

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

October 15, 1916. Lesson III.

The Appeal to Caesar—Acts 25: 1-27.

Commentary.—I. Paul accused by the Jews. (vs. 1-7). I. when Festus was come into the Province. Little is known of Festus, who succeeded Felix as governor of the Roman Province of Judea. Josephus speaks of him as a man of better character than Felix. He died two years after becoming governor of Judea. After three days Festus remained in Caesarea, the city where his official residence was to be, but three days or perhaps but one full day, before he went up to Jerusalem, the centre of Jewish influence. It was important that he should become acquainted as soon as possible with the nature and needs of his subjects, and make an attempt to secure the favor of those whom he was to rule. 2. The high priest—This official, now appointed by the Roman Government, stood at the head of the Jewish ecclesiastical system. Chief of the Sanhedrin, not only the members of the Sanhedrin, but other influential Jews also. Informed him against Paul—The verb indicates that the proceedings here assumed a legal form. It was no mere mention in any irregular way, but a definite charge was made, no doubt in the same terms which Tertullus had used before—Lumby. 3. Desired favor against him—Asking a favor against him—R. V. The nature of this favor is explained in the next clause. Festus wished Festus to send to Caesarea to have Paul brought to Jerusalem under the pretence that he might be tried before the Sanhedrin, but the real purpose was that they might in some way bring about his death. Laying wait in the way—The two years that had passed since Paul was rescued from the conspirators who had not lessened the hatred of the Jews toward him nor their desire to kill him. The moral corruption of the Jewish leaders is made clear by this wicked and cruel plot.

4. Answered that Paul was kept in charge (R. V.)—It is probable that Festus was suspicious of the intentions of the Jews who wished Paul brought to Jerusalem. He gave them to understand that Paul was being securely kept in Caesarea and that was the place for him to have a trial, if any trial was necessary. 5. Which among you are able—Festus invited and urged those Jewish leaders who had influence and the ability to bring charges against Paul to go with him to Caesarea and make their accusations there. If there be any wickedness in him—Festus opened the way for a hearing of the case before himself, and Paul's accusers would have the opportunity of showing whether or not there was anything amiss in the prisoner. 6. More than ten days—The marginal reading is, "No more than eight or ten days," and this is in agreement with the Revised Version. The stay of Festus at Jerusalem was not prolonged. He seems to have been active and firm in the prosecution of his duties as governor. Went down into Caesarea—Caesarea was situated on the shore of the Mediterranean and Jerusalem upon a ridge two thousand five hundred feet above the level of the sea, hence there is propriety in saying that Festus "went down" to Caesarea. The next day—There was no delay in giving Paul's accusers an opportunity to present their case. Sitting on the judgment seat—Festus as the governor of a Roman province, was also a judge, and before him were brought cases for trial. 7. Stood round about—In their eagerness to secure Paul's condemnation. Many and grievous complaints—No doubt the Jews had gathered many complaints against Paul from rumors during the two years since his arrest, and they were glad of the opportunity to bring before Festus their many charges against him. Which they could not prove—The judge did not consider the evidence strong enough to sustain the charges.

8. Answered for himself—The Roman law gave the accused person the opportunity to answer the charges made against him. Neither against the law of the Jews—The accusations against Paul were three as refuted by him in his reply. He had not broken Jewish law nor had he spoken against the Jewish system of religion, but had declared that Jesus came as the fulfillment of the law. Neither against the temple—He had not polluted the temple, as his enemies had charged. Nor yet against Caesar—It is evident that the Jews had charged Paul with sedition against the Roman Government, but the apostle promptly denied any disrespect for Rome. 9. Willing to do the Jews a pleasure—Festus desired to secure the good-will of the Jews. Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem—The procurator had no authority to compel Paul to appear before the Sanhedrin, for that was an ecclesiastical court, and its decisions were not recognized by the civil government. Before me—Festus signified his willingness to go to Jerusalem with him, probably to see that Paul had a proper hearing. 10. I stand at Caesar's judgment seat—Every civic court in the Roman empire was looked upon as Caesar's judgment seat. It was a part of the Roman judicial system. Paul had been brought before Felix many times during the two years of his imprisonment. He, as the Roman citizen, had the right to justice at the hands of Roman judges. As thou very well knowest—It was so evident that Paul had not wronged the Jews that Festus must at once acknowledge his innocence. 11. If I be an offender—The question of Paul's guilt or innocence must be decided by the civil court and not by the Jewish Sanhedrin. I refuse not to die—The apostle was ready to endure any just punishment, even to suffer death, but he was conscious of his innocence. No man may deliver me unto them—Paul was certain of his rights as a Roman citizen. He was firm in his determination to trust to the protection of the Roman government, and there was no power that

could give him over to the Jews against his will. I appeal unto Caesar—Paul had looked the ground over well and had come to the decision to place himself under the power of Rome. An appeal to Caesar meant that his cause would be brought before the emperor himself. 12. Conferred with the council—Festus had those about him who understood the law and its operation, and he consulted with them as to the case before him. Evidently the result of this conference was the decision that no other course was open but to grant Paul's appeal. Hast thou appealed unto Caesar—Doubtless the correct reading is, "Thou hast appealed unto Caesar."

III. Festus and Agrippa consult about Paul (vs. 13-27). Agrippa, who is here mentioned, was Herod Agrippa II, son of Herod Agrippa and the grandson of Herod the Great. He had been placed over the provinces east and north of the Sea of Galilee, and Perea and Galilee were also included in his kingdom. Bernice was his sister. These royal personages visited Festus after he had been settled as procurator over Judea, and, inasmuch as they were Jews, Festus told them about Paul, expecting that they would give him information that would lead him to a better understanding of this notable prisoner. He gave them a history of the case as he had to do with it, and Agrippa expressed a desire to hear Paul speak. Accordingly Paul was brought the next day into the "place of hearing," and was introduced to Agrippa and his company. Festus was in perplexity, for Paul had appealed to Caesar and had committed no crime deserving capital punishment, and he did not know what report to send to Rome with his prisoner. He was hopeful that Agrippa would be able to let some light upon the question.

Questions.—Why had Felix left Paul a prisoner? Who succeeded Felix? Who brought charges against Paul? What did they request Festus to do and for what purpose? What reply did Festus make? What further step was taken in the trial of Paul? Why did Paul appeal to Caesar? Who was Agrippa? Bernice? What request did they make of Festus?

PRACTICAL SURVEY.

Topic.—Contrasted forces.

I. The complexity of the Jews.

II. The perplexity of Festus.

III. The decisive appeal of Paul.

I. The complexity of the Jews. With the Sanhedrin the first thought of a change of government seems to have been the hope of working upon the inexperience of Festus so as to get Paul into their power. It was the religious influence of Paul working mightily, sapping the very foundation of their religious system, presence in Jerusalem held dear Paul was an uncompromising antagonist. Moral corruption, superstition, traditions, the policy and ambition of the priests and their wholesale apostasy from God met his steadfast disapproval. Though two years had passed since the Sanhedrin had accused Paul at a Roman court, their restless hatred and determined purpose to destroy his life had not lessened. On their continued insistence Festus gave the Jews the haughty and genuinely Roman reply that whatever their Oriental notions of justice might be, it was not the custom of the Romans to grant any man's life to his accusers by way of doing a favor, but rather to place the accused and the accusers face to face and so give the accused a full opportunity for self-defense. The Jews knew better than to disclose their real grievances, so they accused Paul of offenses against their best institutions, the law and the temple, and of treason against the state. In truth Paul had put the law in its proper place and had everywhere vindicated its true functions.

II. The perplexity of Festus. As a shrewd man, Festus must have seen that Paul's accusers were capable of fabricating the most groundless charges; and they must have known from the spirit of the apostle that he was an innocent man. He must have known that Felix had found no fault in him. The Jews charged Paul with heresy, treason and sacrilege. Of treason Festus could form a judgment, but he knew nothing of heresy or sacrilege. He was keen enough to see that the only treason of which Paul was guilty was in supporting a "theological king." Manifestly the whole matter was out of his range. Had it been a question of politics or law, that keen judge would have brought all the power of his intellect to bear upon it. There does not seem to have entered the mind of Festus the thought of investigating Christianity. It appeared to him that the men over whom he was appointed to rule were permitting themselves to be passionately absorbed by questions not worthy of a moment's consideration. Nothing could exceed the contemptuous indifference with which he referred to Christ. He looked upon the vital subject of Paul's preaching and of his contest with the Jews as a trifling matter unworthy of the serious consideration of educated men. He made the occasion of Agrippa's visit an opportunity for an explanation of all the "complications" which so confused him. He was painfully embarrassed as to what to say about Paul to Caesar. The law required that he send with each prisoner a full report of his case to the emperor. His failure to declare Paul's freedom and his proposal to place him under trial before the Sanhedrin led to an appeal which ended his authority in the case.

III. The decisive appeal of Paul. Two years of imprisonment had not lessened Paul's courage nor affected his presence of mind. His defense was as clear and firm as ever. He held no desire of revenge against his enemies, no conspiracy against his unrighteous judges, no impatience at so long a trial. He possessed a calm submission to Roman law and a confidence in the divine protection. Continued hardships had tested his quality. He maintained the same quiet dignity and offered the same defense. His appeal to Caesar was proof of a conscience void of offense before God and man, of a humble submission to divinely ordained authority, of a wise avoidance of an unnecessary martyrdom and of an unwearied zeal for the extension of the kingdom of God. Paul eagerly seized the occasion for teaching both

the Roman ruler and the Jewish Agrippa that the gospel was not a mere idle question, but a great reality for which he was ready to die if need be.—T. R. A.

FARM GARDEN

REPORTS ON WINTER GRAINS.

Experiments have been conducted at the Ontario Agricultural College and throughout Ontario in the past year with winter wheat, winter rye, winter barley, winter emmer and hairy vetches. The autumn of 1915 and the spring of 1916 were very wet, and the month of July was dry and hot. About two hundred and ninety varieties of winter wheat and a large number of selections and crosses have been tested at the college within the past twenty-seven years. Of the named varieties fourteen have been grown in each of twenty-one years, and the results of these are of special value. The following gives the average for twenty-one years in yield of both grain and straw per acre and in weight per measured bushel of a few of the leading varieties: Dawson's Golden Chaff 61.3 bushels, 2.9 tons, and 60.1 lbs.; Imperial Amber, 47.9 bushels, 3.2 tons and 61.2 lbs. Early Genesee Giant, 46.8 bushels, 3.0 tons, and 60.2 lbs.; Early Red Clawson, 46.6 bushels, 2.8 tons, and 59.2 lbs.; and Egyptian Amber 46.4 bushels, 3.2 tons and 61.7 lbs.

The average results of the fourteen varieties are as follows: Yield of grain, per acre, 40.9 bushels for 1916, and 45.1 bushels for the twenty-one year period; yield of straw per acre 2.9 tons for 1916, and also for the average of the twenty-one year period; and weight per measured bushel 63.2 lbs. for 1916 and 61.1 lbs. for the whole period. It will be seen that in 1916 the winter wheat gave an average of practically four bushels per acre below and two pounds per measured bushel above the average of the past twenty-one years. Of the twenty-eight varieties of winter wheat which have been tested for the past five years the highest yields in bushels per acre were produced by Grand Prince 46.7, Kharkov 46.4, Imperial Amber 45.3, Gillespie Red 44.9, Yaroslaf 44.7, American Banner 44.1, Thelms 43.8, and Michigan Amber 43.7. Those varieties of winter wheat which produced the largest leaves of bread from equal quantities of flour in the average tests of nine years made in the bakery branch of the chemical department of the college are as follows: Yaroslaf, Banatka, Crimean Red, Tuscan Island, Buda Pesh, Tasmania Red, Egyptian Amber, Kentucky Giant, Rudy, Turkey Red, Treadwell and Bulgarian. Crosses have been made between the Dawson's Golden Chaff and some of the varieties of particularly high quality for bread production, such as Tasmania Red, Crimean Red, Turkey Red, Buda Pesh and Imperial Amber. In the average tests for the past five years one of these crosses has surpassed in yield per acre all the named varieties which were grown at the college.

In treating winter wheat for smut the best results were obtained by immersing the grain for twenty minutes in a solution made by adding one pint of formalin to forty-two gallons of water. This treatment is simple, cheap and effective. Our experiments show the great importance of using large, plump, sound, well matured seed of strong vitality. In the co-operative experiments throughout Ontario reports have been received from thirty-three counties. These results show the following average yields in bushels per acre: Imperial Amber 35.5, American Banner 31.9, Banatka 30.8, and Petkus variety made the highest records both at the College and throughout Ontario. Winter Barley gave a yield in 1916 of 44 bushels and effectual. Our experiments show the great importance of using large, plump, sound, well matured seed of strong vitality. In the co-operative experiments throughout Ontario reports have been received from thirty-three counties. 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