

# OpenTheo

## July 2nd: Daniel 11 & Acts 24:24—25:12

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The conflicts of the kings prior to the advent of Michael. Festus becomes governor.

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## Transcript

Daniel Chapter 11 And as for me, in the first year of Darius the Mede, I stood up to confirm and strengthen him. And now I will show you the truth. Behold, three more kings shall arise in Persia, and a fourth shall be far richer than all of them.

And when he has become strong through his riches, he shall stir up all against the kingdom of Greece. Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion, and do as he wills. And as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not to his posterity, nor according to the authority with which he ruled, for his kingdom shall be plucked up and go to others besides these.

Then the king of the south shall be strong, but one of his princes shall be stronger than he and shall rule, and his authority shall be a great authority. After some years they shall

make an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement, but she shall not retain the strength of her arm, and he and his arm shall not endure, but she shall be given up and her attendants, he who fathered her and he who supported her in those times. And from a branch from her roots one shall arise in his place, he shall come against the army and enter the fortress of the king of the north, and he shall deal with them and shall prevail.

He shall also carry off to Egypt their gods with their metal images and their precious vessels of silver and gold, and for some years he shall refrain from attacking the king of the north. Then the latter shall come into the realm of the king of the south, but shall return to his own land. His son shall wage war and assemble a multitude of great forces, which shall keep coming and overflow and pass through, and again shall carry the war as far as his fortress.

Then the king of the south, moved with rage, shall come out and fight against the king of the north, and he shall raise a great multitude, but it shall be given into his hand, and when the multitude is taken away, his heart shall be exalted, and he shall cast down tens of thousands, but he shall not prevail, for the king of the north shall again raise a multitude greater than the first, and after some years he shall come on with a great army and abundant supplies. In those times many shall rise against the king of the south, and the violent among your own people shall lift themselves up in order to fulfil the vision, but they shall fail. Then the king of the north shall come and throw up siege works and take a well fortified city, and the forces of the south shall not stand, or even his best troops, for there shall be no strength to stand.

But he who comes against him shall do as he wills, and none shall stand before him, and he shall stand in the glorious land, with destruction in his hand. He shall set his face to come with the strength of his whole kingdom, and he shall bring terms of an agreement and perform them. He shall give him the daughter of women to destroy the kingdom, but it shall not stand or be to his advantage.

Afterward he shall turn his face to the coastlands, and shall capture many of them, but a commander shall put an end to his insolence, indeed he shall turn his insolence back upon him. Then he shall turn his face back toward the fortresses of his own land, but he shall stumble and fall, and shall not be found. Then shall arise in his place one who shall send an exactor of tribute for the glory of the kingdom, but within a few days he shall be broken, neither in anger nor in battle.

In his place shall arise a contemptible person, to whom royal majesty has not been given. He shall come in without warning, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries. Armies shall be utterly swept away before him and broken, even the prince of the covenant.

And from the time that an alliance is made with him, he shall act deceitfully, and he shall become strong with a small people. Without warning he shall come into the richest parts

of the province, and he shall do what neither his fathers nor his father's fathers have done, scattering among them plunder, spoil, and goods. He shall devise plans against strongholds, but only for a time, and he shall stir up his power and his heart against the king of the south, with a great army.

And the king of the south shall wage war with an exceedingly great and mighty army, but he shall not stand, for plots shall be devised against him. Even those who eat his food shall break him. His army shall be swept away, and many shall fall down slain.

And as for the two kings, their hearts shall be bent on doing evil. They shall speak lies at the same table, but to no avail, for the end is yet to be at the time appointed. And he shall return to his land with great wealth, but his heart shall be set against the holy covenant, and he shall work his will and return to his own land.

At the time appointed he shall return and come into the south, but it shall not be this time as it was before, for ships of Kittim shall come against him, and he shall be afraid and withdraw, and shall turn back and be enraged and take action against the holy covenant. He shall turn back and pay attention to those who forsake the holy covenant. Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple and fortress, and shall take away the regular burnt offering, and they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate.

He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant, but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action, and the wise among the people shall make many understand, though for some days they shall stumble by sword and flame, by captivity and plunder. When they stumble they shall receive a little help, and many shall join themselves to them with flattery, and some of the wise shall stumble, so that they may be refined, purified, and made white, until the time of the end, for it still awaits the appointed time. And the king shall do as he wills.

He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the god of gods. He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished, for what is decreed shall be done. He shall pay no attention to the gods of his fathers, or to the one beloved by women.

He shall not pay attention to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all. He shall honor the god of fortresses instead of these. A god whom his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts.

He shall deal with the strongest fortresses with the help of a foreign god. Those who acknowledge him he shall load with honor. He shall make them rulers over many, and shall divide the land for a price.

At the time of the end the king of the south shall attack him, but the king of the north shall rush upon him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen, and with many ships.

And he shall come into countries, and shall overthrow and pass through. He shall come into the glorious land, and tens of thousands shall fall, but these shall be delivered out of his hand, Edom and Moab and the main part of the Ammonites.

He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. He shall become ruler of the treasures of gold and of silver, and all the precious things of Egypt, and the Libyans and the Cushites shall follow in his train. But news from the east and the north shall alarm him, and he shall go out with great fury to destroy and devote many to destruction.

And he shall pitch his palatial tents between the sea and the glorious holy mountain. Yet he shall come to his end with none to help him. Daniel chapter 11 contains the main part of the fourth and last of Daniel's visions.

This vision runs from chapter 10 to chapter 12. The prophecy covers a period of well over 550 years, and with the frequent ping-ponging the king of the north and the king of the south, it can be quite difficult to follow. It does however provide us with a schema for thinking about much of the intertestamental period.

Beginning with the period from Cyrus to Alexander the Great, it takes us through the six Syrian wars from 274 BC to 168 BC, followed by the Maccabean revolt and taking us down to the time of the Herods. The chapter begins with a verse that really belongs with the preceding chapter. The verse refers to Gabriel's assistance of Michael from the first year of Darius the Mede.

This confirming and strengthening of Michael probably relates to the overthrow of the Babylonian Empire and the subsequent release of Israel, Michael's people. From verse 2, the chapter relates the history of the region that is to be expected. Following Cyrus, three more kings will arise in Persia.

Cambyses, Gaumata, Darius. After them comes the fourth king, who is far richer than all of them, Xerxes. His stirring up against the kingdom of Greece is the second Persian war.

The mighty king that arises after them comes from Greece, it's Alexander the Great. He reigns from 336 to 323 BC. However he does not get to pass on his kingdom to his son.

Rather it is divided among four of his generals. Cassander gets Macedon and Greece, Antigonus, Anatolia and Asia Minor, Seleucus Mesopotamia and Ptolemy, Egypt and the South. In Israel's history it was generally caught between a northern and a southern power.

The northern powers were generally Babylon and the Assyrians. The great southern power was Egypt in its various guises. For much of the chapter that follows, the king of the north is the man who rules in the Seleucid Empire and the king of the south is the Ptolemaic king.

The first Ptolemy, from 322 to 285 BC, established his kingdom in Egypt. He buried the body of Alexander in Alexandria. He was the first of a very long line of Ptolemies.

Seleucus, who had been one of the officers under Ptolemy, was attacked by Antigonus to his west, but was assisted in defeating him by Ptolemy. Ptolemy I was succeeded by Ptolemy II, who gained the authority of Egypt and married his sister. The Seleucid king Antiochus I fought the first of six Syrian wars with Ptolemy II.

After the end of the Second Syrian War, in 248 BC, the war was concluded with a marriage treaty. Berenice, the daughter of Ptolemy II, was given to Antiochus II. Unsurprisingly, Laodice, the replaced wife of Antiochus II, was not happy with this situation.

She poisoned her husband, his new wife Berenice, and their son in 246 BC. After this coup, a branch of her, being Berenice's roots, Ptolemy III, her brother, sought to avenge her death and launched the Third of the Syrian Wars. He prevailed over Seleucus II, Antiochus II's successor, and got a lot of plunder.

Seleucus II's attempts at retaliation failed and he returned to his own land. Verse 10 refers to the heirs of Seleucus II. In 219 BC, the Fourth Syrian War started, Antiochus III and Ptolemy IV fighting.

Ptolemy IV brought up a force against Antiochus III, who was defeated at Raphia in 217 BC. The war ended in 211 BC. The Jews, being in the region between and variously controlled by these powers, was naturally caught up in these conflicts.

Ptolemy IV was exalted in pride and started to persecute the Jews, who were at that time under the rule of his kingdom. Verse 13 refers to Antiochus III's regathering of his forces and forming a greater army. He was preparing for a Fifth Syrian War.

From verse 14, it seems that this period was one of failed Messianic Jewish resistance to the Ptolemies. Ptolemy V became king in 205 BC. Antiochus III launched the Fifth Syrian War.

He took the well-fortified city of Caesarea and the territory of Judah, what is referred to as the Glorious Land in verse 16, came under his control around 197 BC, as he, Antiochus III, otherwise known as Antiochus the Great, took it from the Ptolemies. The Seleucid king Antiochus gave his daughter Cleopatra, not the later, much more famous Cleopatra, to the young Ptolemy V in marriage. Their wedding is actually recorded on the Rosetta Stone.

He hoped by this means to subvert the rule of Ptolemy through the influence of his daughter. However, his plan failed and indeed ended up backfiring. She steered her husband towards alliance with Rome instead of Antiochus.

Antiochus then turned to attack the coastal towns, Ptolemaic and Greek cities. When the Greek cities appealed to the Roman Republic, they fought against Antiochus III. He invaded Greece but Antiochus was decisively defeated by the Romans at Thermopylae and Magnesia who took Asia Minor from him and drove him back into his land.

In the Treaty of Appamea in 188 BC, Antiochus III was forced completely to abandon Europe and had no choice but to submit to other humiliating terms. He was murdered in 187 BC while trying to plunder a temple in Susa to pay off his war debts, being removed as it were from the playing field, the events of verse 19. After this in verse 20 we have the rise of Seleucus IV.

He was the heir of Antiochus III who needed to pay off his father's war debts to the Romans. He sent Heliodorus to the temple in Jerusalem to loot its treasuries but he was expelled from the temple. He claimed that supernatural powers had prevented him from entering.

Later, Heliodorus assassinated his master Seleucus IV, hoping to seize the throne for himself. After the assassination of his brother Seleucus IV by the usurper Heliodorus, Antiochus IV otherwise known as Epiphanes, another son of Antiochus III the Great, recovered the kingdom in 175 BC with the aid of the king of Pergamum. He claimed to rule as co-regent with an infant son of Seleucus IV on behalf of the rightful heir Demetrius I, his nephew, who was imprisoned in Rome.

Antiochus IV later murdered his infant co-regent. During this period in Jerusalem there were tensions between two factions, the Toboids and the Onaids. The former were Hellenizers who celebrated the cultural sophistication of the Greeks, represented by Syria, and the latter were more conservative Jews who supported Jewish nationalism or Egyptian governance.

These two groups struggled for dominance over the high priesthood in Jerusalem in the years leading up to the Maccabean Revolt. The high priesthood was the focal Jewish power in Jerusalem at the time. The Onaids were represented by Annias III, the high priest and descendant of Zadok.

They resented the Hellenizing influence of Seleucid rule. The conflict between these two factions would play an important role in what followed. Joshua, who had taken the Greek name Jason, representing the Toboids, although he was the brother of Annias III, was sent to Antiochus IV and he proposed that he replace his brother as high priest in exchange for increased tax revenue and proactive Hellenization of Jerusalem.

Jason was made high priest in 174 BC. Although he was the high priest, Jason encouraged his compatriots to adopt Greek culture and values. He built a large gymnasium next to the temple and Jews participating in the games would use false foreskins to hide their circumcision as they competed naked.

In 171 BC, a Tobaïd named Menelaus was sent to Antiochus with the tribute. He offered greatly to increase Jerusalem's tax revenue if Antiochus would only install him as high priest instead of Jason. Sure enough, Menelaus, though having no connection with the line of Zadok or Aaron, was established as high priest by Antiochus.

Menelaus raided the temple treasuries to pay tribute to Antiochus. When Annias III, who had been deposed for Jason, Menelaus' predecessor, publicly protested against this, Menelaus had him murdered. The murder of Annias III is likely the reference to the Prince of the Covenant in verse 22, which summarises events of Antiochus IV Epiphany's reign.

Verse 23 likely describes Antiochus' deceitful rise to power, initially presenting himself as ruling for the sake of the imprisoned Demetrius, but then seizing power for himself. Antiochus had greater wealth to employ than his predecessors, who had costly war debts to Rome. Antiochus IV used his larger funds to buy loyalty.

His desire for funding is an important element of what precipitated the crisis of the period in Jerusalem. The Anniads appealed to Ptolemy to help. A young Ptolemy VI sent a force into the south of Syria, hoping to take back Jerusalem in 170 BC.

This kicked off the Sixth Syrian War. They had lost Jerusalem to the Seleucids under Antiochus III in 197 BC. However, this force was decisively defeated by Antiochus IV Epiphany's, as Ptolemy was betrayed by people close to him.

Antiochus ended up taking the whole of Egypt, save for Alexandria. He took Ptolemy VI captive and reduced Ptolemy his nephew to the status of a puppet king. In response to this, the city of Alexandria set up Ptolemy VI's younger brother as king there, Ptolemy VIII, called Phiscon.

Ptolemy VI and Antiochus ended up uniting against this common enemy, while still very much scheming against each other, speaking lies at the same table as verse 27 says. Antiochus, however, did not defeat Alexandria, Antiochus was likely concerned about how Rome would respond. After this, he returned to Syria to regroup.

Passing by Jerusalem on his way back, with the help of his high priest Menelaus, Antiochus levied a tax on the people and took tribute from the temple treasury. In his absence, Ptolemy VI, Antiochus' puppet king, was driven out by Ptolemy VIII Phiscon, the man that Alexandria had set up. The deposed Ptolemy VI went to Rome to seek for aid.

In 168 BC, Antiochus IV returned to Egypt. However, now there were Roman forces on the side of Ptolemy VI who weren't happy with this destabilizing of the region. Egypt was Rome's breadbasket, so they were naturally concerned about Antiochus' actions in the region.

The Romans sent a senator, Popilius Linnaeus, who set Antiochus an ultimatum. He drew a circle around Antiochus in the sand, requiring a response from him before he left it.

Either he would withdraw from Egypt, or he would continue his expedition and face the wrath of Rome, who would declare war against him.

The Romans of the ships from Kittim referred to in verse 30, Antiochus, tailed between his legs, had to leave Egypt. In Jerusalem, news was received that Antiochus had been killed. Jason, the high priest who had been deposed for Menelaus, sought to regain control of the priesthood and of Jerusalem.

Menelaus and other leading Tobiads fled to the Syrians in Egypt. Antiochus, who was still very much alive, was infuriated. Crushing rebellious factions in Jerusalem would be just the way to get beyond the humiliation of his Egyptian escapades.

Turning back from Egypt, he would take action against the Holy Covenant. Antiochus IV sought to humiliate the Jews, defiling and dishonoring their worship. He sought aggressively to Hellenize and Paganize the city of Jerusalem, building a large fortress within it.

He required the Jews to refer to the Lord as Jupiter or Zeus Olympius. He set up pagan altars throughout the city, and required that the Jews offer pigs to the Lord. He prohibited faithful Jewish worship and practices such as Sabbath, circumcision and feast days.

He set up a pagan altar within the temple itself, the abomination that makes desolate, offering a pig to Zeus. He plundered the temple treasury and left a force to control Jerusalem in his absence. We should recall that Antiochus' actions here, and the three year cessation of Jewish religious worship, was earlier referred to in chapter 8 verses 8-14.

Then the goat became exceedingly great, but when he was strong the great horn was broken, and instead of it there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven. Out of one of them came a little horn, which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the glorious land. It grew great even to the host of heaven, and some of the host and some of the stars it threw down to the ground and trampled on them.

It became great, even as great as the prince of the host. And the regular burnt offering was taken away from him, and the place of his sanctuary was overthrown. And a host will be given over to it, together with the regular burnt offering because of transgression, and it will throw truth to the ground, and it will act and prosper.

Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to the one who spoke, For how long is the vision concerning the regular burnt offering, the transgression that makes desolate, and the giving over of the sanctuary and host to be trampled underfoot? And he said to me, For two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings,



then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state. The conflict with Antiochus IV was not merely an external one to the nation of Judah. It was also one bound up with internal divisions between Hellenizers and conservative Jews.

While faithful Jews resisted Antiochus and his forced paganization of the land, they suffered horrific persecution, and many were martyred. Many commentators speculate that the little help received by the wise among the people, referred to in verse 34, relates to the Maccabean revolt, as Judean rebels under Judas Maccabees, a nickname meaning hammer, whose father Mattathias, the Hasmonean, sparked the revolt, defeated the Syrian army and re-established the worship of the temple. He rededicated the temple in December of 165 BC.

This would later be commemorated as the Feast of Dedication or Hanukkah. The Maccabees were eventually successful in driving out the Syrian Greeks in 140 BC, establishing the Hasmonean dynasty and enjoying semi-autonomy in the empire. From around 110 BC, they enjoyed independence and they expanded into surrounding regions of Transjordan, Samaria and Idumea.

They forced conversion to Judaism upon the Idumeans, descendants of the Edomites. Later they also added Galilee to the territory. This period of time, much of which is recorded in the books of the Maccabees, was a testing and refining time for the nation, a time of expectation of the Lord's visitation, as the fulfilment of the prophecies of Daniel and others was still awaited.

The Hasmonean dynasty, arising from the Maccabees, was corrupted however. John Hyrcanus, the Hasmonean ruler under which Judea had gained independence, claimed both high priestly and royal office and prerogatives. It was he who had forced the Idumeans to convert.

Verse 36 and following are seen by many as a portrait of Antiochus IV relative to his gods. However, the picture does not fit Antiochus well. Antiochus, for instance, is the king of the north, but the king mentioned here is attacked by the king of the north.

This king also seems to be unfaithful to a covenant that he is under in some way. James Jordan, I believe correctly, argues that this figure is Herod the Great and likely the dynasty that followed him. Even though they had been forcibly converted, the Idumeans had come under the covenant.

The Herods arose from an Idumean ruling family. After the Roman Pompeii occupied Jerusalem in 63 BC, the Hasmoneans retained some nominal power. In 47 BC, the Romans had appointed Herod the Great's father as procurator of Judea.

He had appointed Herod his son as governor of Galilee. Only a few years later, however, Herod's father was killed and Herod took over his position as procurator. To strengthen

their ties with Rome, the Hasmonean dynasty gave one of their daughters to Herod in marriage.

Herod later appointed his seventeen-year-old brother-in-law as high priest. Caught in civil war conflicts between Mark Antony and Octavian, Herod initially sided with Antony as Antony had helped him earlier. However, when he saw the tide of the conflict turning, he switched his allegiance to Octavian.

These events seem to be referred to in verses 40-43. The king of the south is Mark Antony, the king of the north is Octavian. Herod initially fights with the king of the south, but the king of the north comes against him with a superior force and sweeps through the lands.

Rome, this king of the north, ends up taking over Egypt, Libya and then Ethiopia. However, in verse 41, reference is made to his abortive expedition against Edom, Moab and Ammon. Herod is, as verses 37-39 highlight, a man of fortresses, a man who is a wily political operator.

He is unfaithful to the covenant and engages in a lot of paganising practices. In addition to not paying attention to the gods of his fathers, it says that he does not pay attention to the one beloved by women. We might speculate as to what is being referred to here.

Perhaps it's a reference to children. We might think about the massacre of the innocents. Others see some reference to homosexuality in the figure being referred to here.

It might also refer to the Messiah as the desire of women. The concluding verses of the chapter return from Octavian and the Romans to the character of Herod. The alarming news from the north probably refers to messages from Antipater, his son, that two of his older sons had spoken against him to Caesar.

Herod ended up killing both of them and after them Antipater when Antipater tried to kill him. The alarming news from the east seems to be something different. In Matthew chapter 2 verses 1-3 we read This is the troubling news from the east.

Once again it leads an angry Herod to strike out with violence. In this case with the massacre of the innocents. The final verse of the chapter likely refers to Herod's two palaces within Jerusalem, one in the temple complex and the other in the upper city.

However Herod, this violent king would meet a sorry end. No one would come to help him. A question to consider.

What are the lessons that could have been learned from people reading this prophecy when it was first given? Acts chapter 24 verse 24 to chapter 25 verse 12 So he sent for him often and conversed with him. When two years had elapsed, Felix was succeeded by Portius Festus, and desiring to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul in prison. Now three

days after Festus had arrived in the province, he went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea, and the chief priests and the principal men of the Jews laid out their case against Paul, and they urged him, asking as a favor against Paul that he summon him to Jerusalem, because they were planning an ambush to kill him on the way.

Festus replied that Paul was being kept at Caesarea, and that he himself intended to go there shortly. So said he, let the men of authority among you go down with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, let them bring charges against him. After he stayed among them not more than eight or ten days, he went down to Caesarea.

And the next day he took his seat on the tribunal, and ordered Paul to be brought. When he had arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him, that they could not prove. Paul argued in his defense, neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I committed any offense.

But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, Do you wish to go up to Jerusalem, and there be tried on these charges before me? But Paul said, I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you yourself know very well. If then I am a wrongdoer, and have committed anything for which I deserve to die, I do not seek to escape death.

But if there is nothing to their charges against me, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar. Then Festus, when he had conferred with his counsel, answered, To Caesar you have appealed, To Caesar you shall go.

After the high priest Ananias, the elders and Tertullus had come before Felix, and Paul had given his defense, Felix adjourned the trial until Lysias the tribune would arrive. Now at the end of chapter 24 we discover that he summoned Paul before him again, this time with his Jewish wife Drusilla present. As Cray Kina notes, Drusilla might have appreciated having someone like Paul who was familiar with Greco-Roman thought and was able to express traditional Jewish convictions within that sort of idiom, having a potential influence upon her husband.

Paul's speaking before Felix and Drusilla here is also part of the way in which he fulfills what Christ foretold in Luke chapter 21 in the Olivet Discourse, in verses 12-13. But before all this they will lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. This will be your opportunity to bear witness.

And Paul takes his opportunity to bear witness here, he speaks boldly about faith in Christ Jesus, shorthand for the gospel message. More specifically he speaks about righteousness, self-control and the coming judgment. These are core implications of the Christian message for someone in the office of civil authority.

Felix is such a ruler and he must submit to the authority of Christ as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Civil authority comes under the rule of Christ. A governor like Felix bears the sword, but he is responsible to Christ for the way that he does so.

He must learn about righteousness, he must learn about self-control, a classic virtue for rulers in Greco-Roman thought, but here framed in terms of Christian teaching. The ruler without self-control is apt to be tyrannical. The leader, however, who has controlled himself will be much less likely to use his power to prey upon others or to fulfil his lusts.

As we learn more about Felix as a character we will see that he has failed in this regard and is a corrupt ruler in many respects. A message of judgment to come was also very prominent within the teaching of Paul and the other apostles. There was a higher throne to which this world's authorities must answer and the fact that such judgment would come and the one by whom it would be rendered was announced by the raising of Christ from the dead.

Paul makes the same point in his Areopagus speech in Athens in Acts chapter 17. Here we might get some indication of the fact that Paul has a particular form of his message that is especially targeted at those who exercise civil or political authority. Felix seems to be rattled and he sends Paul away saying that he will call him again when he has the opportunity.

He continues to talk to him on regular occasions but he does not free him. This is not the brief postponement of Paul's trial that we might have anticipated. We begin to realise that Felix is a corrupt ruler.

He is hoping to be given a bribe. The longer he delays the greater the pressure would be for Paul or his friends to give one. He also wants to appease the Jews by keeping Paul imprisoned and yet he knows that Paul is innocent so he does not want to condemn him.

Two full years elapse before Porcius Festus replaces Felix as the governor of the province. Three days after Festus arrives he goes up to Jerusalem and at the very start of his tenure as governor the chief priests and the principal men of the Jews present him with Paul's case. They want him as a favour to them to bring Paul back to Jerusalem.

They are hoping to ambush and kill him on the way. This is the second time that they had played the part of brigands in trying to take Paul's life through an ambush. Festus' rejection of the petition of the chief priests and the leading men of the Jews highlights divine protection of Paul.

Festus was a very new ruler and they are requesting a favour at this point which would have put them in his debt and created goodwill at the outset of his governorship. The petition seems to have been made with some insistence too. Festus however seems to be wary.

He invites the leading men of the Jews to join him in going down to Caesarea where they can bring their charges against Paul if there is anything wrong about him. Unbeknownst to Festus he is protecting Paul in this way. The providential protection of God should clearly be seen to lie behind all of this.

God has a purpose for Paul and Paul will come to no harm before that purpose has been fulfilled. Festus only stays in Jerusalem for a few days, 8 to 10 days, and then he goes down to Caesarea and immediately on the very next day he takes up his seat in the tribunal to judge and orders Paul to be brought. As Kena observes there is likely a great irony here.

There was quite likely a backlog of cases after Felix's tenure as governor. As we have seen he used his power to imprison people as a means of extracting bribes. However the Jewish authorities concern to get rid of Paul actually leads Festus to expedite his case and to deal with him immediately.

The Lord actually uses the enemies of Paul to move his case up the queue. What's more, seemingly as a result of this expediting of his case he gets to speak to Agrippa and Bernice shortly afterwards. It is possible that Luke had access to Roman archives.

There were carefully kept records and speeches would be of similar length to those that we see in this chapter. Festus is accompanied by a number of Jews from Jerusalem who come to present the case against Paul. They take a very confrontational tone but they cannot prove their charges.

Paul's response gives some indication that both Jewish and Roman legal concerns are at play. Is Paul a rabble-rouser among his own people, opposing the law, the people and the temple as he was accused of a few chapters ago? Is he seditious against Caesar? He insists that both are not the case. He is a good Jew and he is a good citizen.

The Jews had earlier asked of Festus that Paul be brought to Jerusalem to be tried there. Although Festus was wary he still wishes to do the Jews a favour in offering him a trial in Jerusalem. He might be suggesting a Jewish proceeding over which he presides.

But Paul recognises that the Jews are not to be trusted. He had been involved in their murderous plans against Christians before so he has seen things from the inside. He knows better than to trust them.

He wishes for justice to be done. He isn't seeking to avoid death. There is an implicit criticism of Festus here.

He knows that Festus is too much swayed by political concerns and that he might not get justice from him. He makes clear that he knows that Festus is aware that there is no substance to the allegations made against him and that if Festus were to do this favour for the Jews he would effectively be handing Paul over to them. At this point then he

makes the key move of appealing to Caesar.

He gives himself over to the protection of the state. He rejects Jewish oversight of the Christian church in the process too. This turning away from the court of the Sanhedrin and turning towards the Emperor for justice is one more sign, one more step on the parting of the ways of the early Christian movement and the Jewish authorities.

Darrell Bach notes that what became an appeal for Caesar's judgement was originally the right to have the people rather than an official render judgement. By the time of the first century this had become a matter of the highest official casting judgement in the case. This request was outside of the official code of law so Festus would have enjoyed some latitude in how he handled the appeal.

This also gives Festus an out, a way of escape. Paul knows that Festus is entangled in Jerusalem politics and its machinations and that it would make a righteous judgement very unlikely. Festus in some ways has his hands politically tied.

The exact character of an appeal to Caesar is not entirely clear. What cases was it permitted for instance? Just in capital cases? Just in cases with the Roman citizens? The Caesar in question would have been Nero. Paul isn't necessarily expecting to find justice but he knows that his chances would likely be greater.

Throughout the book of Acts Paul shows great shrewdness in the way that he approaches Jewish authorities and Roman authorities, the way that he will take advantage of certain laws, the way that he will use certain situations to his advantage. He is adaptable and resourceful, always alert to clever ways in which he could turn things to his favour. In Paul's appeal to Caesar he is doubtless thinking about something else though.

In Acts chapter 23 verse 11 the Lord had declared to him, Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome. He knew that the Lord wanted him to go to Rome and this would be a way of precipitating that movement. A question to consider.

Considering Paul's teaching in his epistles, what do you imagine that his message to Felix concerning righteousness, self-control and the coming judgement might have contained?