

What was one of the first things Festus did upon ascending to the governor job (vv. 1-2)? He went up to Jerusalem to meet with the Jewish leaders. Jerusalem was the religious capital of his jurisdiction and Festus had probably heard of its volatile nature. Festus was a more moderate and wiser governor than Felix.

What did the Jewish leaders request of Festus (v. 3)? They realized that they did not have much hope of doing away with Paul through the Roman courts. The Jews knew their case was so weak that the only way they could rid themselves of him was by ambush while he was being transferred from Caesarea to Jerusalem.¹

How did Festus respond (vv. 4-5)? But Festus had undoubtedly been informed of their previous plan to kill Paul, and of the precautions taken by the commander in Jerusalem to send him away to Caesarea. He therefore refused their request, but promised them that he would permit them an opportunity to state their case against Paul if they could come to Caesarea.²

What was Festus' next move (v. 6)? After a stay of more than ten days in Jerusalem, Festus returned to Caesarea and convened the court the next day.

When Paul appeared, what happened (v. 7)? The Jews brought many serious charges against Paul, but were unable to prove any of them. Déjà vu all over again!

How did Paul defend himself (v. 8)? In regard to Paul's defense, the serious charges made by the Jews appear to have been the same ones as those that Tertullus had presented (24:5-6). However, the Jews could not prove them, and they produced no witnesses, so all Paul had to do was categorically deny allegations against him. Their case was weak and they knew it.

What did Festus offer Paul (v. 9)? The new governor Festus did not want to do anything that would turn the Jewish authorities against him, especially in view of Felix's bad record. He did not know how to proceed (v. 20), but he wanted to stay in the Jews' good graces by doing them a favor. Therefore he somewhat naively asked Paul if he was willing to move his trial to Jerusalem, the site of some of his alleged crimes. The fact that he asked Paul's permission indicates that Paul was not a common criminal but an unconvicted Roman citizen with rights that the governor had to respect.³

How did Paul respond (vv. 10-11)? For a moment it seemed as if Festus was willing to accede to the request of the Jews that Paul be sent to Jerusalem for trial before the Sanhedrin. However, he would not do this without the prisoner's permission. Paul obviously realized that if he agreed, he would never reach Jerusalem alive. He therefore refused by stating that the court in Caesarea was the proper place for a trial. If he had committed a crime against the Roman Empire, he was not unwilling to die for it. But if he was not guilty of such a sin, then on what legal ground could he be handed over to the Jews? Taking full advantage of his rights as a Roman citizen, the Apostle Paul then uttered the memorable words, "I appeal to Caesar."⁴

What was Festus decision (v. 12)? Paul's appeal got Festus off the hook with the Jews, so after the governor had conferred with his legal advisors, he announced that in view of Paul's appeal, he must go to Caesar.⁵

Who arrived on the scene next (v. 13)? King Agrippa and his sister Bernice evidently visited Festus on this occasion in order to pay their respects to the new governor of their neighboring province and to congratulate Festus on his new appointment.

How did Festus take advantage of their visit (vv. 14-21)? Festus recounted his dealings with Paul's case which had been left to him by Felix apparently asking Agrippa for advice. He confessed his own surprise at the nature of the charges that the Jews had brought against him. They were matters concerning the Jewish religion (18:15; 23:29) and the resurrection of Jesus. Festus frankly confessed he was incapable of handling the case (v. 20). He did not know how to investigate these charges further. In particular he did not understand Paul's insistence on the resurrection of Christ (v. 19).⁶

What was the problem facing Festus (vv. 20-21) In sending his prisoner to Rome, what charge would he make against him? Since Agrippa was a Jew, and therefore knowledgeable about matters involving Judaism, Festus hoped he would get some help in drawing up a suitable charge.⁷

How did Agrippa respond to Festus' story (v. 22)? Paul's case interested Agrippa and he asked to hear Paul speak. Festus readily agreed, hoping that Agrippa would be able to help him understand Paul's situation and provide information that he could use in his report to the emperor.⁸

How did Festus proceed in conducting this hearing (vv. 24-27)? Once again, Festus set forth the history of the case—the insistent demands of the Jews for Paul's death, the inability of Festus to find the apostle guilty of any crime deserving of death, and then Paul's appeal to Caesar.

What was Festus' dilemma (vv. 26-27)? He was forced by Paul's appeal to send him to Caesar, yet there was no adequate *legal basis* for a trial. Festus plainly stated that he hoped Agrippa would be able to help him; after all, it did seem rather unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him. Festus believed that Agrippa, with his knowledge of Jewish customs and laws, could help Festus write out some charges that would be specific enough for Caesar Nero to consider.⁹ These proceedings were more in the nature of a hearing than a trial. The Jews were not present to accuse the apostle, and Agrippa was not expected to render a binding decision.¹⁰

After explaining his need in face-saving language, Festus turned the hearing over to Agrippa.¹¹

¹ Stanley D. Toussaint, "Acts," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 422.

² William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1657

³ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Acts, 2022 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), 471.

⁴ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1658.

⁵ Stanley D. Toussaint, "Acts," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 423.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1658.

⁸ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Acts, 2022 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), 475.

⁹ Stanley D. Toussaint, "Acts," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 423.

¹⁰ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1658

¹¹ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Acts, 2022 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), 476.