

# PALESTINE IN THE TIME OF AGRIPPA II. 48-70 A.D.

English Miles  
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**THE PROMISE EXPLAINED!**  
**ACTS CH25:23 – Ch26:32**

**ILLUSTRATION**

What is a promise? A declaration or assurance that one will do something or that a particular thing will happen. What are some well known promises that have been kept? A website called, "PolitiFact Tracks" tracked the promises made by politicians and assigns them one of five labels: promise kept, promise broken, compromise, stalled, and in the works. According to this formula, Obama kept 174 promises, broke 63, compromised on 54, and stalled on 67. Another 148 were still in the works.

**PAUL'S MANNER OF LIFE BEFORE CHRIST! Ch25:23-Ch26:11**

"Paul's trial before Agrippa is the longest and most elaborate of the five. Luke sketches the scene with graphic detail, and Paul's defence speech is more polished in structure and language than the others. One wonders if Luke was present in the visitors gallery. Otherwise Paul (or somebody else) must have rehearsed it all to him later, although Luke may also have had access to the official documentation of the case.

*The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp (23a). They would have on their purple robes of royalty and the gold circlet of the crown on their brows. Doubtless Festus, to do honour to the occasion, had donned the scarlet robe which a governor wore on State occasions. Following them, as they entered the audience room, in the pageantry of the procession, were both the high ranking officers, the military tribunes who were members of the procurators staff, and the leading men of the city. When they had taken their seats, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in (23). According to tradition, he was only a little fellow and unprepossessing in appearance, balding, with beetle brows, hooked nose and bandy legs, yet full of grace. Wearing neither crown nor gown, but only handcuffs and perhaps a plain prisoners tunic, he nevertheless dominated the court with his quiet, Christlike dignity and confidence" (John Stott, Commentary on Acts, pg369).*

V4 – My manner

V5 – How I lived as a Pharisee

V6 – In light of the promise - ***Promises of God concerning the Coming Messiah!***

Genesis Ch3:15, Ch12:1-3, Ch22:1-18

Deuteronomy Ch18:15-19

2 Samuel Ch7:12-17

Psalms 2:1-12, 16:7-11

Isaiah Ch7:14, Ch9:1-7

Micah Ch5:2-5

Zech Ch9:9, Ch13:7

V9 – I opposed the name of Jesus

V10 – I locked up and put to death

V11 – I punished them and with raging fury

How would you summarise such a life?

**PAUL'S MESSAGE IN LIFE BECAUSE OF CHRIST! V12-23**

***What do you make of Mark Ch13:11?*** Paul now has a great opportunity to tell the truth about how Christ appeared to him, and verses 15-17 are crucial! Why? Because we see:

1. V15 - Christ appearing in person to Paul!
2. V16 - Christ's call on Paul's life!

### 3. V17 - Christ sending Paul!

In other words, Christ's identity, call and mission!

**Why does Luke dwell so much on the details here?** I want to suggest that it is because it directly relates to Paul, and the theme of Jesus' resurrection, which has already been raised by Paul, and will be raised by him again:

- Ch23:6 - 8
- Ch24:14 – 16+21
- Ch25:19
- Ch26:6-8 + 22-23
- Ch28:20

So often, the conflict that arises within Christian families is because of where people stand on the resurrection of Jesus. For those who truly believe that Jesus, being fully man and fully God, was crucified and then rose from the dead, ascended into heaven and now reigns supremely at the right hand of God, do life differently, to those who don't believe this! ***THIS BRINGS ULTIMATE CONFLICT!***

#### **PAUL'S MODEL IN LIFE BECOMING LIKE CHRIST! V24-32**

**Herod the Great (ruled 37 - 4 B.C.)** He's the guy in the Christmas story. Super powerful cruel king answerable to Rome. Tried to trick the wise men. Killed the babies in Bethlehem (not to mention some of his own sons and wives) - Matt Ch2:1, 3, Ch2:7, 12-13, 15-16, 19. Luke Ch1:5. **Herod Archelaus (ruled 4 B.C. - A.D. 6)** He was one of Herod the Great's three sons mentioned in the Bible. He received one-half of his father's territory, the area surrounding and near Jerusalem (Judea and Samaria). Joseph was unwilling to move Mary and toddler Jesus to Bethlehem after fleeing to Egypt because Bethlehem was in this Herod's territory and, like his father "the Great," Herod Archelaus wasn't known to be very cuddly either. He got replaced by a Roman procurator less than ten years into his reign; that's why Pontius Pilate is the man in charge at Jesus' crucifixion rather than one of the "Herod's" - Matt Ch2:22. **Herod Antipas (ruled 4 B.C. - A.D. 39)** Jesus called him "the Fox" (Luke 13:32). Received a quarter of his father's territory (Galilee and Perea). Divorced his first wife and married Herodias, the wife of his brother (who was yet a different "Herod"). Killed John the Baptist. ***Pontius Pilate sent Jesus to see this Herod as part of Jesus' trial*** since this Herod was visiting Jerusalem at the time Jesus was sentenced to death. Did you know that Pilate and Herod Antipas became friends that day (Luke 23:12)? - Matt Ch14:1, 3, 6. Mark Ch6:14, 16-18, 20-22. Mark Ch8:15. Luke Ch3:1, 19. Luke Ch8:3. Luke Ch9:7, 9. Luke Ch13:31. Luke Ch23:7, 8, 11-12, 15. Acts Ch4:27. Acts Ch13:1. **Herod Philip the Tetrarch (ruled 4 B.C. - A.D. 34)** Got the remaining quarter of his father's territory (north and east of Galilee—mostly ruled over Syrians and Greeks). Married his niece, Salome, the daughter of Herodias (Herod Antipas's wife-of-sin). **Herod Agrippa I (ruled A.D. 37 - 44 (41-44 in Judea))** Grandson of Herod the Great and nephew of Herodias, Herod Antipas's wife. Eventually ended up ruling over even more territory than his grandfather, Herod the Great. In the book of Acts, he is known as the one who had James (the brother of John) put to death by the sword and put Peter in prison (Acts 12:1-5) ..... although he couldn't keep him there (12:6-19)! Also..... "He did not give God the glory" when referred to as a god by the people of Tyre and Sidon and was thus struck by an angel and "eaten by worms" (Acts 12:20-23). **Herod Agrippa II (ruled A.D. 50's - died around A.D. 93)** Like his father Herod Agrippa I and great-grandfather Herod the Great, he ruled over a large territory. He's the one who interviewed Paul along with the Roman procurator Festus when Paul

was imprisoned in Caesarea, after Paul's third missionary journey (Acts 25 - 26). Agrippa exclaimed to Paul (literal translation): "In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28).

*So the Herod's have not got a great track record, Herod The Great tries to kill Jesus, Herod Antipas has John the Baptist be-headed, Herod Agrippa the 1<sup>st</sup>, has James (John's brother) killed by the sword, Herod Agrippa 2<sup>nd</sup> is sleeping with his younger sister!*

### **APPLICATION**

Why do some people find the Christian faith so difficult to believe?

Is the Christian faith just a crutch for the weak?

Paul thought his faith was true and reasonable, is yours?

What evidence is there for the truth of Christianity?

Could you "persuade" someone about the truth of Christianity?

Can you present the Gospel clearly in a couple of minutes?

What are the basic elements of the Christian message which non-Christians need to hear?