



Acts Chapter 24 through 26 Paul Is Innocent!

Last week we sifted through Acts chapter 23 and we found several very interesting things. We talked about why Paul was on trial in the first place, and that Paul was innocent of the charges that the Jews were trying to bring against him. We showed through the scripture that Paul was not preaching against the law of Moses and he was not preaching against circumcision, and we also showed through scripture that Paul always lived in obedience to the law according to James and the elders at Jerusalem in Acts chapter 21 verse 24.

We saw Paul circumcise Timothy in Acts chapter 16 while delivering a judgment from James to the synagogues that was for circumcision... not against it, and we watched Paul purify himself and shave the heads of four other men at the Temple according to the law, and we saw Paul pay for the offerings of those four men at the Temple. We saw Paul running to Jerusalem to keep the commanded feast days of God the Father, and we know that Paul himself was being obedient to the law, and still keeping the 7th day Sabbath of God. And I might add that none of this would have meant anything if the law had been nailed to some tree somewhere, or done away with.

Paul was on trial for things that he did not do. He was being accused of things that simply were not true, and yet Paul found himself standing before Soldiers, Governors, and Emperors giving his testimony as a prophet of the one true God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob.

And so we find Paul in front of the Governor Felix, and he's told that he'll have to wait until the Jews arrive to testify against him before he can have his trial, and so we find Paul waiting for the Jews to arrive so that his trial can proceed. So with that.. lets read Acts chapter 24 and lets see how that trial went:

ACTS CHAPTER 24:

Act 24:1 And after five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a spokesman, one Tertullus. They laid before the governor their case against Paul.

Act 24:2 And when he had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying: "Since through you we enjoy much peace, and since by your foresight, most excellent Felix, reforms are being made for this nation,

Act 24:3 in every way and everywhere we accept this with all gratitude.

Act 24:4 But, to detain you no further, I beg you in your kindness to hear us briefly.

Act 24:5 For we have found this man a plague, one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world and is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.

Act 24:6 He even tried to profane the temple, but we seized him.

Act 24:8 By examining him yourself you will be able to find out from him about everything of which we accuse him."

Act 24:9 The Jews also joined in the charge, affirming that all these things were so.

Act 24:10 And when the governor had nodded to him to speak, Paul replied: "Knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation, I cheerfully make my defense.

Act 24:11 You can verify that it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem,

Act 24:12 and they did not find me disputing with anyone or stirring up a crowd, either in the temple or in the synagogues or in the city.

Act 24:13 Neither can they prove to you what they now bring up against me.

Act 24:14 But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets,

Act 24:15 having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.

Act 24:16 So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward both God and man.

Act 24:17 Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings.

Act 24:18 While I was doing this, they found me purified in the temple, without any crowd or tumult. But some Jews from Asia—

Act 24:19 they ought to be here before you and to make an accusation, should they have anything against me.

Act 24:20 Or else let these men themselves say what wrongdoing they found when I stood before the council,

Act 24:21 other than this one thing that I cried out while standing among them: 'It is with respect to the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you this day.'"

Act 24:22 But Felix, having a rather accurate knowledge of the Way, put them off, saying, "When Lysias the tribune comes down, I will decide your case."

Act 24:23 Then he gave orders to the centurion that he should be kept in custody but have some liberty, and that none of his friends should be prevented from attending to his needs.

Act 24:24 After some days Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, and he sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus.

Act 24:25 And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, "Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you."

Act 24:26 At the same time he hoped that money would be given him by Paul. So he sent for him often and conversed with him.

Act 24:27 When two years had elapsed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. And desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison.

Once again it's important to understand the underpinnings of Judaism so that we can clearly understand what's going on here. Judaism was broken and divided, and was being held together by the laws and traditions of men rather than adhering too.. and keeping, and obeying the law of God according to the Torah.

It's important to understand that the High Priest was now being appointed by the Roman government, and instead of their being only one "High Priest" in the blood line of Aaron... there were multiple "High Priests" walking around. And just like a United States President is always called "President" for life... so too it was with these so called "High Priests". Once you were a "High Priest" you were always called a "High Priest" no matter whether you were the current sitting High Priest or not.

On top of these multiple "High Priests" there were all of these "Pharisees" which had pretty much taken over the God ordained office of the Levies, and so this "ad-hock" band of "want to be's" had become what was known as the leadership of Judaism. These so called "High Priests" ran the Temple, and the Pharisees ran the Synagogues, and there was a great divide between what these two factions of Jews believed. On top of this you had groups like the Essens, and the Samaritans and all kinds of Jewish denominational sects were popping up.. all claiming to have the truth... and just like Christianity today... hardly any of what they believed in.. could be found in the scriptures that they said they believed in. The traditions, and rituals, and myths of men had supper-seeded the Word of God, and just as our Messiah had said... they had made void the Word of God in order to hold onto their own traditions.

It always amazes me how little things have changed even to this very day. So here stands poor Paul standing on trial in front of this Roman Governor while being charged by these wolves in sheep's clothing that had just plotted to attack the Roman soldiers and to kidnap Paul so that they could murder him just 5 days ago.

And so it seems as though Paul is fighting a loosing battle. But never the less... Paul continues to force these so called "High Priests" to prove their allegations against him... and of course... they can't... so Felix simply continues to keep Paul in prison where at least he'll be safe, and this goes on for another two years before Felix is finally succeeded by Festus, and we're told in Acts chapter 24 verse 27 that Felix wanted to do the Jews a favor.. so he left Paul in prison.

And so now Festus enters the picture and I want us to think about this for just a moment. First Paul is arrested by the Roman Tribune, who can't seem to understand what law Paul has broken to make these Jews so angry with him. So he takes him to Felix the Governor who after two years... still has no real idea what Paul has done to break the law, and now Felix hands him over to Festus who we'll soon see still... can not get to the bottom of what law Paul has broken.

Now.. before we move forward it's important that we try to understand the hatred that the Sadducee's have for Paul, and why they want to kill him. It's important to remember that back in the beginning of Acts we found Paul rounding up the new believers of Yahshua Jesus, and hauling them into prison. Remember... it was Paul who was standing there holding the coats of those who had stoned Stephen to death!

Paul himself although a Pharisee... had gotten the authority to round up these Christians from the High Priest and the Sadducee's who made up this Sanhedrin.. and instead of rounding up these Christians and bringing them back to stand trial.. Paul himself becomes a believer, and a follower of the "The Way".

So it seems clear that at one time Paul was either a junior member of the Sanhedrin himself.. or was at least in the employ of the Sanhedrin in some official capacity. So you can imagine the humility and shame that he brought upon them when he himself became a believer. The fact that none of the Roman authority's could figure out what Paul had done to make these Sadducee's so angry as to want to murder him, should tell us something about the evil that drove these Jews to the point of even committing murder. Suggesting that these Sadducee's were spiritually blind... would be an understatement.

This Spiritual blindness is written about in several places throughout the scriptures. Listen to what Paul tells us in Romans chapter 11 verses 7 through 11:

Rom 11:7 What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened,

Rom 11:8 as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day."

Rom 11:9 And David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them;

Rom 11:10 let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs forever."

Rom 11:11 So I ask, did they stumble in order that they might fall? By no means! Rather through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous.

You see Paul understood why the Sadducee's could not see or understand the Gospel message that he came to deliver. Here's how Paul explains it in Romans Chapter 11 verses 28 through 32:

Rom 11:28 As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers.

Rom 11:29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

Rom 11:30 For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience,

Rom 11:31 so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they

also may now receive mercy.

Rom 11:32 For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all.

So it's important that we understand where this “Spiritual Blindness” of the Sadducee's comes from.. it comes from directly from the one true God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob, and just as Paul tells us.. they are enemies for our sake, but as regards election they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers, and just as we Gentiles were once disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of the disobedience of the Jews... the Jews are now being disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to us.. they also may now receive mercy. You see God the Father has consigned us all to disobedience... so that he may have mercy on us all. And once again... this mercy that God has shown to us is what grafts us all into the same vine.. the same body, the same Olive Tree and the same House of Israel.

Gal 3:27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Gal 3:29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

It always amazes me how many biblical scholars, commentators, early church fathers, and denominational charters of men... fail to understand these things... simply because they have chosen to follow after men instead of reading their bibles for themselves and asking for the discernment that can only come from the Ruach Hakodesh of God.

So lets read chapter 25 and lets see if Festus can get to the bottom of what law Paul has broken:

Acts Chapter 25:

Act 25:1 Now three days after Festus had arrived in the province, he went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea.

Act 25:2 And the chief priests and the principal men of the Jews laid out their case against Paul, and they urged him,

Act 25:3 asking as a favor against Paul that he summon him to Jerusalem—because they were planning an ambush to kill him on the way.

Act 25:4 Festus replied that Paul was being kept at Caesarea and that he himself intended to go there shortly.

Act 25:5 "So," said he, "let the men of authority among you go down with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, let them bring charges against him."

Act 25:6 After he stayed among them not more than eight or ten days, he went down to Caesarea. And the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought.

Act 25:7 When he had arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him that they could not prove.

Act 25:8 Paul argued in his defense, "Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I committed any offense."

Act 25:9 But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, "Do you wish to go up to Jerusalem and there be tried on these charges before me?"

Act 25:10 But Paul said, "I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you yourself know very well.

Act 25:11 If then I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death. But if there is nothing to their charges against me, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar."

Act 25:12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with his council, answered, "To Caesar you have appealed; to Caesar you shall go."

Act 25:13 Now when some days had passed, Agrippa the king and Bernice arrived at Caesarea and greeted Festus.

Act 25:14 And as they stayed there many days, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying, "There is a man left prisoner by Felix,

Act 25:15 and when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews laid out their case against him, asking for a sentence of condemnation against him.

Act 25:16 I answered them that it was not the custom of the Romans to give up anyone before the accused met the accusers face to face and had opportunity to make his defense concerning the charge laid against him.

Act 25:17 So when they came together here, I made no delay, but on the next day took my seat on the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought.

Act 25:18 When the accusers stood up, they brought no charge in his case of such evils as I supposed.

Act 25:19 Rather they had certain points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who was dead, but whom Paul asserted to be alive.

Act 25:20 Being at a loss how to investigate these questions, I asked whether he wanted to go to Jerusalem and be tried there regarding them.

Act 25:21 But when Paul had appealed to be kept in custody for the decision of the emperor, I ordered him to be held until I could send him to Caesar."

Act 25:22 Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I would like to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," said he, "you will hear him."

Act 25:23 So on the next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp, and they entered the audience hall with the military tribunes and the prominent men of the city. Then, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in.

Act 25:24 And Festus said, "King Agrippa and all who are present with us, you see this man about whom the whole Jewish people petitioned me, both in Jerusalem and here, shouting that he ought not to live any longer.

Act 25:25 But I found that he had done nothing deserving death. And as he himself appealed to the emperor, I decided to go ahead and send him.

Act 25:26 But I have nothing definite to write to my lord about him. Therefore I have brought him before you all, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that, after we have examined

him, I may have something to write.

Act 25:27 For it seems to me unreasonable, in sending a prisoner, not to indicate the charges against him."

As we read the first few verses of Chapter 25 it's clear that even though Paul had been in prison for the last two years.. this still was not enough punishment as far as the Sadducee's were concerned.. and once again just as they had done in Jerusalem.. we see in verse 3 that they were again plotting to ambush Paul so that they could kill him. Surly the Sadducee's thought this new Governor Festus would fall for their evil trickery.. but Festus was a little wiser than they had given him credit for.. and Festus tells them to come with him to Caesarea where he would meet with Paul and they could bring their charges along with them. Once again... the evil plot to ambush Paul and murder him had been foiled.

Once again we find Festus puts Paul on trial in front of these Sadducee's and once again they have no proof or evidence that Paul had broken any laws so Festus asks Paul if he wanted to go to Jerusalem to be tried but Paul knew that he'd never make to Jerusalem alive and being a Roman Citizen he had every right to appeal to Teaser himself and so this is what Paul does.

At this point it's out of Festus hands. Paul being a Roman Citizen had every right to be tried in front of Ceasar and so Festus agrees to Paul's plea. Now before we move forward I want us to understand what we're seeing in verses 7 and 8:

Act 25:7 When he had arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him that they could not prove.

Act 25:8 Paul argued in his defense, "Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I committed any offense."

Notice that we're told in verse 7 that the Jews were charging Paul with charges that they could not prove. And again in verse 8 once again we see Paul proclaiming that he had not broken the law of the Jews, or the Temple, or of Ceasar, so it's should be more than clear... that Paul was indeed innocent of breaking any laws of either God or man... and yet.. these Jews were were so hungry for blood... that all they wanted was to murder him.

Once again it's important to remember what our Messiah called these very same Jews in Matthew chapter 23. He called them a brood of vipers, whitewashed tombs full of dead mens bones, blind guides, and he even called them two fold children of hell. And in Matthew 23:33 he said and I quote *"You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?"*.

Now.. another thing that we need to know... is that the current Emperor of Rome at that time was Nero who hated all Christians with a passion, and this is who Paul was going to soon stand

before. Festus knowing this... knows that he had better have something more to put in his report about Paul before sending him to Nero.

So when we see King Agrippa come into the picture, and he hears about Paul... Festus is glad that he wants to know more about him. So Festus calls Paul before King Agrippa so that he has something more to report to Nero. At the moment Festus really doesn't have much to say about Paul, after all he hasn't really broken any laws, and he's already been in prison for the past two years, so Festus needs something more to put in his report before he sends Paul to stand before Nero... and so Festus welcomes King Agrippa input on the situation, hoping that he'll have something more to put in his report. And this brings us to chapter 26... so lets read chapter 26 to see what King Agrippa has to say about Paul:

Acts Chapter 26:

Act 26:1 So Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense:

Act 26:2 "I consider myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I am going to make my defense today against all the accusations of the Jews,

Act 26:3 especially because you are familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews. Therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently.

Act 26:4 "My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews.

Act 26:5 They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee.

Act 26:6 And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers,

Act 26:7 to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king!

Act 26:8 Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?

Act 26:9 "I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

Act 26:10 And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them.

Act 26:11 And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

Act 26:12 "In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests.

Act 26:13 At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me.

Act 26:14 And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the

Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

Act 26:15 And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.'

Act 26:16 But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you,

Act 26:17 delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you
Act 26:18 to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

Act 26:19 "Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,
Act 26:20 but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.

Act 26:21 For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me.

Act 26:22 To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass:

Act 26:23 that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles."

Act 26:24 And as he was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind."

Act 26:25 But Paul said, "I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words.

Act 26:26 For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner.

Act 26:27 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe."

Act 26:28 And Agrippa said to Paul, "In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?"

Act 26:29 And Paul said, "Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am—except for these chains."

Act 26:30 Then the king rose, and the governor and Bernice and those who were sitting with them.

Act 26:31 And when they had withdrawn, they said to one another, "This man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment."

Act 26:32 And Agrippa said to Festus, "This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

As we see Paul begin to defend himself he tells King Agrippa that he is defending himself

against the accusations of the Jews. Paul tells King Agrippa that the reason that he's standing before him is because of the promise made by God to their fathers. What promise is he talking about? He's talking about the promise made in 2nd Samuel verses 12 through 17:

2Sa 7:12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.

2Sa 7:13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

2Sa 7:14 I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men,

2Sa 7:15 but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you.

2Sa 7:16 And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever."

2Sa 7:17 In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.

God told David that it would be from his offspring... and from his body... that he would bring forth the Messiah who would also be known as a son to God, and that it would be his kingdom that would be made forever, and his throne that would be established forever. This was the very promise that Paul was talking about... and it was the very fulfillment of this promise that Paul was on trial for.. but even Festus thought that this was insane, and that Paul had lost his mind.

King Agrippa on the other hand was well aware of the writings of the prophets and was well aware of this promise.. and yet even he is not sure what to make of Paul's proclamation about this Yahshua Jesus. One thing that King Agrippa knows for sure is that Paul could have been released from prison if he would have simply not appealed to Caesar.

Moving into Chapter 27 next week we'll see an unusual journey to Rome as Paul and the Roman soldiers guarding him become shipwrecked, and the story begins to take another turn.

