

10.7

Roman Rulers Mentioned in the Book of Acts

Roman Rulers in Palestine

Herod Agrippa: Ruled Galilee (37–44 CE) and All Palestine (41–44 CE)

- a grandson of Herod the Great who was allowed to rule all Palestine in what was a short-lived restoration of the Herodian Empire
- persecuted the fledgling Christian movement in Jerusalem; put James the disciple of Jesus to death and imprisoned Peter (12:1–3)
- politically popular and successful but, according to Acts, was struck by an angel of the Lord for not giving glory to God; eaten by worms and died (12:20–23)

Felix: Ruled Judea (53–60 CE)

- ruled as a procurator or prefect, similar to Pontius Pilate
- a former slave of the emperor Claudius's mother
- his brother Pallas was a close adviser to both Claudius and Nero
- had a Jewish wife, Drusilla (24:24), who was the sister of Agrippa II

- presided at a hearing in Caesarea regarding the fate of Paul, who had been arrested in Jerusalem (chaps. 23–24); described as well informed about Christianity (24:22)
- keeps Paul in prison in Caesarea for two years and passes him on to Festus

Festus: Ruled Judea (60–62 CE)

- another procurator or prefect, successor to Felix
- presided over a new hearing in Caesarea concerning Paul, after which Paul appeals to have his case heard in Rome (25:1–12)
- plays host to Agrippa II and his sister Bernice and gives Paul a chance to preach to them (25:13–27)

Herod Agrippa II: Ruled Galilee (44–100 CE)

- had an unusually long tenure: ruler of Galilee for more than fifty years, including the tumultuous period of the Jewish war with Rome (66–73)
- in the New Testament known only in Acts for his visit (with sister Bernice) to Festus in Caesarea, where he listens to Paul's account of his conversion (25:13–26:32)

Roman Rulers outside Palestine

Sergius Paulus: Proconsul of Cyprus (Date Unknown)

- in Acts, invites Paul and Barnabas to share the Christian message with him and witnesses a punishment miracle when his court magician is struck blind (13:4–12)

Gallio: Proconsul of Achaia (ca. 51–52 CE)

- in Acts, dismisses a mob that has seized Paul, refusing to rule on charges that have to do with religious beliefs rather than substantive criminal matters (18:12–17)

Summary: References to Roman Rulers in the Book of Acts

Herod Agrippa I (12:1–23)

Felix (23:23–24:27)

Festus (chaps. 25–26)

Herod Agrippa II (chaps. 25–26)

Sergius Paulus (13:4–12)

Gallio (18:12–17)