

I. Introduction

A. Calling vs Assignment

1. Reference and explain
2. Resource: Assignment worksheet

B. Are you wondering ... (like me telling stories over and over)

1. Why does Luke choose to repeat/record Paul's testimony so many times in Acts?
2. Intentional and inspired
3. *And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. (Revelation 12:11)*
 - a. Paul is a visible example of what John writes in Revelation 12:11.
 - b. The centrality of Christ's death and resurrection and our testimony of Jesus is the most power-filled way we can live.

II. Paul and the Powers

A. Herod Agrippa II

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

1. Last king of the Herodian line; father beheaded James and imprisoned Peter (angelic rescue); Bernice widowed twice and lives with brother with rumors of inappropriate relationship (Herod's could never be accused of being a moral family)
2. Building a bridge with the new political power in the region

B. Festus seeks advice from Agrippa

And as they stayed there many days, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying, "There is a man left prisoner by Felix, 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. 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. 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. When the accusers stood up, they brought no charge in his case of such evils as I supposed. 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. Being at a loss how to investigate these questions, I asked whether he wanted to go to Jerusalem and be tried there regarding them. 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." Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I would like to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," said he, "you will hear him." (Acts 25:14-22)

1. Summarizes what we already have heard and know
2. Seeking informal advice as Agrippa has no decision-making authority
3. Main issue: a man, Jesus, who was dead but whom Paul asserts to be alive

- a. 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. (Acts 25:19)
- b. *Paul's primary offense is the centrality of the risen and reigning King Jesus. Not just resurrection, but resurrection of Messiah
- c. Why, in the midst of so much communal, civil, and cultural tension and unrest is there so much focus on this one man's message about Jesus?
- d. We'll return to this question.

C. Informal presentation

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. 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. 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. 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. For it seems to me unreasonable, in sending a prisoner, not to indicate the charges against him." (Acts 25:23-27)

- 1. Military, royalty, political, and prominent gathered to hear this moment
- 2. "I can't figure out how to summarize why I am sending Paul to Emperor Nero." He's asking for help with his legal requirements and paperwork.

D. Paul's address (26:1-11)

So Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense: "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, especially because you are familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews. Therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently. My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews. 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. And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, 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! Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead? I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 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. 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." (Acts 26:1-11)

- 1. Third conversion story recorded in Acts

2. Not flattery, but complementary facts: Agrippa considered himself Jewish and had a long history with the Jews and Judaism
3. Paul's defense
 - a. The Jews, if honest, can tell you I've been a faithful, zealous Jew.
 - b. I'm on trial for the hope we all have in God and his promise.
 - c. Jesus, who has been raised from the dead, is the culmination and fulfillment of all the Old Testament.
 - d. I, myself, was under an errant belief and imitated the principalities and powers rather than Christ.
 - e. *Before we get into Paul's explanation on what happened and his appeal to Agrippa, we need to understand why this is such a big deal.

COMMUNION

III. The New World Order

A. What happened at the cross?

1. Who was humiliated?
 - a. *And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:8)*
 - b. *For our sake He made Him to be sin Who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21)*
 - c. *He Himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed. (1 Peter 2:24)*
 - d. *And I, when I am lifted up from the Earth, will draw all people to myself. (John 12:32)*
 - e. *In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of His robe filled the temple. (Isaiah 6:1)*
 - f. *It seemed that Jesus was the one lowered and humiliated at the crucifixion. What the watching world - and Satan himself - did not know is that it was Satan and his entire usurping empire that was deposed and humiliated at the cross. The cross and resurrection inaugurated the new and final world order.
2. Jesus disarmed and put to shame the spiritual principalities and powers at the cross and triumphed over them through the resurrection
 - a. *And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This He set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in Him. (Colossians 2:13-15)*
 - b. *Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:11-12)*

- c. Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. (1 Corinthians 2:6-8)
- B. Cosmic politics (Genesis 3:15) and Paul's message

I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel. (Genesis 3:15)

 1. The seed war: heel and head declaration by YHWH
 2. Jesus dethroned the principalities and powers that usurped God's earthly throne in Eden.
 3. He crushed Satan's head at the cross.
 4. The cross was the act of disarming the ruling power of sin and the resurrection was the public demonstration gaining victory over the enslaving power of sin.
 5. *Jesus died not only to save individual sinners, He died to break the authority of the principalities and powers that enslaved sinners so they could be saved.
 6. The Gospel, the testimony we carry, is not just a message of individual salvation, it is also a message of the abolition of the old global order of Satan and the principalities and powers, and the initiation of the new global/eternal order.

Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in Heaven and on Earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)
 7. *Satan can no longer hurt us spiritually or bring a successful charge against us! (Romans 8:33)
 8. *And this is why the Jews, and Rome, and all empires/nations and ideologies are threatened by anyone who not only speaks the name of Jesus but inhabits and is inhabited by the name of Jesus. Every people, tribe, tongue, nation, ideology, movement, and innermost thought must bow to this risen, high King Jesus.
 9. *Turkey, Utah, Texas: the enemy's deception still ongoing. No longer will accusation stand but he is still free and active to deceive.
- C. Why does Acts focus so much on the centrality of the resurrection and repeatedly tell Paul's testimony?
 1. *He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in Him. (Colossians 2:15)*
 2. *And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. (Revelation 12:11)*
 3. PRAY FOR MIDDLE EAST