



Acts

Lesson 23, Chapter 24 and 25

For over 400 years the Roman Empire governed all the lands around the Mediterranean Sea and most of Europe. In studying the New Testament, especially the Gospels and Acts, it is evident the significant influence that the Romans had on Christianity. Though the Romans allowed the Jews to run their own religious affairs, they were in total control of all judicial and political matters. The Romans enforced all civil and economic laws which the Jews were sometimes held to tighter than the Romans themselves.

In chapter 23, Paul, a Roman citizen himself, has been arrested and is being held in Caesarea to await trial before Governor Felix. Having been accosted by the Jews in Jerusalem, the Romans had interceded and rescued him from sure death by their hands. Claudius Lysias, the commander in Jerusalem, after receiving information concerning a plot on Paul's life, sent him to Felix with a letter of explanation turning Paul's case over to him. Paul now awaits the arrival of his accusers from Jerusalem to present his case.

In chapter 24, five days after Paul's arrival in Caesarea, the chief priest Ananias, several of his elders, and Tertullus their lawyer appear before Felix to present their case against Paul. Tertullus initiates his presentation with several lines of false flattery for Felix, hoping, no doubt, to win him over through his pride. He then explains the grievances against Paul which have now been exaggerated beyond the original accusations to appear more serious to the Romans.

Paul's defense consists of stating that he was doing nothing in Jerusalem in the way of

misguiding the people or anything that could be considered a "seditious act." He stated that the people who really opposed him in Jerusalem were Jews from Asia, and those people weren't even now in the courtroom to accuse him as they should be. In fact, his accusers had brought no witnesses of the actual event to testify against him. In response, Felix decides to wait for the commander, Lysias, to come and give his testimony about the events before he makes his judgment. Unfortunately, two years later the matter had not been finalized, and Paul was still in jail.

In chapter 25, two years later, Paul's case is about to be tried before Governor Festus who has replaced Felix. The Jews first request is that Paul be taken back to Jerusalem to be tried in their court. Festus refuses, and once again they present their case against Paul. In response Festus gives Paul the option of going back to Jerusalem to have his case tried. Knowing the evil intent of his accusers, Paul appeals to Caesar, which is his right as a Roman citizen. He knows he will receive a more fair trial before the pagans than he would the religious leaders of his own people.

Not long after this King Agrippa and his sister Bernice arrived in Caesarea to visit Festus. While they were there, Festus told them of Paul's case and all that had taken place up to that point. This stirred Agrippa's curiosity. He requested to hear Paul, and arrangements were made for Paul to appear before him the next day.

Prayer requests:

Group time notes:
