection. Here we see a division between darkness and light. If we make the wrong or no-decision we end up living for darkness and evil. There is no “zero” ground or “neutral” ground.