

## Who is Drusilla in the Bible?

Drusilla was the youngest of three daughters born to Herod Agrippa I and is reported to have been very beautiful. Both King Agrippa I and his son Agrippa II were rulers in Israel during the first century. Drusilla is significant because of her interaction with the apostle Paul during one of his imprisonments. Drusilla, along with her husband at the time, Governor Felix, were intrigued by Paul's teaching about Jesus and wanted to hear more (Acts 24:24).

Drusilla came from a royal but dysfunctional family. Her father, Herod Agrippa I, was the grandson of Herod the Great, the king we read about in the Christmas story who ordered the slaughter of all baby boys in Bethlehem in an effort to destroy the Messiah (Matthew 2:1-15). Drusilla's older sister Bernice had a long and checkered sexual history, culminating in an incestuous relationship with their brother, Agrippa II, whom we read about in Acts 25 and 26.

Drusilla was given in marriage at the age of fourteen to Azizus, king of Emeza. The historian Josephus implies that she was unhappy in this marriage and was later seduced by Felix with the help of a Cyprian sorcerer named Simon. Felix, the Roman governor of Judea, took Drusilla as his third wife, and they had a son, also named Agrippa. This son later died in an eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79.

As a Jewess, Drusilla would probably have known about the stoning of Stephen, which happened before she was born (Acts 7:58-60), and the martyrdom of James (Acts 12:2) at the order of her own father. She was married to a man who was well acquainted with Christianity (Acts 24:22). After Paul was arrested in Jerusalem, he was brought to Caesarea. Governor Felix heard the charges brought against him, and Paul presented the

gospel as part of his defense, but Felix delayed giving a verdict. Some days later, Felix with his wife, Drusilla, summoned Paul for another hearing. There was no legal reason for Drusilla to be present at these hearings, so she must have been curious about what Paul had to say.

Speaking before Felix and Drusilla, Paul “spoke about faith in Christ Jesus . . . righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come” (Acts 24:24-25). Luke records that the governor was afraid at Paul’s words and sent Paul back to his cell until a more “convenient” time (verse 25). We are not told what Drusilla’s response was, but Paul’s preaching on self-restraint and the coming judgment must have disturbed her, given her marital history and ungodly lifestyle.

Paul gives us a good model for presenting truth to those who seem to be set against it. He boldly proclaimed the gospel without watering it down to please his audience. It is up to the messenger to deliver the message; what God does with the truth we speak is God’s business. The results are His. As Paul spoke to the court in Caesarea, Drusilla may have seemed to be as far from Christianity as a person can be, yet she was drawn to the message. The gospel has power to reach even the hardest hearts when presented without shame or apology. Paul wrote in Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.” He proved his boldness concerning the gospel when he preached to Felix and Drusilla.