

MESSAGE NOTES: Acts 24-26

"Christianity [is not] simply a warmth-in-the-heart religion [but] a kingdom-on-earth-as-it-is-in heaven religion. It [is not] focused on me and my survival, my spirituality [but] on God's world that still needs the kingdom-message. The gospel is good news which warms our hearts precisely because it isn't just about warming hearts ... That is why we who [worship] do so with material things: water (when people are baptized); bread and wine at the Eucharist... and above all, music. The world of creation has been reclaimed by the living and healing God. - N.T. Wright

Responses to the Resurrection

Paul: Something to Embrace

Acts 24:14-16

"¹⁴ However, I admit that I worship the God of our ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, ¹⁵ and I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. ¹⁶ So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man."

Acts 25:19

"Instead, they had some points of dispute with him about their own religion and about a dead man named Jesus who Paul claimed was alive."

Felix: Something to Fear

Acts 24:22-27

"²² Then Felix, who was well acquainted with the Way, adjourned the proceedings. "When Lysias the commander comes," he said, "I will decide your case." ²³ He ordered the centurion to keep Paul under guard but to give him some freedom and permit his friends to take care of his needs.

²⁴ Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁵ As Paul talked about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you." ²⁶ At the same time he was hoping that Paul would offer him a bribe, so he sent for him frequently and talked with him.

²⁷ When two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, but because Felix wanted to grant a favor to the Jews, he left Paul in prison."

Festus: Something to Navigate

Acts 25:4-5,9,12

⁴ Festus answered, "Paul is being held at Caesarea, and I myself am going there soon. ⁵ Let some of your leaders come with me, and if the man has done anything wrong, they can press charges against him there."

⁹ Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges?"

¹² After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared: "You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!"

Agrippa: Something to Defer

Acts 25:24

²⁴ Festus said: "King Agrippa, and all who are present with us, you see this man! The whole Jewish community has petitioned me about him in Jerusalem and here in Caesarea, shouting that he ought not to live any longer."

Acts 26:25-31

²⁵ "I am not insane, most excellent Festus," Paul replied. "What I am saying is true and reasonable. ²⁶ The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. ²⁷ King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do."

²⁸ Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?"

²⁹ Paul replied, "Short time or long—I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains."

³⁰ The king rose, and with him the governor and Bernice and those sitting with them. ³¹ After they left the room, they began saying to one another, "This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment."

STUDY GUIDE:

STEP ONE: Icebreaker (*Optional*):

- Would you prefer Easter to be earlier or later in the year? Why?

STEP TWO: Prayer & Scripture Reading

- Ask someone in your group to pray to open your time together.
- Ask another person to read **Acts 24:19-27** and **Acts 26:25-31**.

STEP THREE: Discuss Questions

1. What was challenging, encouraging, confusing, or stood out most to you from this past weekend's teaching?
2. What to you is the most compelling evidence for the resurrection? Why?
3. Read Acts 24:14-16. Consider Paul's experience in meeting Jesus. Why don't you think Jesus normally appears to people in this way today?
4. Paul decides to embrace Jesus after his encounter. What does it mean to truly embrace Jesus as your Savior and Lord?
5. Read Acts 26:24-29. Consider King Agrippa's interaction with Paul. Do you believe that Christianity is reasonable? Why or why not and what distinguishes it from other religions?
6. Would you agree or disagree with this statement and why? If Christ is not risen, nothing else matters, and if Christ is risen, nothing else matters.
7. What's one area of your life that the reality of the resurrection may or should cause you to change or think differently about it and why?

STEP FOUR: Prayer: Ask someone in your group to close in prayer.