

# Paul Appeals to Caesar

Key Verse:

**“Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.”**

Mark 12:17

Extra: How are good and evil powerfully at work here?

Level 5 lesson 37

**Read: Acts 25:1-22 and Philipians 1:12-14**

**PAUL APPEALS TO CAESAR:** Two years passed and Paul remained confined to prison, chained to a guard, but able to enjoy relative freedom within the prison and visits from friends. When Felix’s term as Governor ended, he was replaced by Porcius Festus. But instead of sorting out Paul’s case and freeing him as he should have, Felix unkindly left him in prison as a favour to the Jews, and did not inform Festus about him.

**SEEKING A FAIR TRIAL:** However, Festus soon learned about Paul when he visited Jerusalem! The High Priest and other leaders seized their opportunity to tell the new governor about him, and begged him to send Paul to Jerusalem for trial. These were no doubt some of the same men who two years earlier had taken a vow not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. Clearly, they had found a way to annul their vow (when they saw Paul had escaped and was safe elsewhere), but their plans for him hadn’t changed! Scripture reveals their intention was to kill Paul along the way.

Festus refused their request at this point and replied, “No, Paul is already in custody in Caesarea and I’m returning there soon too. Your leaders can come with me and accuse him there, if he has done anything wrong.” His impartiality as Judge in the case must be questioned though, when we read that, “After spending eight or ten days with them, he went down to Caesarea!”

Finally, the Court was convened and Festus ordered Paul brought before him. Again, Paul’s enemies reiterated the same old charges against him, none of which they could prove (v7). Paul simply denied them all, stating boldly, “I have done nothing wrong against the law of the Jews, or against the temple, or against Caesar!” Festus could see no resolution. Perhaps hoping to play for time, he then remembered the earlier request of the Jews that Paul be sent to Jerusalem for trial. Thinking that this would also win him the friendship of his Jewish subjects, he asked Paul if he would be willing to “stand trial before me there, on these charges?”

Paul, sensing Festus’ desire to pander to the Jews, saw through the suggestion immediately and pointedly reminded him: “I AM standing before Caesar’s court NOW! ... I have done no wrong to the Jews, as you know very well!” Paul was clearly in no mood to stand for any nonsense from the weak-principled Festus. “If I am guilty of anything deserving death,” he continued, “I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no-one has the right to hand me over to them.”

Then in ringing tones Paul concluded, “I appeal to Caesar!” This was the lawful privilege of every Roman citizen in such cases. Festus discussed Paul’s demand with his councillors and then in recognition of Paul’s right under Roman law, pronounced, “You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!”

**FACING A PROBLEM:** Of course, this raised an old problem: for which criminal charges was Paul being sent to Rome for trial? Both Felix and Festus had been unable to find any legitimate charges against him. A visit by King Agrippa to Caesarea to see Festus seemed to offer a possible solution. King Agrippa was a man who knew the Jew’s laws, customs and religion well and so Festus explained Paul’s case to him: “There is a man here (Paul) whom Felix left as a prisoner. The Chief priests and Jewish elders wanted the death penalty pronounced against him, but I told them that it is not Roman Custom to do this without giving him a chance to face his accusers. The trial was eventually held in Caesarea and I sat in judgement on the case. However, the accusations against the man were not what I’d expected. As far as I could see, there were certain questions of their own superstition or religion that they were arguing about and particularly concerning “a dead man, named Jesus, whom Paul claimed was alive.”

“I couldn’t really understand what all the fuss was about,” continued Festus to Agrippa, “and suggested sending him to Jerusalem for further examination. But Paul hindered this by appealing to Caesar.” Festus perhaps thought that all Paul meant was that Jesus had never really died - but we know (and the Jews knew) that Paul claimed Jesus had risen from the dead - a vital issue indeed! “An interesting case,” mused Agrippa, “I would like to hear the man myself.” “Very well,” responded Festus, “Tomorrow you will!”

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. How did Felix show his meanness towards Paul?	.....
2. What did Festus want to do with Paul to please the Jews?	.....
3. Why did Paul wish to have his case heard before Caesar?	.....
4. According to Festus, what was Paul arguing with the Jews about?	.....
5. Jesus rose from the dead! Why do you think this fact is a vital matter?	.....

My Name is ..... Age .....

# Paul Before King Agrippa

Key Verse:

**“If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.”**

1 Peter 4:16

Extra: What does it mean to repent and turn to God?

Level 5 Lesson 38

## Read Acts 25:23-26:32 and 2 Corinthians 6:1-2

**FESTUS' EXPLANATION:** The following day, the Caesarea courtroom was the place to be! The military chiefs and rulers of the city were all there in their finery, and the atmosphere was one of excitement as they arrived. King Agrippa and his wife, Bernice, along with the Roman Governor Festus, made their grand entrance with great pomp and ceremony. Into this highly-charged arena came Paul, the man of God - small and unimpressive in physical stature, but a spiritual giant! Surveying the scene before him, he was doubtless aware what a great opportunity it presented to tell everyone about the Lord, and he intended not miss it!

Pointing to Paul, Festus commenced the proceedings. “King Agrippa and all present, see this man! The whole Jewish community has brought complaints to me about him, shouting that he should not live any longer. I found that he had done nothing worthy of death, and that he himself had appealed to Caesar ... I have nothing definite to write to Caesar, therefore I have brought him before you, King Agrippa, for examination, so that I might have something to write.” With a nod of his head Agrippa motioned to Paul, “You have permission to speak for yourself.”

**PAUL'S WITNESS:** Stretching out his hand, Paul responded respectfully, “I consider myself fortunate, King Agrippa, that today I am to defend myself before you ... especially because I know you are expert in all Jewish customs and questions.” After this tactful opening, Paul proceeded with his defence, outlining the background to his case, and in so doing giving a wonderful testimony to the reality of the Gospel and the work of God in his life.

He explained how that earlier in life he was convinced that he had to do everything possible to oppose ‘Jesus of Nazareth,’ and that is exactly what he’d done! In Jerusalem, and even foreign cities, he went from one synagogue to another to imprison Christians and vote for the death penalty against them. But then he shared how while still actively involved in his fierce persecution of ‘Christians’ he experienced something that changed him from an angry persecutor into a most devoted witness for Jesus Christ!

He spoke of the mid-day meeting with the risen Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus, and how God had sent him to take the message of salvation to Gentile sinners. As a result, “I went to Damascus, then to Jerusalem and Judea, and to the Gentiles also,” he said. Then, “I preached that they should repent and turn to God; and prove their repentance by their deeds” (v20).

This was why the Jews had seized him and tried to kill him. Paul then said that with God’s help he continued to tell people what the Bible taught, that “Christ would suffer and rise from the dead.”

**AGRIPPA CHALLENGED:** Agrippa and the whole audience listened spellbound. Suddenly, Festus, obviously convicted by Paul’s words, interrupted, “Paul, you are mad!” he shouted loudly. “Your great learning is driving you insane!” Respectfully Paul answered, “I am not mad, most noble Festus: I am speaking the honest truth!”

Then, for the fifth time he made reference to the King’s knowledge of Scripture by directly addressing the king, “King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do!” In reply, Agrippa avoided Paul’s question, replying, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?” In other words, “it will take more persuasion than this to make me a Christian!”

At Agrippa’s refusal to earnestly consider his words, Paul addressed the whole courtroom once more in closing, “I pray God that not only you, but all who are listening to me today may become what I am (a Christian) - except for these chains.” At this, Paul was taken away and the hearing ended. King Agrippa and his wife Bernice, along with all the other dignitaries, stood up and after leaving the Court said to each other, “This man has not done anything for which he should die or be put in prison.” Indeed, Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been released if he had not appealed to Caesar!”

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. Why was Paul brought before King Agrippa?	.....
2. What did Paul do to the Christians before he became one himself?	.....
3. Why did the Lord send Paul to the Gentiles?	.....
4. How would you have answered Festus’ interruption?	.....
5. What did Paul desire for the whole audience?	.....

# Storm at Sea

Key Verse:

**“But mark this: there will be terrible times in the last days.”**

2 Timothy 3:1

Extra: What evidence can you find to prove that our world is either getting worse or better?

Level 5 Lesson 39

## Read Acts 27:1-20 and Jonah 1

The Scriptures are silent about how the problem of proper charges against Paul was eventually resolved, or if at all! But finally, in response to his appeal to Caesar, Paul was sent to Rome to stand trial before the most powerful man on earth then - the Roman Emperor! Although a prisoner, Paul probably could hardly wait to finally set sail.

**A PERILOUS JOURNEY:** A centurion named Julius was placed in charge of Paul and the other prisoners on the ship. After leaving Caesarea, their first port of call was Sidon, where Julius kindly allowed Paul to visit his friends who gave him provisions for the long journey. Leaving Sidon, they hugged the coast of Cyprus, where they were in lee from contrary winds, and then up to and over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, finally arriving at Myra, a city of Lycia. Here Julius found a ship carrying grain to Italy, from Alexandria in Egypt. Julius arranged for all the prisoners to be transferred to this ship and so began the next leg of the journey.

Travelling directly west towards Cnidus they were badly hindered by strong head winds, which put them way behind schedule. Finally, they arrived at a port called “Fair Havens” on the south coast of Crete. However, because of the delays they had experienced, it was already the time of year when winter storms made sailing very dangerous. Of course, travelling by sea in those times was always something of a risky business! A discussion naturally arose as to whether they should stay in Fair Havens for the winter, or press on toward Crete and winter there.

**PAUL’S WARNING:** Paul, being aware of the discussion and an experienced traveller himself, warned them, “Men, I can see that our voyage is going to be disastrous and bring great loss to ship and cargo, and to our own lives also.” That was pretty clear wasn’t it! However, the Captain and the owner of the ship didn’t agree, and Julius the Centurion believed them instead of Paul. This proved to be a great mistake.

Paul, in his inspired writings in the Bible, also gives many warnings of danger and judgement ahead for this world (see 2 Timothy 3:1-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-11; and 1 Thessalonians 4:12-19). Many people choose to reject these warnings, preferring to believe those who teach that there is nothing to worry about. As was the case here, however, Paul will be proved right one day.

**A TERRIFYING STORM:** Having decided to leave Fair Havens, they made for Phoenix, further west in Crete, intending to stay there during winter. When they left, a gentle wind was blowing, and it looked as though Paul had been a bit too pessimistic. Before long though, a strong wind called the “North-easter” began to blow and crew and passengers soon realised Paul’s warning had been right. The ship was now at the mercy of a howling gale! The sailors’ only option was to pull in the sails and run before it. While passing to the south of a small island named Cauda, they were able to finally secure the ship’s lifeboat, which appears to have been washed off the decks at some point. They also put ropes tightly round the ship itself to hold it together. On top of all this, they were afraid that they would be driven by the fierce winds onto the sand-bars off Syrtis (modern-day Libya).

The days went by and still the hurricane raged! Enormous waves crashed endlessly over the battered boat and the crew were forced to lighten the load by throwing things overboard. Any spare gear, as well as some of the cargo, had to be sacrificed in order to try and keep the boat afloat. No-one was even sure where they were any more, as they had not seen the sun or stars for days, making navigation impossible. With the storm showing no signs of easing, everyone on board had given up all hope of survival. I’m sure many of them must have wished they had taken Paul’s advice. What a predicament they were in. Unless a miracle happened, surely everyone on board that ship was doomed!

### QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. How did Julius show his friendliness toward Paul?	.....
2. What did Paul tell them at “Fair Havens”?	.....
3. Why did Julius, the Centurion, prefer to believe the Captain?	.....
4. What does Paul say about the last days of our world? (See Key Verse & lesson notes)	.....
5. How do you think the ship crew felt at the height of the storm?	.....

# Shipwrecked!

## Read Acts 27:21-44 and 1 Corinthians 15:58

**Key Verse:**  
**"...[Hold] on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith."**

1 Timothy 1:19

Extra: What suggestions can you give to strengthen someone's faith during trials?

Level 5 Lesson 40

**A MESSAGE OF HOPE:** Just when all on board the doomed ship were in despair, Paul had a message of hope. The man whose advice had been ignored was now listened to with much respect. "Men," he said, "You should have taken my advice not to sail from Crete." Then instead of telling them they would all perish as a consequence, he continued. "Now I urge you to keep up your courage, because not one of you will be lost; only the ship will be destroyed."

How did Paul know this? Humanly speaking things were hopeless. Paul revealed that an angel of God had visited him in the night and assured him that in God's grace, all lives on board the ship would be spared, along with his. He told them to, "Cheer up, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as He told me." Things looked bleak and hopeless, but Paul knew God would keep His promise and save their lives, even though the ship would be shipwrecked on an island.

Cheered by Paul's message, those on board went about their tasks with fresh enthusiasm. Then around midnight, when the storm had raged for fourteen nights the experienced sailors sensed they were nearing land. After several depth soundings, it was clear they were indeed being driven ashore somewhere. In the pitch darkness the only thing they could do though, was throw out anchors to slow their progress and wait for daylight.

**A SELFISH ACT:** During the night Paul awoke from fitful sleep to see a group of sailors selfishly attempting to escape in the ship's lifeboat. Paul alerted the Centurion to what was happening, warning him, "Unless these men stay with the ship, you cannot be saved!" Immediately the soldiers under his instructions cut off the ropes of the boat and it disappeared into the darkness. As the dawn approached Paul urged everyone on board to eat something. "You've been fasting a long time," he said. No doubt most had been terribly seasick too! "Take some food; you'll need it to survive. Don't worry, not a hair of any man's head will be lost!" So Paul gave thanks to God for the food, and after eating some bread, everyone was strengthened and encouraged.

**A MIRACULOUS ESCAPE:** With the arrival of daylight they saw a bay with a sandy beach just ahead. This would naturally provide the safest landing spot to run aground, if at all possible. Quickly the remainder of the ship's cargo of grain was thrown overboard to lighten the ship even further. Then the trailing anchors were cut free along with the ropes holding the rudder and a sail was hoisted at the bow of the ship so the wind would blow them towards the beach. This was all good seamanship, but such was the ferociousness of the storm that each man recognised their survival still lay in the hands of God. It is certain that despite their best efforts many lives would have been lost apart from God's protection.

Finally, the fateful moment arrived and, "The ship struck a sand-bar and ran aground." There she stuck fast and the stern of the boat began to break up under the ceaseless pounding of the waves. Normally under such circumstances, the prisoners would have been killed to prevent them escaping, because a Roman Centurion's life was forfeited if this happened. However, even as the soldiers were about to begin, the Centurion wanted to save Paul, so he stopped them. Then he instructed all those who could swim to jump into the sea and swim ashore. The rest were to grab boards and broken pieces of the ship. It was now a case of 'every man for himself.' Prisoners, sailors, and soldiers alike had to now fight for their lives in the treacherous sea.

Miraculously, every man made it safely to shore - not one life was lost! Just as God had promised Paul, all 276 passengers on that fateful ship survived to struggle ashore; exhausted, but thankful to be alive. In a very real sense, they owed their deliverance to the grace of Almighty God, who spared them along with His beloved servant Paul. Unlike disobedient Jonah centuries earlier who had to be thrown overboard for the safety of the others, Paul's presence on the ship meant security for them all. I hope they remembered to thank God for His grace and mercy toward them. And I pray that each of you will do likewise in regard to His wonderful salvation, freely offered in Jesus Christ!

### QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What was Paul's message to the despairing people on the ship?

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2. How were the sailors stopped from fleeing in the lifeboat?

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3. What evidence do you see of God's care in this shipwreck?

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4. Why did the Centurion not allow the prisoners to be killed?

.....

5. What was the grand climax of the whole terrible experience?

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