

International Bible Lessons Commentary
Acts 26:19-32

International Bible Lessons
Sunday, November 4, 2012
L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, November 4, 2012**, is from **Acts 26:19-32**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lessons Commentary* (formerly, *Bible Lesson Forum*) below. **Study Hints for Thinking Further** discuss the five questions below to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion; these hints are available on the **International Bible Lessons Commentary** website. For additional **International Bible Lesson Commentaries**, see the complete and comprehensive **International Bible Lessons Commentary Index**. The weekly **International Bible Lesson** is posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught at **<http://InternationalBibleLessons.org>** and in **The Oklahoman** newspaper.

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Acts 26:19-32

(Acts 26:19) “After that, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,

The King Agrippa that Paul is addressing in this verse is King Agrippa II, and he was the great grandson of Herod the Great. Herod the Great attempted to kill the infant Jesus. Agrippa I killed the Apostle James. The Jewish leaders put Paul on trial before Agrippa II. Paul made the defense of his faith in the verses below. Paul met Jesus in the vision on the road to Damascus, and he did not disobey Jesus the Messiah (see Acts 9).

(Acts 26:20) but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout the countryside of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God and do deeds consistent with repentance.

The Lord Jesus told Ananias that He had chosen Paul to witness to “Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15). Paul proclaimed in Damascus and everywhere that Jesus is the Messiah and “the Son of God” (Acts 15:20). King Agrippa lived immorally with his sister, Bernice, and Paul emphasized repentance as he began his defense of his faith. Paul was not afraid of King Agrippa, because Paul trusted God to keep all of His promises.

(Acts 26:21) For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me.

Paul preached to both Jews and Gentiles the crucial importance of living a life consistent with repentance and faith in Jesus the Messiah and Son of God.

Having persecuted the Christians and approving the

stoning of Stephen in Jerusalem, Paul began to preach and prove that “Jesus was the Christ” (Acts 9:22). Paul was arrested in the temple for preaching Jesus (Acts 21:27), and the Jewish leaders wanted to kill him by entrapment if necessary (Acts 23:12).

(Acts 26:22) To this day I have had help from God, and so I stand here, testifying to both small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would take place:

The Book of Acts shows from the beginning of Paul’s ministry to the end how God helped Paul after he began to obey Jesus (the Book of Acts ends with Paul teaching in Rome). Paul referred to the vision he obeyed, but he then insisted that everything he preached and taught about Jesus was consistent with the Hebrew Scriptures. Moses and the prophets foretold the Messiah’s coming, how He would come, and what He would do (beginning in Genesis 3:15).

(Acts 26:23) that the Messiah must suffer, and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.”

The Jewish leaders had expected the Messiah to come and overthrow their political oppressors and elevate them to greater authority, military power, and riches. Paul said the Scriptures foretold that the Messiah would come first to suffer (see Psalms 22 and Isaiah

53). After His crucifixion, Jesus was the first to rise from the dead to never die again. Jesus proclaimed the truth to all people, both to the Jews and to the Gentiles.

(Acts 26:24) While he was making this defense, Festus exclaimed, “You are out of your mind, Paul! Too much learning is driving you insane!”

Porcius Festus was Procurator of Judea from about 59 to 62 BC, so we know something of the timeframe of Paul’s trial. Festus replaced Felix. Festus recognized that Paul was highly educated, for Paul was educated as a Pharisee at “the feet of Gamaliel” (Acts 22:3). Festus did not believe in Paul’s vision and called his teaching about Jesus “insane.”

(Acts 26:25) But Paul said, “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking the sober truth.

Paul denied that he was insane, and by reading Paul’s reasoning in the Book of Acts and his letters we have good evidence of Paul being of sound mind, with an excellent understanding of how to argue or reason from the Hebrew Scriptures. The truth Paul taught was sober, because it revealed the way to be saved from sin and death through faith in Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ and the apostles also preached a message of repentance from sin and new life. Sober

consequences follow from rejecting the salvation and eternal life that God freely gives through faith in Jesus Christ.

(Acts 26:26) Indeed the king knows about these things, and to him I speak freely; for I am certain that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this was not done in a corner.

King Agrippa II knew the beliefs of the Jews for he had lived under the influence of Herod's court most of his life; whereas Festus was a Roman procurator (as was Pilate, who ordered the crucifixion of Jesus). King Agrippa's ancestors had tried to kill Jesus as an infant, and they had persecuted the apostles; therefore, King Agrippa knew about the gospel that Paul preached and he had been given the opportunity to know the Hebrew Scriptures and Jewish traditions.

(Acts 26:27) King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe."

King Agrippa's family were not Jews. Herod the Great was an Idumean, who was appointed King over the Jews by the Romans conquerors. For generations, Agrippa's family had dealt with the Jews. Paul began to speak about the prophets with King Agrippa, as he did in his missionary efforts with the Jews. If King Agrippa believed the prophets, then Paul could show

through the prophets how Jesus fulfilled their prophecies.

(Acts 26:28) Agrippa said to Paul, “Are you so quickly persuading me to become a Christian?”

After Paul’s vision on the road to Damascus, Jesus sent Ananias to tell Paul that he would carry His name before “Gentiles and kings” (Acts 9:15). So, Paul was not just trying to defend himself when he told the story of his conversion to King Agrippa and the Roman authorities. Paul was trying to tell his story in such a way that his listeners would choose to believe in Jesus the Messiah as their Lord and Savior.

(Acts 26:29) Paul replied, “Whether quickly or not, I pray to God that not only you but also all who are listening to me today might become such as I am—except for these chains.”

Paul indicated that he was not just trying to make quick conversions of his listeners. He was trying to lead people to follow Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. He was trying to lead people to make a total commitment of their lives to serving Christ as he had done. He told them that he would pray and tell everyone listening the truth about Jesus; then, God would do the other needed part of the work of conversion.

(Acts 26:30) Then the king got up, and with him the governor and Bernice and those who had been seated with them;

This trial of Paul was before high officials who answered to the emperor of Rome, and they served at the discretion of the emperor. Neither King Agrippa nor Bernice wanted to change their behavior or quit living immorally as a part of receiving Jesus the Messiah as their Lord and Savior. They enjoyed their wealth and power as pagans in this world. Festus, the governor, probably did not know enough about the prophets and Christian beliefs, and he thought Paul was out of his mind — so they left the court.

(Acts 26:31) and as they were leaving, they said to one another, “This man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment.”

Though they did not want to become Christians, they did not believe Paul had broken any Roman laws by his beliefs or by his preaching. They represented Roman law and justice, not the traditions of the Jewish leaders who had rejected Jesus, James, Peter, Paul and their teachings.

(Acts 26:32) Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to the emperor.”

Paul appealed to the emperor of Rome, because he had that right as a citizen of Rome (see Acts 22:28-29), and he knew that he had done nothing wrong. He did not want to go back to Jerusalem, for he knew he would be arrested again, and he would face a mock and unfair trial that could lead to his death (see Acts 25:9-12). He also wanted to teach about Jesus in Rome. Notice that Paul was declared “not guilty” by these Roman authorities, and they honored Paul’s appeal and sent him to Rome rather than turn him over to the Jewish leaders who would have murdered Paul.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What are some things that can happen to a person if they choose to disobey Jesus and the Scriptures?
2. Why did Paul make his defense both from his experience and from the Scriptures.
3. Explain why Paul insisted that people “should repent and turn to God and do deeds consistent with repentance” (Acts 26:20)?
4. Why did Paul insist that he preached “nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would take place” (Acts 26:22)?

5. How did Paul respond when Festus called Paul “insane”?

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