

**Bible e-Study** on the book of Acts (25:18-19)

**Jesus: Dead or Alive?**

***“18 When his accusers got up to speak, they did not charge him with any of the crimes I had expected. 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.”***

***Acts 25:18-19***

**NUGGET** – These words come from the mouth of Festus as he explains to King Agrippa about Paul and why he is in Festus’ custody. (And why he is sending him on to Rome, though for us, we see that as the hand of God moving in Paul’s life.) This explanation centers on why the Jews were accusing Paul and what Festus understood to be Paul’s defense. Now the Jew’s accusations are, of course, trumped up looking back in the previous chapters. We know that the Jews were simply trying to maneuver events so that they could find a way to kill Paul. Sound familiar? Of course it does.

This is what happened with Jesus also. He too was falsely accused. He too was put under Roman custody, the wrong authority, for His ‘crimes’. This is what happens when the state usurps spiritual authority. Festus’ words make this clear – *“did not charge him with any of the crimes I had expected”* and *“points of dispute with him about their religion”*. Festus had no true authority in such matters. His authority was in the civil / criminal realm. Anyone with authority that is not rightfully theirs finds it hard to refuse.

And like in Jesus case, so also with Paul, the state is being used by the religious authorities to try and do the work of killing him for them even though Jesus nor Paul had done anything to deserve death. But Paul, according to Festus’ words, makes his defense based on *“a dead man named Jesus who Paul claimed was alive.”* And here is the crux of the matter. Paul is playing ‘you bet your life’ on his belief that Jesus is alive, and Festus doesn’t know what to do with that. He appears to be confused and chalks it up to a religious dispute.

The next verse tells us that Festus *“was at a loss how to investigate such matters.”* As we said, this is the crux of the matter for Festus, as it remains the single most important matter down to today. Is Jesus dead or alive? It seems from what Festus says that people of that day knew the name and person of Jesus and that it was known that He had indeed died. But how do you investigate whether or not He is alive when He is nowhere to be seen?

It relies then as now, on the testimony of those who claim to have seen Him. Do you, as Paul, ‘bet your life’ on their and his testimony? After all Paul claims to have seen Jesus on the way to Damascus and others claim to have seen Him on their way to Emmaus and others over a period of weeks claim to have seen, talked and ate with Him. That is the hinge point for us, as it is for Festus and Agrippa and for the world.

**APPLICATION -**

1. From Festus we can learn to have compassion and understanding for those today who also don’t know what to do with the claim that the dead man, Jesus, is alive.
2. We do well to remember that we are always ‘on trial’ for the gift of faith that we’ve been given. Trusting the testimony of scripture regarding Jesus Christ will always put us in conflict with other authority.

**PRAY** – Holy Spirit, grant us boldness as You did to Paul to share what we know to be true of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, that others hearts may become softened to that truth. In Jesus name, Amen.