

## **Dr. Craig Keener, Acts, Lecture 22, Acts 23-26**

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This is Dr. Craig Keener in his teaching on the book of Acts. This is session 22, Acts chapters 23 through 26.

In chapter 22, verse 30 through chapter 23 in verse 10, we read about the Sanhedrin hearing.

Now the Chiliarch, the tribune, Claudius Lysias, calls the Sanhedrin to meet about Paul. That doesn't mean that they wouldn't be meeting anyway. Sanhedrin members probably met regularly, but what the tribune is asking for is an assessment.

He needs their official expertise before he can send Paul on to the governor. The crowd's cries have been confused, and so now he's going to get the official view, which he expects will not be confused. Unfortunately, he proves to be wrong.

Ananias was the high priest from the year 47 to somewhere around 58 or 59. So he's still the high priest at this point, as Acts mentions, but he was abusive. We read in Josephus all sorts of bad things about this high priesthood.

And again, the Talmud speaks of some of the high priests using clubs to beat people and so on. He was not well-liked by the revolutionaries, so much so that he was among the first assassinated by them. So, when Paul says, God will strike you, you whitewashed wall, that was carried out by the revolutionaries.

He orders a blow to Paul's cheek, which is a severe insult. Normally not meant to knock a person's teeth out. Normally the blow to the cheek was meant to be an insult.

In fact, it was a punishable offense under the law. You could be fined for that. And many ancient legal collections, this was placed alongside the lex talionis, eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth.

If somebody strikes you on the cheek, here's how much they have to pay as a fine. He wasn't supposed to do that. That was obviously a violation of legal ethics to order somebody to be struck just as it was in John 18 when Jesus is struck.

Jesus answered and Paul answered too. Paul answers, you whitewashed wall, alluding to Ezekiel 13 verses 10 through 15, where corruption was concealed or covered up by whitewash. Now people respond, how dare you address God's high

priest that way? To which Paul responds, oh, my brothers, I didn't realize that he was a high priest.

A big debate among scholars is whether Paul really didn't recognize him as high priest or whether Paul is speaking sarcastically or ironically. Well, some people say that Paul was nearsighted, which I am, and that that was why Paul said he didn't recognize he was a high priest because the high priest would have been wearing his official regalia. That is not a very good argument.

They say, well, Paul said, I was sick when I was with you in Galatia, Galatians 4.13. That's true. But he also says there that you would have, I testify, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me. And so, people say there must have been something wrong with Paul's eyes.

Unfortunately for that argument, that was a familiar figure of speech. It appears elsewhere in ancient literature as just a way for a person to show affection or be willing to sacrifice deeply for another person. It doesn't mean there was something wrong with Paul's eyes per se.

And in fact, the argument wouldn't be necessary anyway, because the high priest would not be wearing his regalia. That was for his priestly duties. That was not for chairing the Sanhedrin.

Now the high priest would not be the high priest that Paul knew, but because of his official role in the meeting, probably because of his seating, I suspect that Paul probably did recognize that this was the highest priest. And therefore, I suspect that Paul was probably being ironic, being sarcastic. But in any case, Paul does answer according to the law.

It was really hypocritical of them to say, how dare you answer God's high priest this way when the high priest was not acting according to the law and having him struck. But Paul is quoting the law or he's quoting scripture when he says, you whitewashed wall. Paul is speaking as somebody who upholds the law as opposed to the high priest.

And Paul quotes scripture when he says, I'm sorry, maybe speaking ironically, but I didn't realize that he was the high priest. Again, there are different views on that. But Paul quotes scripture for the scripture says, don't speak evil of a ruler of your people.

The high priests were... the Roman governor would appoint high priests at will and depose high priests at will. Or in this period, Agrippa could do that. Agrippa II, the son of Agrippa I who died in Acts chapter 12.

So, Paul quotes scripture by not recognizing the current high priest, perhaps deliberately not recognizing him. He may also be appealing to some conservative Jewish sensitivities as well, because the high priest could, you know, was not exactly a puppet of Rome, but had to work within certain boundaries. Paul is advancing his ethos.

I mentioned earlier pathos appealing to emotion. Ethos was an appeal to character, very frequent, very important in rhetoric. You find it all over the place in ancient speeches.

Somebody is making an argument about their character. I'm not the kind of person who would have done that bad thing. Or I am the kind of person who would have done this good thing.

Well, Paul is establishing his ethos, his character by showing that he's a man of scripture. He can quote scripture. He cares about justice.

So far though, he's not gaining any ground in trying to show his identification with his Jewish culture. The fact that he was raised that way or whatever. So finally, in verse six, he says, brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of Pharisees.

And the reason that I'm on trial is for the resurrection of the dead, which was a Pharisaic distinctive as opposed to the Sadducees. Paul did hold distinctive beliefs of the Pharisees. He also held more than the distinctive beliefs of the Pharisees.

He believed that not only was there going to be a resurrection of the dead but that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Son of Pharisees could mean he was a disciple of the Pharisaic movement, but it could mean that his entire family had migrated to Jerusalem and that his father was a Pharisee as well as Paul being a Pharisee. In any case, the Pharisees were the minority in the Sanhedrin and they were probably very sensitive to being discriminated against at this point.

Remember, it was Gamaliel who defended Peter and the other apostles earlier here. It is the Pharisees who also defend Paul. They defend his revelation.

They said, well, what do we know? Maybe an angel or a spirit did speak to him. Now, what do they mean by that? You may remember our comment from Acts chapter 12, that sometimes Jewish people believed that after a person's deceased, they became an angel. Certainly, they became at least a spirit.

So, the Pharisees don't have to agree with him that Jesus has already been raised from the dead, but here's somebody who does believe in the resurrection. We know from Acts 15.5 that there were some Pharisees who were believers. We know that

the movement is very respectable among the Pharisees at this point because they keep the Torah.

They observe even apparently many of the traditions of the Pharisees. Nobody's rocking the boat much. This generation of the Pharisees seems to be more open and they can say, well, maybe Jesus didn't rise from the dead, but maybe he's a spirit or an angel.

Maybe he did speak to Paul because, in Acts chapter 22, they may have gotten the report already, maybe some of them had been there, that in Acts 22, Paul was saying Jesus appeared to him and Jesus spoke to him. Well, a conflict erupts within Sanhedrin. The Pharisees are pulling on one side, the Sadducees are pulling on the other side.

And that was actually a nasty way of killing people back then where you could rip them apart, but also you have it in some other documents where people who liked the person and didn't like the person or two people who liked the person were each pulling in different directions. In this case, the tribune, he's been able to hear what was spoken. So, he's a witness.

He hadn't brought the troops into the council chamber, which according to a rabbinic tradition later on was the chamber of Hume Stone on the Temple Mount or very close to the Temple Mount. Josephus seems to put it in any case, very close by. And so, we think we know where it is, which will be of interest soon.

But in any case, his troops are outside, but he's there at the top of the chamber. He's able to hear what the people are saying. He's able to witness how the high priest ordered Paul to be struck.

He's able to hear the conversation presumably going on in Greek. Probably Paul started by speaking in Greek and probably the Sadducees, often spoke Greek. It's on many of their tomb inscriptions.

So, in any case, Claudius Lysias has been able to follow some of this and to see that this is an internal religious issue. Paul was really smart because he knew what would stand up in the Roman court of law. He's had experience with this.

So, he makes sure that what the charge that comes out of the Sanhedrin hearing will be is a religious issue. He may not have been counted. He may not have counted on being pulled apart by the Pharisees and the Sadducees, however.

At this point, Lysias intervenes, and sends troops in to pull Paul out again. So later on, when he says that he rescued Paul deliberately, well, at least there'll be some truth in that, even though that wasn't the case the first time that he rescued him. Could

the Sanhedrin have acted like this? Well, we have fights like this in the Senate floor in Rome.

We have Josephus talking about the Sanhedrin going so far as members are throwing stones at each other. I don't know if they brought them with them or how they got them. They probably weren't pulling them out of the walls.

But in any case, conflict in the Sanhedrin wasn't on this occasion only. So, Claudius Lysias has to consider, what am I going to do now? And in the midst of this happening, there's a plot to kill Paul, verses 12 through 15. Paul is not one of the assassins as had been thought in 21:38, but some other people want to assassinate Paul.

And they swear an oath not to eat or drink until they've killed Paul. Now, sometimes people wonder what would have happened to them since they ultimately didn't succeed in killing Paul. Sorry if I'm hurting the suspense.

But well, what would have happened to them? They could have starved to death, or died of dehydration, but most likely they didn't. Back then you could get a rabbi or a person schooled in the law to release you from your oath under certain circumstances. So, they presumably would have survived at least for a while longer, although if they continued in these ways, they would have undoubtedly been among the revolutionaries and would have been dead within a decade.

But in any case, these were young men. And remember, youth was often associated with zeal, with passion of different sorts. They would be physically able to strike.

And it was also associated with nationalistic zeal. Josephus speaks of especially the younger people wanting to be involved in the fighting. And that some young priestly aristocrats sympathized with the revolutionaries.

That's why they say that their plan is to contact some people in the Sanhedrin and get the Sanhedrin to ask for Paul to be brought again. And then they'll assassinate Paul on the way. It doesn't mean everybody in the Sanhedrin would have been complicit with this, but they would have had sympathizers in the Sanhedrin who would have been.

And that's a concern later on in chapter 25 when Paul is to be brought to Jerusalem. Well, how do they know about the plot at that time? Luke can probably assume it based on what was known earlier. There's a leak.

And as I think I've mentioned before, leaks happened all the time, including from the Sanhedrin. Josephus reports one in his own case where some people were sent to kill

him or bring him back as a prisoner. So, Paul's nephew is also a youth and people may not know that he's Paul's nephew.

In any case, somebody tells somebody and Paul's nephew, who may have friends in a circle where it's heard about, comes to warn him. Well, how is he going to get into the Fortress Antonia? Oh, let me say something before that about how this plot would have worked. From the Fortress Antonia where Paul was kept to the probable site of the Sanhedrin is only about 1,000 to 1,500 feet or 300 to 450 meters.

And the route there is a fairly narrow route on the one side of the temple. So, that means Romans can't depend on their numbers. If there's a lightning-swift attack at the center of their column where Paul is, they can kill Paul quickly.

And if some of them get killed in the process, well, that was part of their plan anyway. They were willing to do that. It's a potential suicide attack.

They believe that they would be martyrs in these circumstances. So, some 40 of them, they're not going to outnumber the soldiers, but they're going to outnumber the soldiers at a particular place in this column walking along this narrow route. Meanwhile, they can just act like they're just standing around in the temple area like lots and lots of other people are doing.

So, how is it that Paul doesn't get assassinated and the soldiers around him don't get assassinated? Well, his nephew hears about this and makes his way to the Fortress Antonia probably in the late afternoon, or early evening. Guards could allow visitors. Often, they charged bribes to allow that.

That's why Felix later on has to give orders to the centurion in charge of Paul to let his friends visit him and minister to him. It also saves the state money. But in any case, that wouldn't be something Felix would worry about.

But that's going to be because he knows Paul is innocent. But bribes were very standard practice for guards. But Paul is a Roman citizen, so he's already getting special treatment.

One of the issues of special treatment, he's got a centurion as one of the guards. Normally, you'd only get a centurion as a guard if you were fairly high up. I mean, that's what happened to a group of the first.

When he was under guard, he was under guard with a centurion. It shows Paul's relatively high status. Well, Lysias, here's the story from Paul's nephew.

Paul tells the nephew not to tell anybody except Flavius Lysias. He knows enough to trust Lysias at this point or as best as he can. There's no real choice.

Because if word gets around that the nephew has told this and word ever gets back to the assassins, your nephew is still in Jerusalem. So, he goes and just tells the Chiliarch, the tribune, Claudius Lysias. As he comes, Claudius Lysias takes him by the hand, which is a familiar way of showing that he should not be afraid or welcoming a person.

And he discovers what's going on. Well, he can't really refuse the Sanhedrin's request. If Sanhedrin asks for Paul to come, if he says, no, I'm not going to send Paul to you, it's an insult to the Sanhedrin.

If he says, I'm not going to send Paul to you because I heard about this plot, that's going to get people in trouble. So, he doesn't refuse the Sanhedrin's request. He preempts it.

He sends Paul directly to the governor, Felix. And he sends a letter with him that explains the circumstances. It doesn't explain all the circumstances.

There was a plot formed against him, but he doesn't implicate the Sanhedrin because once this letter is sent, it becomes part of the public record. And it would be very uncomfortable to be a tribune in Jerusalem commanding a cohort and you've got the whole Sanhedrin as your enemies now. So, he doesn't make it look like he's refusing the request.

He doesn't make it look like he's accusing them of anything. He just sends Paul out unexpectedly. He sends a large part of his cohort, some cohorts, the largest cohorts.

And this was a period of transition. We don't know exactly when this became the standardized size cohort, but some cohorts had 600 troops. It had earlier been 480 troops.

Some cohorts had 480 infantry plus 120 cavalry. Lysias sends both cavalry and infantry, and he sends apparently a large part of his cohort. Now this is right after the Pentecost festival and the cohort in Jerusalem in the Fortress Antonia was beefed up during festivals.

And possibly this governor, who was incompetent as we'll see, didn't show up. He just sent the troops and they hadn't all gone back yet. So maybe some of these cavalry need to go back anyway.

But whatever the case, he sends a substantial number of soldiers with Paul, larger than you would normally expect. But then again, night ambushes had been increasing in the Judean hills. And Josephus talks about that, blames Felix's misadministration because if you were arrested for something, including being

involved in a night ambush, you were captured alive, you paid enough money, you got off, you got free.

So, because of the corruption, ambushes were increasing in this period and it would deter an ambush if you had more troops. And if you deterred an ambush, it was better than fighting an ambush because the more people you lost in the fight, the more trouble the tribune could be in. If he loses nobody, he's in good shape.

So, he dispatches the troops and they are sent on a forced overnight march to Tiberius Claudius Felix. Now he may have been Tiberius Antonius Felix. There's a difference between what Josephus says and what Tiberius says, but Josephus had a more specific interest in the local situation.

Tacitus may have just assumed that his brother Paulus Felix had the same sponsor for his freedman status that his brother had. So probably Josephus is right. In any case, it's probably Tiberius Claudius Felix is his full name.

He was in office probably starting around 52 and probably ending around 59. The official letter to Felix would become part of the legal file. That's why Luke can presumably quote it precisely, or Luke could vary the wording if he wants to.

Paraphrase was accepted. But Luke would have access to this letter when they were in Caesarea because the defense team as well as the prosecution would have access to it. Just like Luke would also have summary transcripts of all the speeches that are given in Acts 24:25, which is really summarized concisely, and 26, the speeches given by Paul and his accusers, particularly Tertullus in Acts chapter 24.

Luke would have access to those when he writes things up. And he may have been there for the one in Acts 26, probably not the one in Acts 24, but he probably wouldn't have known about the, well, he might've been able to travel in time, but probably not. And Felix is addressed as most excellent Felix.

That was an appropriate title for somebody of the Roman knight class, just below the senatorial class. Well, and you could address higher people that way too, but knights would be addressed that way. But Felix is not that.

He's a freedman, but he's a freedman who's a powerful freedman because his brother, who's a freed slave in Rome palace, has wielded a lot of power. He's no longer in the same position of power that he was in before, but he still has some political power. So, Felix is governor and therefore he gets the title most excellent.

Claudius Lysias, the way he explains what happened, makes it look like he rescued Paul deliberately. And Paul is not, you know, Paul being a made aware of the letter is not likely to contradict that because, you know, you don't undermine your



benefactor unless, you know, he was cross-examined and he had no choice, but probably he's not going to contradict what Lysias says that Lysias rescued him, which Lysias kind of did the second time. The troops are sent with Paul and with his letter in a forced overnight march.

Now, some people say Antipatris was too far for them to march overnight. And that seems to be a reasonable objection. So also, the objection to how many troops are sent.

Luke, after all, wasn't there. Luke wasn't in the fortress in Antonia. He only catches up with Paul later on in Caesarea.

However, for the reasons I've given, I see no reason to say it's implausible that this many troops were sent. And as far as a forced overnight march, Roman soldiers did that regularly. They were supposed to exercise daily.

Probably not all of them did, but they had periodic forced marches of 20 miles or 32 kilometers. Sometimes they had forced marches of 30 miles or 48 kilometers. Sometimes they were made to do that all night long.

So, they would have been trained for this. Now, Antipatris is somewhere between 35 and, according to longer estimates, 45 miles or 55 to 70 kilometers away, but it's downhill. And so presumably they could have done this if they had to.

Under war conditions, sometimes people do things like this. It's downhill. They reach Antipatris, well, we don't know what time in the morning they get there, but probably they leave early in the evening as soon as it's dark.

And the infantry can probably, you know, they're supposed to turn around and come back to the fortress in Antonia. It'd be great if they get back before people realize that they're all missing. But it'll be daylight.

Most of the ambushes took place during the night. The cavalry continued on their way from Antipatris, which was about halfway to Caesarea. We know the Roman roads.

Actually, there's some debate about the site of Antipatris in this period, but we do know the roads that were taken from the Roman milestones. And then from there, the cavalry go on to Caesarea and they deliver Paul and they deliver the letter. And Lysias reads the letter.

Most people read aloud, so probably he or somebody reading for him, which the language could also mean, read the letter aloud. Paul can hear it if he hasn't heard it before. And also, Governor Felix asks from what province he comes.

Well, he comes from Cilicia. And that's when Felix decides to handle the case himself, because he could have referred it to somebody else and lowered his workload. But if Paul is from Cilicia, in this period, Cilicia was governed also by the governor of Syria, who is Felix's boss.

And rather than giving his boss a higher workload, he decides he's going to handle it himself. Once the accusers have come, Claudius Lysias, his own tribune, is able to come. Now, Claudius Lysias, by the way, was not necessarily, well, probably was not a freedman.

Actually, he was not a freedman. He bought his citizenship. But like the governor Felix, he was not the normal kind of person for this office.

Felix was not of the normal class from which governors were chosen. And Claudius Lysias was not from the normal group from which tribunes were chosen. Normally, tribunes were aristocratic Romans.

So, they may have had some connection there. They may have had some level of friendship. We know that centurions sometimes became friends with tribunes.

And tribunes could sometimes become friends with governors. In any case, Felix is probably more inclined to believe his tribune than he is to believe the high priest. But he didn't have the best relations with the high priest sometimes.

But the high priests come up several days later. And Paul is probably summoned on very short notice once they arrive. The accusers speak first, as was customary.

They get Tertullus to speak for them. Tertullus, given his name, may have been a Roman citizen. That would have been a smart move on the part of the aristocratic priests who want Ananias once Paul is in trouble.

So, they get somebody who can speak eloquently and who's Roman. We get just a summary of his speech. But again, that's what you get in the court documents is a summary.

People would take it down in shorthand, but they'd mainly record a summary. That's what went into the records. Paul responds.

And here I want to go into a little bit more detail. There are some rhetorical techniques that appear in Acts 24.10-21. In verse 21, he praises the judge. Well, that was customary in the opening.

He praises him more sparingly than Tertullus who flatters him and says things that we wouldn't expect. Tertullus' speech says that Felix has established peace for the nation and he's known for his good governance. That was actually absolutely false.

But it does set up for the theme of, well, since you want to keep peace and you suppress sedition, here's a case where you ought to suppress it. But Paul praises the judge, but it's more sparing praise and it's more accurate praise. You've been a judge of this people for a long time.

So, I know you understand things about this culture. And of course, Felix, later on, we hear, I think around verse 24, that Felix knew about the way, the movement of the Christians. His wife was Drusilla.

Drusilla was the sister of Agrippa II and Bernice. She was the daughter of Agrippa I. So, he was married to a Jewish princess. He knew a lot about what was going on in Judea.

And also, he'd been there for a long time. So, he knew something about the way and he knew that they were not a politically subversive movement. So that's one reason he doesn't convict Paul.

But in any case, he praises the judge in verse 10. In verse 11, Paul narrates the events leading up to the case. This was standard in defense speeches and many, many kinds of speeches back then.

You'd start with a complimentary exhortium, praising your audience, and then you would move to a narratio or a narrative of the events leading up to the case. It wasn't even just used in speeches. It was sometimes used in some other genres as well.

Well, in his narration of the events, he said, you know, I came just 12 days ago. That's something that could be verified by a number of witnesses who were even mentioned in the book of Acts. 12 days ago I came.

That'll make it clear that he was coming for the festival. He wasn't showing up just any time. He was coming for the festival of Pentecost.

Thus, it emphasizes his piety. So, it fits into the character argument from ethos. That is, you know, he was coming to serve God.

Many witnesses were available for that. So, verse 12, as far as causing a riot, well, I didn't cause a riot. I wasn't even speaking in the synagogues.

I wasn't even here long enough to speak in the synagogues. And, you know, causing a riot was a capital offense. So, this is something Paul has to deal with right away in terms of the accusations against him.

Often in a speech, one would state up front the issues that one was refuting. It could be called a refutatio in Latin. In verse 13, he says, they can't prove what they're asserting.

In the capital case, the accusers carried the burden of proof. So, if they can't prove their case, it should be thrown out. Speakers often said this about the other side.

In fact, in Acts 25, when people are accusing Paul, Luke says it, he says, they asserted many things which they couldn't prove. They couldn't offer proof. Now, if they wanted to associate Paul with riots, they didn't have to stop here.

They could have gone around and collected documents from other places. The people from Ephesus could have, after they'd gone back to Ephesus, they could have made sure next year they came, they could have brought documents with them where they could have attested, look, Paul was associated with a riot in Ephesus. But even there, I mean, to prove that he started the riot, that's going to be harder.

That's why Luke gives you all this evidence throughout Acts where Paul wasn't the one starting these riots. Verse 14, he said, now this I confess to you, that I worship God in this way. Well, it was great in ancient forensic rhetoric, and ancient legal rhetoric.

It was great. People often would confess things that were non-crimes. It gains you credibility for other things because you're confessing it.

I confess that I'm doing this thing that some people don't like, but it's not illegal. So it can't be prosecuted. Speakers sometimes confess non-crimes.

This is the same charge that Paul maneuvered from the Sanhedrin. And that Claudius Lysias, therefore, is a witness to and attests in his letter that this is just a religious issue. And Paul makes sure that this is going to make it into the court record again.

It's public record. The only thing they really have against him is they disagree with him on certain religious issues, which cannot constitute a capital offense under Roman law. Paul is a very smart man.

It also emphasizes his piety because, hey, what they're objecting to is the way he worships God, but he's worshipping God. Verse 15, he believes in the resurrection. Well, again, that's already in the court document.

But belief in the resurrection, while the Sadducees, Ananias, and the others who've come to accuse him, hold against the resurrection. They don't agree with him, but they're the ones who hold the minority view. Resurrection is a mainstream Jewish belief.

And Felix being married to Drusilla would know that. If you're going to execute Paul for believing in the resurrection, well, you've got to execute the Pharisees. You've got to execute most of the people.

So that was common local knowledge. And there's nothing they can say. That's the verdict that came out of the Sanhedrin hearing too.

That's what got the riot stirred up against him there. In verse 16, he says his conscience is clear. He had said that back in chapter 23 and the high priest ordered him to be struck because he didn't like that.

But his conscience is clear. Again, that's a statement of ethos. It's like saying, well, you know, I've not been convicted of a crime before.

I've acted with piety before God. Those kinds of things were things that a defense speaker defending himself in court would say and if believed would be normally let off because you don't think somebody just becomes a criminal or a riot stir right at that moment. And in verse 17, we learn more about his ethos, more about his character.

In verse 17, he says, I came to bring alms to my people. Now this is where we learn about Paul's collection in Acts. And Luke doesn't specify that this was only for the believers, but it certainly was for a lot of people there in Jerusalem.

The fact that they're believers doesn't change that. And so, he came to bring money to his people. That's an honorable thing.

And who's going to be able to complain about that? There were plenty of witnesses to this. So, nobody's going to be able to deny this. Defendants sometimes argued, I was on trial for a benefaction to my accuser, which made the accuser look even worse.

We saw that back in chapter four, where they said if we're on trial for a benefaction done to this man who stands before you whole, it makes the accusers look very bad. Verses 18 and 19 though, really drive home the point. He says I was attacked in the temple.

He's not the one who started the riot. Somebody else did. Temples were supposed to be a place of sanctuary.

A person should be protected in a place like the temple. And he goes on to say, and my accusers, who should have been here if they had anything to say. Now, he breaks off the sentence.

There's an ellipsis here where he doesn't finish his sentence. But it was common to reverse charges against your accusers. It was also common to implicate them by implying it, by insinuating it, rather than stating it explicitly.

And Paul seems to be doing that here, where he breaks it off. You know, I didn't stir the riot in the temple, but my accusers, Luke's narrative confirms. Yes, it was his accusers who started the riot.

No wonder they didn't show up. And Paul seems to imply that. Something else that's important, you know, you return charges against the accusers.

And in this case, he could do it easily. And Luke's narrative shows that he could do it easily. When accusers don't appear, the case can be thrown out of court, should be thrown out of court.

The accusers who started the problem can even be tried for the offense of wasting the judge's time by bringing something before the court and then not showing up to testify. They could be charged for abandoning a case. The accusers aren't there.

The high priest has taken up their prosecution, but they don't have any witnesses. The witnesses didn't show up. They probably actually went back to Ephesus already and probably were wise not to stick around.

But that would have been enough to get his case thrown out of court. But even more than that, the case should be thrown out for the reason that he goes on. You often say that you're clinching arguments for the end.

And he demonstrates at the end of his speech, the only charge that emerged from the hearing before the Sanhedrin is a charge that Paul kind of maneuvered. But the only charge that emerged from it was religiously related. I didn't desecrate the temple.

I didn't do anything else that they've said. I'm not causing sedition. It's because I preach the resurrection.

And that was clear already in the Sanhedrin hearing that Lysias witnessed and told you about. By any standard of Roman justice, Paul's argument was so clear cut that this case should have been thrown out of court. He should have been released immediately.

Why did Paul continue in custody? Only for political reasons. His accusers were of very high status. Now, if they were completely high status and Paul had no status, Felix probably would have handed him over to them and had him executed.

However, Paul also had some status. Remember, there are tens of thousands of Judean believers. If Paul is a leader in this movement, which is actually what Tertullus, his accuser, had said, you know, he's a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.

Well, if that's the case, then Paul has some political clout of his own. Plus, he's a Roman citizen. His accusers may be, but he is too.

And if he has supporters, if it gets back to Rome that a Roman citizen was executed unjustly, Felix can be in trouble. So, Felix invites Paul periodically to come in and speak before him. And Paul speaks about righteousness.

Paul speaks about judgment. And Felix gets very nervous and says, I'll hear from you another time on this. Remember that it's both Felix and Drusilla.

Felix has some reason to get nervous when Paul is speaking about righteousness and so on. Righteousness, self-control, and judgment. Self-control was often emphasized by moral philosophers in that period.

Well, Felix had married three different princesses in succession. And the current princess he was married to the final one, was Drusilla. She was the daughter of King Agrippa I and the sister of Agrippa II and Bernice, as I mentioned earlier.

So, here is this couple where he actually seduced her away from her previous husband using a Cypriot Jewish magician to do so, to get her for himself. And that didn't go over too well in her family. And it didn't go over too well with the king.

You know, this was a nice political marriage. And so, he had some lack of self-control and some lack of righteousness right there sitting beside him. Drusilla had the same thing.

They had gotten together on very immoral terms. And the reason he kept Paul in custody, Luke says in verse 26, is he just wanted a bribe. Well, that fits the way Josephus describes the Roman governors in this period and in this location.

So, he keeps Paul in comfortable accommodations there in the palace in Caesarea, which is where the hearing took place. And he invites him to come speak the way Herod. Antipas often liked to hear John speak in Mark chapter six, but he doesn't let him go.

And he leaves Paul in custody to do the Jews a favor, the Judean authorities a favor when he leaves. Why is that? Felix needed every favor he could get. In verse 27, Felix is being replaced.

He's being recalled on charges of corruption that were lodged against him by the high priests. Well, that could be very serious. His predecessor had been recalled on charges of corruption and very successful prosecution against his predecessor with very alarming results for his predecessor.

So, Felix is being recalled to Rome. We know Felix was corrupt. Not only did he want a bribe from Paul, but he also bribed one high priest to kill another high priest.

He left Paul's case pending so he could get at least some favor from the Judean authorities from Jerusalem. Governors were sometimes convicted of corruption, but his brother Pallas, though he was a freedman and though he was no longer in good with the same officials, Pallas was still powerful and apparently got Felix off. So, Felix didn't get charged, but he did have to leave his governorship.

A new governor was sent when Felix was called back and the new governor was Festus. Now Festus was one of the fairest governors. He's one of the only ones that Josephus actually portrays fairly nicely.

Festus was a no-nonsense sort of person. You can see that by how quickly he gets down to business once he gets into office. He got along great with Agrippa and Bernice, but he was unfortunately short-lived in his office.

He seems to have died in office after maybe a couple of years. But Pallas brought before Festus. When Festus goes to Jerusalem first to try to have a good relationship with these people who got his predecessor recalled, but he's a no-nonsense kind of person.

They want Paul to be tried in Jerusalem. Well, no. Normally people are tried in Caesarea.

That's where the governor lives and that's where he's going. Rather than wait for Paul to be brought down there, they're just going to go there. He doesn't know about the plot.

He probably isn't aware of the mention of a plot even in Lysias' letter because he's just gotten there. He hasn't heard any of these things. But this actually works in Paul's favor because what it does, it gets Paul's case moved up on the docket.



So, Paul gets the hearing faster than he would have otherwise. But now Paul has lost the advantage of what happened earlier because even though the court records are still there, he can appeal to them. The case is really being started anew.

It's being opened anew with a new governor. Now, much of this chapter, starting with verse 25, much of it starting with verse 13, talks about the visit of Agrippa II and Bernice to Festus. We know from other sources that Agrippa and Bernice often visited officials early in their tenure.

We also know that Festus and Agrippa had a good relationship, probably unlike Agrippa and his brother-in-law who messed up his sister's earlier marriage. Festus and Agrippa had a good marriage. Sorry, they were not married to each other, but Festus and Agrippa had a good relationship.

Actually, they sided sometimes together against the Jerusalem priests. Often, they kept the peace for Rome. Agrippa and Bernice were known for that.

They tried to stop the revolt. They did their best. And Rome was satisfied that they really did their best because, after the revolt, Agrippa and Bernice remained in power in his region.

They were still alive, apparently, at the time that Josephus wrote his works in the 90s of the first century. So, they were undoubtedly still alive at the time that Luke wrote as well. I don't want to say too many bad things about rulers who are still alive at that point, although their father, Agrippa I, doesn't appear too well, but neither does he appear too well in Josephus.

Bernice, it's interesting. She had a very sad life, a very tragic life at this point. She and her sister both were at least mocked and ridiculed and maybe worse when their father died and there was a kind of a revolt or a protest among the Syrian auxiliaries stationed in Caesarea.

Well, later on, she's married to a king, but the marriage falls apart. And so, she's now back staying with her brother, Agrippa. There were people who said that they actually had an incestuous relationship.

That seems to appear only in unreliable ancient sources like Juvenal, who liked to satirize people. Probably it's false, but she was an object of slander. Later on, during the siege of Jerusalem, she and Vespasian, Vespasian was the Roman general there.

Vespasian ends up going back to Rome to become emperor. Titus is left to finish the job of capturing Jerusalem. As a result of that, Bernice and Titus are together and Bernice and Titus had an affair.

The affair was such that when Titus later, long after this, went back to Rome to become the emperor, he had always promised Bernice that if he ever became emperor, she would become the empress. Well, it's just as well it didn't happen because he died after a couple of years as emperor. His father had lived a long time.

But when Bernice went to Rome expecting to become the empress, Josephus tells us that nobody would let her into the palace because Titus' advisors said the empire would not tolerate a Jewish woman as the empress. So very tragic life. But in any case, Agrippa and Bernice were highly respected people.

Agrippa was somebody that Festus could really rely on for the right perspective. He didn't trust the chief priests. They hadn't been nice to his predecessor.

He'd heard all sorts of things about them. He knew that they had certain political agendas, but he trusted Agrippa. Agrippa had a Hellenistic education just like he did.

And Agrippa was a Roman citizen just like he was, as well as being Jewish. So, he was the kind of Jewish person that a Roman governor would like to listen to. And so he wants this guy's advice.

So, he tells him, he shades it a little bit. He says, well, you know, he makes himself look good. But after he mentions this conundrum, not knowing what to do, Agrippa volunteers.

He says I myself would like to hear him. And Festus says, well, then you shall tomorrow. So, they set it up.

Now, here's the question for this. Who are Luke's witnesses for this scene? Maybe some servants in the household? Maybe. But this wasn't something that was in the court record.

And how are you going to know actually what conversation transpired? Well, here's where the genre of ancient historiography is important, because we have to keep in mind that they would give you the information they had, but they were also responsible for fleshing it out as scenes. And sometimes you would have to imagine, okay, given what we know about the evidence, what happened? Well, what do we know happened? You find out the next day because Festus says it when he introduces the case. He says, well, Agrippa, I need your advice on this case.

Some of the people in Jerusalem said this man should not live, but what should I do in this case? And they had been accusing him already in chapter 25. So, chapter 26 gives us the hearing before Festus, Agrippa, and Bernice to determine what cover letter should be sent to Rome in the dossier. And here Paul speaks eloquently, as eloquent as his Aramaic speaking was in the previous chapter, so eloquent is his

Greek-speaking, but not the previous chapter, the previous speech in chapter 22, speaking before the crowds and speaking of Ananias, a man very skilled in the law and just emphasizing his connections with Jerusalem and so on.

Here he speaks and gives a good Jewish, Hellenistic kind of Jewish speech to appeal to Agrippa. He knows that Agrippa is the one he's got to speak to. Agrippa is the one he has to persuade.

And so, he speaks of how the voice from heaven talked about Paul kicking against the pricks. Well, Jesus may have said that, or it may be Paul's paraphrase, but whatever it was, because it was in Hebrew when Jesus spoke to him, or Aramaic, it was somehow in Semitic speech, Acts tells us. But he's citing here Jesus in ways that reflect the language of Euripides, something that they could appreciate.

And he gives this whole account, he shares his own experience of what Jesus said to him, and he's no longer trying to defend himself the way he was back in chapter 24 for his life quite so much as he's trying to preach the gospel. Why? What had Jesus said? Jesus said in Luke chapter 21, you'll be brought before kings and governors for my sake. Luke chapter 12, Luke chapter 21, the spirit will give you in that hour what you should say, or they won't be able to refute your wisdom.

And also, when Paul was called, Acts 9:15 and so on, you will bring the gospel before Gentiles and before kings for my name's sake. Well, now is his chance. Here's Agrippa II, he's not the king of Judea like his dad was, but he's king over a smaller realm at the moment.

And Paul has a chance to speak before this king. At some point Festus interrupts because Paul is talking about the resurrection and about Jesus appearing to him. And Festus already said in the previous chapter that the whole debate was about Paul who said that a dead man, Jesus, was alive.

Well, now in chapter 26, Festus interrupts him, which judges were allowed to do and often did, and says, Paul, your great learning has driven you insane. Now, it was kind of half a compliment. He recognizes that Paul is very learned.

That would appeal to him. Insanity is actually used as a legal defense in certain cases, but probably he's not using it as a legal defense. Sometimes people would speak of rhetoricians as speaking insanely when they spoke with great passion.

And some people think this reflects Paul's passion. But philosophers tended to think people, well, people often thought that philosophers acted insane because they didn't live according to the rest of the world's values, especially people like cynics. And philosophers often thought the rest of the world, the masses, were insane.

They didn't know what they were about or anything. So, this fits also the way Paul was speaking passionately, a similar language for inspiration back in Acts chapter 2. But remember in Acts chapter 2, the crowd said, these people are full of new wine. They're drunk.

1 Corinthians chapter 14 also says, if you're all speaking in tongues, why don't people think that you're insane? Prophets in the Old Testament were sometimes called insane. In 2 Kings chapter 9, when the prophet comes into Jehu, takes him aside, and anoints him as the next king of Israel, he comes back among the other military officers and they say, what did this insane fellow want? And he says, you know the matter. And then he tells them and they hail him immediately as king.

But prophets were often associated with insanity. Paul is speaking in this prophetic kind of way. He's speaking in a way that Festus couldn't relate to.

It was just like how Pilate probably viewed Jesus. Well, especially in John chapter 18, where Jesus speaks of being a king, but his kingdom is not of this world. It's a kingdom about truth.

Well, that sounded to Pilate like a cynic philosopher, a harmless, apolitical sage. Kingdom, not a threat to Rome. So, it's not necessarily a completely bad thing in terms of Paul's innocence, but he certainly doesn't believe what Paul was saying about Jesus.

And Paul then appeals directly to Agrippa. King Agrippa, you know the truth of what I'm talking about. I mean, you know this matter hasn't been hidden in the corner, which was an idiom or figure of speech back then for something that was widely known, philosophic movements that were out in the open, and so on.

He says this matter wasn't done in the corner. The king knows what I'm saying. And then he appeals to the king and says, oh, King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? Well, he's been speaking from the law and the prophets.

He's been basing this on the prophets. So it puts King Agrippa in a corner. If he says, yes, I believe the prophets, or yes, I believe what you're saying about the prophets.

And so, he apparently replies, there's some debate on what it means, but apparently he replies, in such a short time, you're trying to make me into a Christian. You're trying to maneuver me to say, yes, I agree with the prophets. So I agree with you.

Jesus is who you say he is. And Paul responds, whether in a short time or in a long time, yes, I want to convert you. I wish that everybody here had what I have, except for these chains.

Nice ending on pathos. They dismiss the court hearing at that point and they gather together. And again, we have a private scene where they gather together and they decide this man hasn't done anything worthy of death.

In fact, he could have been set free if he hadn't appealed to Caesar. Back in chapter 25, he appealed to Caesar so that he wouldn't have to have the case in Rome because Festus wanted to put it in Rome to give a favor. I mean, it was nice coming in to be able to politically humor the people who are asking for this to be held in Rome.

But Paul appealed to Caesar as a citizen could do. Well, it was highly irregular. That's why Festus consults his concilium, and his advisor staff, about what should be done.

Because normally you could only appeal after you've been convicted. Paul is appealing before conviction, although his life is more at stake before the conviction if he has to go to Jerusalem for the trial. So what Paul instead does, is he appeals to Caesar.

Well, Festus' advisors agree, hey, this is great for us, because if he's appealed to Caesar, we'll send him to Caesar. Gets it out of our hands. We're not in trouble with the Jerusalem elite.

It's over our head. It's in the hands of the emperor. I mean, if we short-circuit an appeal to the emperor, we are dishonoring the emperor.

So, we'd better not do that. So, it solved things politically for him very easily. So, they decide he has to go to the emperor.

Well, how is this known, this private scene? This private scene is presumably reconstructed by the fact that, well, the reason Agrippa was supposed to have this hearing was so Agrippa could help Festus formulate the charge. You can't send something to Caesar's court without at least a charge and an explanation of what the case is about. And with Agrippa's advice, this letter can be sent.

Again, this is a legal document. Paul and Luke would know what the legal document contains. And even if they didn't, they could probably find out figuring out from the oral instructions that were given to Julius the Centurion who's accompanying them because of the very nice treatment that Paul receives on the way.

Although it's going to get nicer after the Centurion really realizes that this is a man of God who's really got some supernatural helper on his side. And that we'll learn about more in the last and briefest of our sessions on Acts.

This is Dr. Craig Keener in his teaching on the book of Acts. This is session 22, Acts chapters 23 through 26.