



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Acts of the Apostles

Chapter 28

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Introduction

In This Chapter We Will:

- Review the events on the island of Malta following the shipwreck
- Observe St. Paul's arrival at Rome
- Look at St. Paul's work in Rome while under house arrest



Introduction

- By Chapter 28, we have St. Paul arriving in Rome
- Rome is still at the height of its power, having conquered much of Europe and parts of Asia and Northern Africa
- In the approximately 30 years that occurred between Chapter 2 and Chapter 28, we have Christianity spreading all over the Roman Empire
- The Book of Acts ends simply with St. Paul in Rome, under house arrest, given some freedom, waiting for his big trial in front of Emperor Nero



Introduction

- It seems like a strange way to end the book
- However, it is designed to be a continuing story until Jesus comes back for his church
- Christians are the continuing Book of Acts
- God has given that same power to us as believers that he gave to the early apostles
- He has given us specific gifts and power to *be* his witnesses to the end of the earth

St. Paul's Ministry on Malta (28:1-10)



The Natives Showed Kindness to the Shipwrecked Travelers (1-6)

- It was rainy and cold, as the travelers escaped to the island
- Malta is about 60 miles from the coast of Sicily and has been a Roman colony since 218 BC
- The natives showed kindness by kindling a fire and welcoming them
- The Greeks regarded all those who did not speak their language as barbarians and applied the name to all other nations but their own

St. Paul's Ministry on Malta (28:1-10)



- A viper bit St. Paul, as he gathered sticks and laid them on the fire
- St. Paul took the role of a servant; instead of looking on, he helped
- We saw him while on the ship helping to throw out the tackling
- He displayed the servant leadership that Jesus taught and exemplified
- The natives reacted
- They knew that there is a God who governs the world, so that things do not come to pass by chance
- Though he had escaped the sea, divine justice would not let him escape

St. Paul's Ministry on Malta (28:1-10)



- St. Paul shook off the viper and suffered no harm
- In this was remarkably fulfilled the promise of the Savior, Mark 16:18
- At this point, St. Paul was walking with a lot of faith
- God promised him he was going to make it to Rome
- Do you think it is a "coincidence" that no one else gets bit?"
- Satan is doing his best to try to stop God's plan
- After a time, the natives thought St. Paul was a "god" as no harm had come to him
- We are reminded of the sudden revulsion of feeling among the Lycaonians (Acts 14:18,19)

St. Paul's Ministry on Malta (28:1-10)



- The Lord apparently had a ministry lined up for the Maltese and was setting the platform for St. Paul, who undoubtedly told them about the true God over the "three months" (Acts 28:11) that he spent in Malta

St. Paul's Ministry on Malta (28:1-10)



The Healing of Publius' Father and Others (7-10)

- Publius was a leading citizen of the region, a governor
- He received and entertained the travelers for three days
- Who are the "us" (Acts 28:7,10)?
- It is not clear if this refers to all 276 people, or just St. Paul and his companions
- Publius' father was sick with a fever and dysentery
- Now St. Paul has an opportunity to perform a miraculously healing and get a chance to show how God works and preach the Gospel
- St. Paul went in to him and prayed

St. Paul's Ministry on Malta (28:1-10)



- St. Paul laid hands on him and healed him
- Others on the island with diseases came and were healed
- The islanders honored them in many ways and provided the necessities for them as they departed the island
- St. Luke was a physician; yet we do not find him engaging in these cures



Arrival at Rome (28:11-16)

They Sailed Toward Rome (11-13)

- After three months, an Alexandrian ship (Twin Brothers) sailed from Malta - it had wintered there
- Spring arrived and the wind changed so that they could sail northward to Italy
- They sailed to Syracuse, Rhegium, and then to Puteoli
- Syracuse is a port city on the east coast of Sicily and is about 90 miles northeast of Malta
- Syracuse was the most important city in Sicily
- The shape of Italy is described as being like a giant "boot"
- Rhegium is a harbor on the "toe" of Italy
- It is still another 130 miles to Rome



Arrival at Rome (28:11-16)

- Puteoli is 250 miles north of Rhegium and right next to the modern Italian city of Naples
- "Puteoli" literally means "little wells", in reference to the many hydrothermal wells that were in the city
- Puteoli was also the cargo port for Rome and the nearby Roman naval base at Misenum housed the largest naval fleet in the ancient world
- Earthquakes since have sunk most of Puteoli under water
- We know from the Epistle to the Romans that there was a church at Rome that St. Paul was anxious to visit, and that the brethren were numerous (see Rom 16:1,3,5-15)
- The object must have been to pass a Lord's day and to celebrate the Lord's Supper



Arrival at Rome (28:11-16)

- The courteous Julius consenting, there was no difficulty in St. Paul's delay here
- After the week they started toward Rome
- Their route was along one of the great roads for which the Romans were so famous, the Consular Way to Capus, and the along the celebrated Appian Way to Rome
- The church in Rome determined to meet the great apostle on the way
- They had already received from him the Epistles to the Romans
- No doubt some of his Asiatic or European converts were in the church



Arrival at Rome (28:11-16)

- Aquila and Priscilla had returned to their old home (Rom 16:3) in the Imperial city, and perhaps were of those who met him on the way
- The Roman road system had checkpoints every 10-15 miles
- Both the Three Inns and the Forum of Appius are landmark-checkpoints
- Some met them at Appii Forum, which is forty-three miles from Rome
- Another group met them at The Three Taverns, which is ten miles nearer the great city
- It was wonderful to meet a welcome from loving brethren, already numerous in Rome Rom 16:1,3,5-15



Arrival at Rome (28:11-16)

- It seemed a cheering sign that the church of the capital of the world should meet and greet him
- The distance traveled by land from Puteoli to Rome as about 135 miles
- The centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard—the Prætorian Prefect, to whose custody, as commander of the Prætorian guard, the highest military authority in the city, were committed all who were to come before the emperor for trial
- Ordinarily there were two such prefects; but from A.D. 51 to 62, one distinguished general—Burrus Aframus held that office
- St. Paul was allowed to choose his own residence under the guard of a soldier

St. Paul's Ministry at Rome (28:17-31)



After Three Days, St. Paul Called for the Jewish Leaders (17-22)

- In three days after his arrival as a prisoner he begins his work
- The first three days had probably been devoted to the brethren
- Being under house arrest, he couldn't go to Jewish Leaders, so he had them come to him
- Claudius expelled Jews from Rome in 49 AD and died, allegedly from poisoning
- Those St. Paul called were the leaders of the Jews who had either hidden through Claudius' expulsion order or moved (back) to Rome after his death.

St. Paul's Ministry at Rome (28:17-31)



- When they came together, St. Paul spoke to them
- He noted that he had done nothing against their people or the customs of their fathers
- Lest they should have heard and received malicious reports against him, he thought it best to state his own case
- He reviewed that he had been taken prisoner in Jerusalem and taken into Roman custody

St. Paul's Ministry at Rome (28:17-31)



- He had been examined and was to be released, but the Jews spoke against his release; thus he appealed to Caesar
- He wants them to understand his position; he speaks to them as a kinsman and a brother
- His appeal to Caesar had been of necessity - to save his life
- But he was not going to accuse his brethren before the dominant race
- His first desire was that they should be his friends, and share with him the hope of the gospel of Christ
- That was the reason he called for and spoke with them
- He has proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah
- This, and this alone, is the cause of him being delivered into the hands of the Romans

St. Paul's Ministry at Rome (28:17-31)



- The Jewish leaders responded to St. Paul
- They indicated they had not received letters nor heard of any evil spoken of St. Paul
- The local Jews may have tried to pretend that they know nothing
- They didn't want to cause any trouble and be expelled from Rome again
- They wanted to hear more from St. Paul "concerning this sect"
- His fame was such that they desire to hear what he thinks, or holds; to hear him explain the gospel
- They noted that it had been "spoken against everywhere"

St. Paul's Ministry at Rome (28:17-31)



- Everywhere the Jews spoke against the Christians with malignant hatred
- St. Paul's treatment illustrates this
- While they had heard nothing negative concerning St. Paul, they had heard negative things about Christianity, so they wanted to hear St. Paul's opinion on the matter

St. Paul's Ministry at Rome (28:17-31)



St. Paul Spoke to the Jewish Leaders Again (23-29)

- The Jews met St. Paul again at his place of lodging
- He explained and testified of the kingdom of God and persuaded them concerning Jesus
- He showed that the reign of the Messiah was to be a spiritual reign; and that Jesus, whom the Jewish rulers had lately crucified, was the true Messiah, who should rule in this spiritual kingdom
- These two points were probably those on which he expatiated from morning to evening, proving both out of the law and out of the prophets

St. Paul's Ministry at Rome (28:17-31)



- Jesus himself used this technique to some disciples after his resurrection: "And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27)
- As has been typical for St. Paul in a new city, he first brought the good news of Jesus Christ to those who knew the "Law of Moses and the Prophets" and had been waiting for the Messiah
- Thereafter, he turned to the Gentiles: "Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!" (Acts 28:28)

St. Paul's Ministry at Rome (28:17-31)



- The Gospel split them
- Some were persuaded and some disbelieved
- What will the Gospel do to you?
- It will put you into one of two groups
- Either you will believe it and be saved for eternity, or you will disbelieve and end up in hell for eternity
- The Gospel is a taste of life to those that believe, and a taste of death to those that are disobedient
- St. Paul completed the discourse by quoting from Isaiah 6:9-10 to those Jews who would not believe as they were leaving the room

St. Paul's Ministry at Rome (28:17-31)



- The passage is quoted six times: in the Gospels (Mt 13:14,15; Mk 4:12; Lk 8:10; Jn 12:40), here in Acts, and in Romans (Rom 11:7)
- No other Old Testament passage is so often quoted in the New Testament, and it is always applied to Jewish unbelief
- The terrible prediction of the stubborn, willful unbelief of the nation was fulfilled in Isaiah's time, in the time of Christ, in that of his apostles, and eighteen centuries of Jewish history illustrate the same fact to our times
- These are the final one word of St. Paul to the Jews before beginning his work among the Gentiles in Rome
- The Jews departed and "had a great dispute among themselves"

St. Paul's Ministry at Rome (28:17-31)



St. Paul Continued for Two Years Under House Arrest (30-31)

- St. Paul was allowed to rent his own home for two years
- His expense was met during this period by the church in Rome and elsewhere
- See Phil 4:18, where the Philippians contributions are acknowledged
- St. Paul received all who came to him
- He preached the kingdom of God
- He taught the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ

St. Paul's Ministry at Rome (28:17-31)



- He taught with all confidence, and no one forbade him
- That is the message for you and I to continue with!
- His bonds became the means of spreading the truth, and he became celebrated even in the palace of Nero, Philippians 1:12, Philippians 1:13; and we find that there were several saints, even in Caesar's household, Philippians 4:22, which were, no doubt, the fruits of the apostle's ministry

St. Paul's Ministry at Rome (28:17-31)



- He was permitted to see and preach freely to all who came unto him
- Here he wrote four of his epistles; the letters to the Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and the short letter to Philemon
- Here, from notices in these epistles, we know that Luke (Col 4:14), Timothy (Philem 1:1), Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25 4:18,23), Mark (Acts 1:24), Aristarchus (Col 4:10; Philem 1:24), Demas (Col 4:14; Philem 1:24), and Tychius (Col 4:7,18) were with him at least part of the time
- Nor is there doubt but these two years produced great results in Rome

St. Paul's Ministry at Rome (28:17-31)



- It was at a later period, when Nero fell under the influence of the cruel Tigellinus, that he became a persecutor, and St. Paul had at this time full liberty

St. Paul's Ministry at Rome (28:17-31)



- The Book of Acts was never designed to end at Chapter 28
- It was meant to be a continuing story that ends with the return of Jesus Christ
- Let's go back to the main-theme verse of the Book of Acts, which is found in Chapter 1
- Jesus said to the disciples “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8)
- God has called us to be his witnesses
- He provides us with *power* to be his witnesses and without hindrance



Conclusion

- What was the name of the island where St. Paul was shipwrecked and what were the inhabitants like?
- What problem did St. Paul have, and what did the natives think as a result?
- What Scripture did this fulfill?
- Who in particular was healed on this island?
- How did the brethren help St. Paul, and how did this affect him?
- Who established the church in Rome?
- Whom did St. Paul call to him?
- What reason did he give why he was in Rome?
- What is the "hope of Israel"?



Conclusion

- What had the Jews heard about St. Paul, and why did they want to talk to him?
- What did St. Paul talk about, and what effect did this have?
- What Old Testament Scripture did St. Paul quote regarding them? Summarize it
- Who else had quoted this passage, and what does it mean?
- What did St. Paul intend to do in the future (v28)
- At the end of his ministry, in house arrest, how did St. Paul his time?
- Since the book does not end with an “amen” does that mean we are still writing the Book of Acts?