

## Sha'ul of Tarsus & His Letters ~ Part 165

### Sha'ul's Appears Before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa ~ Part 5

**Note:** To examine the graphics in this series, click on them for a pop-up version.

We continue in the **Book of Acts. Sha'ul's Appears to the Roman Authorities** beginning in Acts 25:9.

#### Sha'ul's Appeals to Ceasar

*<sup>9</sup> But Festus, wanting to do the Judeans a favor, asked Sha'ul, "Would you be willing to go up to Yerushalayim and be tried before me there on these charges?" <sup>10</sup> Sha'ul replied, "I am standing right now in the court of the Emperor, and this is where I should be tried. I have done no wrong to the Judeans, as you very well know. <sup>11</sup> If I am a wrongdoer, if I have done something for which I deserve to die, then I am ready to die. But if there is nothing to these charges which they are bringing against me, no one can give me to them just to grant a favor! I appeal to the Emperor!" <sup>12</sup> Then Festus, after talking with his advisers, answered, "You have appealed to the Emperor; you will go to the Emperor!"*

Progress on **Sha'ul's** case ceased for two years while **Felix** waited, perhaps for a bribe (Acts 24:26). Now, with **Festus** showing himself uninterested in justice, **Sha'ul** decides to enter his appeal to be tried by the highest authority, a right available to **Roman Citizens** since 509 BCE. **Yeshua** had promised that **Sha'ul** would one day go to **Rome** (Acts 23:11), and he had long wanted to go there (Romans 1:10–15). His dream is fulfilled in Acts 28:16 below.

#### Festus and Agrippa

*<sup>13</sup> After some days, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to pay their respects to Festus.*

**King Agrippa. Herod Agrippa II**, the last **Herodian king**, was raised in **Rome** and made king in 50 CE, six years after the death of his father, **Herod Agrippa I** (see Acts 12:3). His capital was **Caesarea Philippi** (modern **Banyas**), at the foot of **Mount Hermon**, some 40 miles northeast of **Caesarea**, where modern **Isra'el, Lebanon, and Syria** meet. **Bernice** was **Agrippa's** sister, so their relationship was incestuous. **Felix's** wife, **Drusilla** (Acts 24:24), was the sister of both. **Bernice** was later mistress of two emperors, **Vespasian** and **Titus**, and almost became **Empress**. Obviously, she had long since given up whatever vestiges of **Jewish** religion and morals she might have once had.

*<sup>14</sup> Since they were staying on there for some time, Festus had the opportunity to acquaint the king with Sha'ul's situation. "There is a man here," he said, "who was left behind in custody by Felix.*

**Agrippa** and **Bernice** made an official visit to welcome the new procurator but stayed on longer than necessary. **Festus** used the time to discuss the perplexing but not pressing issue of **Sha'ul**.

*<sup>15</sup> When I was in Yerushalayim, the head cohanim and the elders of the Judeans informed me about him and asked me to pronounce judgment against him. <sup>16</sup> My answer to them was that it is not the custom with Romans to give up an accused man just to grant a favor, before he has met his accusers face to face and had the opportunity to defend himself against the charge. <sup>17</sup> So when they arrived here with me, I did not delay, but took my seat in court the next day and*

*ordered the man brought in. <sup>18</sup> "When the accusers stood up, instead of charging him with some serious crime as I had expected, <sup>19</sup> they disputed with him about certain points of their own religion, and particularly about somebody called Yeshua, who had died, but who Sha'ul claimed was alive.*

**Gallio**, in similar circumstances, had refused to sit in judgment on a matter of internal concern among **Jews** (Acts 18:12–16). **Festus** was less wise. Nevertheless, this **Gentile's** description of the dispute as one *about certain points of their own religion* is additional evidence that **Messianic Judaism** is a form of **Judaism**.

*<sup>20</sup> Being at a loss as to how to investigate such questions, I asked him if he would be willing to go to Yerushalayim and be tried on these matters there. <sup>21</sup> But since Sha'ul appealed to be kept in custody and have his case decided by His Imperial Majesty, I ordered him held until I could send him to the Emperor."*

Once again, no good case was made against **Sha'ul**, and once again, he defended himself against the three principal possible accusers—the **Pharisees**, concerned with **the Torah**; the **Sadducees** and **cohanim**, concerned with **the Temple**; and the **Roman** state, embodied in **the Emperor**. **Luke** omits the specifics of both accusation and defense.

*<sup>22</sup> Agrippa said to Festus, "I myself have been wanting to hear the man." "Tomorrow," he replied, "you will hear him." <sup>1</sup>*

In our next post, we will continue to learn about **Sha'ul's Appearances Before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa**.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 25:9-22.