

Presentation 9—Acts 24-26

In Caesarea: Paul's *Apologia*

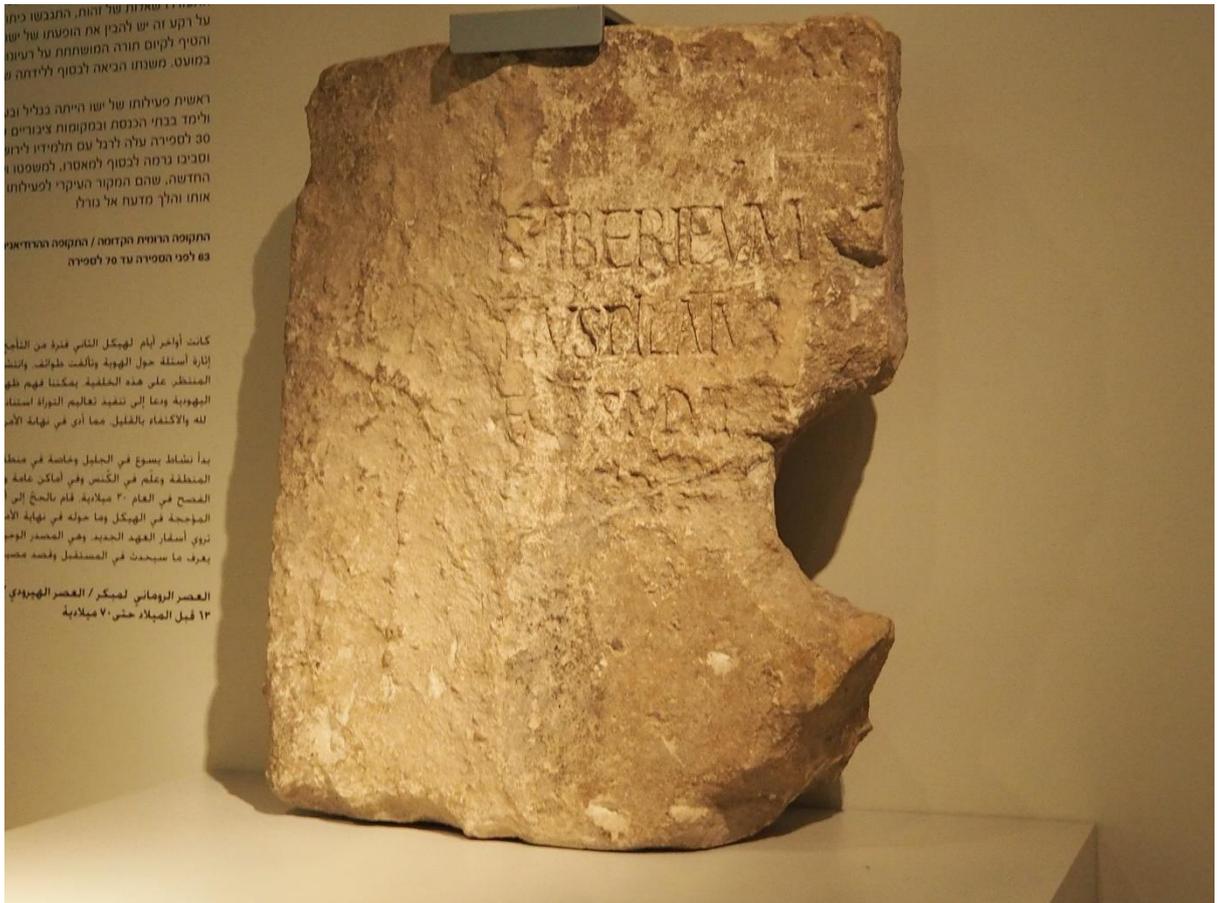


Ancient Caesarea (Photo: Michael Trainor)

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- Acts 24.1-27—*Paul in Caesarea before Governor Felix*. The representatives arguing against Paul and his fidelity to his Jewish Faith.
 - v5-6: Religious authorities malign Paul's faith.
 - v10-21 Paul's first *apologia*. Attests to his fidelity, his hope in God and the resurrection, with a clear conscience, and gives alms to the Jewish world.
 - v22-23—Felix awaits for Festus. Places Paul under house arrest.
 - v24-27. Felix with Drusilla, memory of their illegal relationship, with Drusilla wooed away from her original marriage. Paul speaks of 'justice, self-control and future judgement' (v 25), perhaps an implicit reference to Paul's judgement on the marriage of Felix to Drusilla. Felix waits for a bribe from Paul who is jailed for two years.

 - Acts 25.1-12. *Paul appeals to Caesar*. Festus arrives from Jerusalem, with Jewish accusers against Paul. Paul responds as innocent and appeals to

Caesar (v 11). Festus: ‘You have appealed to Caesar; to Caesar you shall go’ (v12).



An original c26-36 CE inscription (in Israel’s Archaeological Museum) found by Italian archaeologists in 1961 in secondary use during the 4th Century CE renovation of Caesarea’s Roman theatre.¹ It bears (partly) the name of Pontius Pilate. The full Latin inscription reads:

[*DIS AUGUSTI*]S TIBERIÉUM

[...*PONTI*]US PILATUS
 [...*PRAEF*]ECTUS IUDA[EA]E
 [...*FECIT D*]E[*DICAVIT*]

which in English translates as

*To the Divine Augusti [this] Tiberieum
 ...Pontius Pilate
 ...prefect of Judea
 ...has dedicated [this]*

¹ Photo: Michael Trainor

- Acts 25.13-27. *Paul before King Agrippa and Berenice*. Festus lays Paul's case before Agrippa. Agrippa and Berenice emerge with pomp and ceremony to listen to Paul's case.



Herod's Praetorium, with peristyle courtyard.²

- Acts 26.1-29. *Paul's Apologia*. Paul defends his fidelity to the Jewish people, lived as a Pharisee, and is on trial for his authentic interpretation of his Jewish traditions. Affirms his mission to punish the followers of Jesus (v9-11). Paul recounts his meeting with the Risen Jesus and his conversion towards the light (v12-18), which becomes his mission to the Gentiles, to turn them towards the light (v18). Paul affirms the action of God in his call, in conformity with the Hebrew traditions (Torah and Prophets). Festus tells Paul that he is 'mad' (v24). Paul denies his madness and then asks if Agrippa is attracted 'Christianity'! (v28).
- Acts 26.30-32. *Paul declared innocent* and 'could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar' (v32). Paul is like Jesus in his passion: innocent but convicted.

² Photo: Michael Trainor

Luke Timothy Johnson writes:

Luke uses these hearings to eliminate once and for all any false apprehensions concerning Paul: he is not a charlatan but sincere, not a renegade from Judaism, but one faithful to the ancestral customs and beliefs, not a fomenter of unrest, but a prophetic witness to the resurrection, not a cowardly opportunist, but a loyal and obedient disciple who's path of suffering replicates that of Jesus himself. By the rebuttal of the attacks on Paul's person, Luke also focuses the reader [listener] on the real issue: the hope of Israel that is the resurrection of the dead.³

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION & CONVERSATION

- Paul easily engages his detractors who accuse him of religious infidelity? Do you find similar examples today in our church, of people accusing others of infidelity? Where and how is this seen?
- Paul engages with the political establishment. He is not phased by the pomp displayed by Agrippa and Berenice. Do you know of situations where others seek to use power and prestige to influence others?
- Like Jesus in Luke's Gospel, Paul is declared innocent. Do you know of situations where others have been wrongly accused?

IN PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT PRESENTATION

- The next session will focus on Acts 27-28. In preparation for this session, spend time with this section of the *Acts of the Apostles*.

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³ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1992) p. 415.