

# Lesson 32 – Acts 26:1-32

## Paul Before the King

“What are you, one of those religious people?” A friend invited you to his house, but you said you were going to your church’s youth gathering instead. If you have ever experienced ridicule for being a follower of Jesus, you know the sting of such an accusation.

Picture the scene that day at the Praetorium in Caesarea. It’s impressive. Governor Festus is seated by King Agrippa with all the standard bearers and glory of the Roman Empire surrounding them. In front of them stands Paul in chains giving an eloquent, convincing explanation of God’s miraculous and saving work. Festus reacts, shouting a harsh accusation, “You are out of your mind!”

### Agrippa and Josephus

King Herod Agrippa II had a connection with the well-known historian Josephus, who lived from 37 to 100 A.D. Josephus and Agrippa (b.27/28) had a few things in common. They were Jews who had to decide whether they would fight for or against the Romans. Josephus at first fought against the Romans but eventually went over to their side around the year 67. Later, he would gain the trust of the Roman military leader, Titus, who would lay siege to Jerusalem and lead the destruction of the city and the temple in 70 A.D.

Agrippa chose his side more quickly. He had been educated in Rome, adopted its lifestyle, and found favor with the Roman rulers. During Agrippa’s rule, the Jewish people grew frustrated with him, his Roman lifestyle, and his abuse of authority in regard to the high priesthood.

King Agrippa worked to convince his fellow Jews not to revolt. It didn’t stop them. In the end, Agrippa sent troops to fight against the Jews and was eventually expelled from Jerusalem. After the revolt ended, he lived as a private citizen in Rome. There it seems that these two men, Agrippa and Josephus, came to know each other. Two letters from Agrippa were preserved by Josephus, whose most well-known writings are *The Jewish War* and *The Antiquities of the Jews*.

[TM note: In *The Jewish War*, Josephus recounts the Jewish revolt against the Romans (66–70). *Antiquities of the Jews* recounts the history of the world from a Jewish perspective. These works provide helpful information about Judaism during that time and some background of early Christianity.]

### Into the Word: Acts 26:1-32

Paul stood before King Agrippa in a royal court, not for a trial, but because the king was curious about this fellow Jew and his strange situation. Note this event is a fulfillment of Acts 9:15 where God said Paul would “bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel.”

1. Why is Paul pleased to present his case to Agrippa, the Jewish king, after having defended himself to so many Roman rulers? vv.1-2 *After repeatedly explaining himself to Roman authorities who had no understanding of the Jewish traditions or religion, Paul now is before a reasonably impartial Jewish authority. The Romans ruled the region but they had left King Agrippa to govern the temple and high priests. King Agrippa at least understood what the disagreements were about.*

Paul reminds the court (vv.6-7) that he is standing trial for the hope of a promise made to the Jewish nation—the promised Messiah who would come from God and save them.

2. Match the following events in Paul’s life as he presents his case to King Agrippa. As he speaks, Paul divides his life into sections. (Letters will be used more than once.)
  - A. Before becoming a believer (vv.4-5, 9-11)
  - B. Road to Damascus (vv.12-18)
  - C. Obedient to God’s command (vv.19-23)

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| <u>B</u> | a. "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"   |
| <u>A</u> | b. "I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities." |
| <u>A</u> | c. "I lived as a Pharisee."  |
| <u>C</u> | d. "I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision."   |
| <u>B</u> | e. "... for this purpose I have appeared to you ... to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light."      |
| <u>A</u> | f. "I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth."                            |
| <u>C</u> | g. "I stand ... stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place."                             |

Because Paul was testifying about Jesus, the Jews had tried to kill him. So here he was, standing before rulers explaining that Jesus was the one sent by God to save us all through His death and resurrection from the dead.

- Then Governor Festus interrupts Paul and accuses him of being (v.24) *out of his mind! His great learning is driving him mad.*
- Why did Paul have confidence that King Agrippa understood what he was saying even if Governor Festus did not? v.2 *The things Paul has been telling about have all been happening out in public. Agrippa has been aware of what has been going on.*
- What did King Agrippa say to indicate that he understood what Paul was saying? vv.27-28 *"In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian." We have no indication that Agrippa came to faith in Jesus, but he clearly understood what Paul meant when he preached that Jesus was the Messiah who had come as promised by God to save His people. Paul implied that King Agrippa believed the Prophets.*

Paul's wish for the king and for everyone present was that they would "become such as I am, except for these chains." Paul's sincere desire was to see all believe in Jesus and be saved.

The consensus of the authorities who had heard Paul speaking was that he had done nothing that deserved death or imprisonment (vv.30-31).

- Why could King Agrippa and Governor Festus not set Paul free, no matter what their opinion of his case? v.32 *To prevent himself from being sent to Jerusalem for trial, Paul had appealed his case to Caesar. He would be going to Rome.*

[TM note: See Acts 25:9-12 regarding his avoidance of Jerusalem.]

### New Ideas: The Scarlet Thread

Paul said in Acts 26:6 that he was being tried for "the hope of the promise made by God to our Fathers." Paul believed that the Old Testament prophecies pointed to Christ. These connected promises have been called the "scarlet thread," because the message of Christ is woven through the Old and New Testaments. This thread of prophecies and promises signifies the blood of Jesus. The story of Jesus and His saving work is foretold in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New.

Compare these prophecies about Christ with what Paul said in Acts 26:22-23:

- Isaiah 9:2 *The people who walk in darkness will have a great light shine upon them.*
- Isaiah 53:5-6 *There would be one person who would take all of our sin upon himself and be pierced, crushed, and scourged (whipped) so that we could be healed.*

Even though King Agrippa knew what the prophets had taught regarding the promised Messiah, Paul understood that King Agrippa was not willing to accept that Jesus, the risen Son of God, was the Christ.

## Memory Verse

“To open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.”  
Acts 26:18

### Extra Memory Challenge

Hebrews 13:6

*So that we confidently say, “THE LORD IS MY HELPER; I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?”*

## Discussion Questions

*Each teacher should encourage, as much as time permits, discussion and inquiry on the part of students. Not every aspect of the following questions is addressed here, and students may have thoughts related to but not mentioned in this guide. The obligation of the teacher, then, is to understand as deeply as possible the Scriptures that are being discussed, in order to answer as well as possible any questions a student might have.*

1. Imagine if you were Paul standing before King Agrippa. What would be your natural response? What could you pray for so that you might rightly respond when given opportunity to speak about Christ? Consider Galatians 5:22-23 and Ephesians 6:19-20. Remember that the God of peace will be with you (Philippians 4:9).

*Our natural response might be fear, anxiety, nervousness, frustration, or even anger.*

*Galatians 5:22-23 – we could pray that we might display the fruits of the Spirit*

*Ephesians 6:19-20 – we could pray that we might make known with boldness the mystery of the Gospel*

2. Who do you think of as being the smartest person in the world? Why? In Acts 26 Paul is accused of being “out of his mind” because of his “great learning.” Where do we find true wisdom? Proverbs 1:7 and 9:10

*Answers may vary. Plato, Aristotle, Einstein, Steven Hawking, Steve Jobs to name a few possibilities. Proverbs 1:7 and 9:10 remind us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. See also I Corinthians 1:27.*

## Daily Devotions

Sunday:	Psalms 8:1-9
Monday:	Psalms 9:1-6
Tuesday:	Psalms 9:7-10
Wednesday:	Psalms 9:11-16
Thursday:	Psalms 9:17-20
Friday:	Psalms 16:1-6
Saturday:	Psalms 16:7-11

## THE LUTHERAN CHURCH AND ITS CHURCH YEAR

\* What are the important events of Holy Week?

Holy Week is the period of time from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday.

- \* Palm Sunday – the triumphal entry, when Jesus entered Jerusalem as King.
- \* Maundy Thursday – in the Upper Room, Jesus and His disciples shared in the Last Supper.
- \* Good Friday – Jesus was crucified on a cross as King of the Jews on Golgotha.
- \* Easter Sunday – Jesus arose from the dead.

[TM Note: Maundy Thursday (“Maundy” is an old English word for mandate or command), we remember the Lord’s Supper in the Upper Room and on Good Friday we review the Lord’s sacrifice on Calvary.]

1. What were Jesus and the apostles observing when He gave them the Lord’s Supper? (see Luke 22:14-20)

*They were observing the Passover, commemorating God’s deliverance of the Israelites from bondage in Egypt.*

2. How does Psalm 22 describe the crucifixion of Jesus?

*Written by David one thousand years beforehand, Psalm 22 describes the scene at the crucifixion of Jesus almost as an eye-witness account.*