**Acts of the Apostles  
A Study of New Testament History**  
**Lesson 23  
Acts 28:1-31**

**Paul's Journey to Rome – Part Two**

**Introduction:**

The journey of the apostle Paul to Rome is certainly one of the most thrilling stories recorded in the Scriptures. Following the harrowing experience of a terrible storm on the Mediterranean Sea, and the final frightful moments leading up to the shipwreck on some unknown island, Paul and all those aboard made it safely to land. The weather had been especially harsh in those final days, not only from the storm but also from the bone-chilling rain. It was winter – not only a bad time of the year to travel on the sea, and also a terrible time of the year to be shipwrecked.

Although Paul and his companions did not immediately know where they were, they were immediately greeted by local inhabitants who may have witnessed the shipwreck. Luke tells us, "And the natives showed us unusual kindness; for they kindled a fire and made us all welcome, because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold" (Acts 28:2).

The site of the shipwreck was the island of Malta (called *Mileta* by the Romans), the largest of three islands in the Maltese group, just 58 nautical miles south of Sicily and 158 miles from the Italian mainland. No one knows the exact location of the shipwreck. However, since most of the island is surrounded by cliffs with few beaches, the traditional site of the wreck was said to be a large bay on the northeast part of the island, since named St. Paul's Bay.

Over the years historians began to question the accuracy of this location since it does not fit with Luke's description of the bay (Acts 27:39-44). The first clue comes from the fact that the sailors did not recognize the land prior to their attempt to beach the ship. During the Roman era Malta was well-known to all sea-going merchants. Because of its strategic location, the island had been the site of several maritime battles between Carthaginian and Roman fleets that fought for control of Malta. The island was also populated with large towns and villages, and had one of the best harbors in the region. For Paul's ship to arrive at a bay on the northeast portion of the island, they would have sailed past these familiar landmarks, and past a well-known harbor.

Recent historical and archeological research has discovered a more feasible location for the shipwreck on the southeast corner of the island known today as St. Thomas' Bay. Not only is there a large undersea sandbar near the entrance of the bay, which may have been the sandbar where Paul's ship ran aground, there have also been archeological discoveries that give further credibility to this location. In the late 1960's Maltese fishermen diving in the area around St. Thomas' Bay unearthed four massive iron anchors dating back to the Roman era.

While there is no way to confirm that these are the same four anchors that were cut loose from Paul's ship, the location where they were discovered fits well with Luke's account (Acts 27:40). Those anchors, along with other artifacts, are currently on display at the Malta Maritime Museum.

During the three months Paul spent on Malta he was provided with several opportunities to demonstrate the mercy and power of God. The first incident came when Paul was bitten by deadly viper as he was laying wood on a fire. The local inhabitants of the island assumed he must have committed some terrible crime, such as murder, and was receiving just punishment for his crimes. But when Paul suffered no harm, they quickly came to think of him as a god. The second opportunity came when Paul healed the father of Publius, a leading citizen of Malta who had welcomed Paul and his companions to stay at his estate. News of this event quickly spread among the inhabitants of the island who also came to Paul to be healed of diseases.

After finally leaving Malta and arriving on Italian soil, Paul made his way to Rome. Along the way he found brethren from whom Luke says Paul "took courage." When he arrived in Rome he was placed under house arrest, and was allowed to live by himself with a soldier to guard him. Three days later Paul called for the leaders of the Jews in Rome and gave a passionate defense of the charges that had been made against him, and "solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets" (Acts 28:23).

For the next two years Paul lived "in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him" (Acts 28:30-31).

Although the record in Acts ends two years after Paul's arrival in Rome (AD 60-62), the Biblical record and tradition suggest Paul lived another four years. During this time it is said Paul was briefly released from prison and made additional travels before being imprisoned a second time and executed during the reign of Nero (AD 66). Critics of this view claim there is no record in Acts to support Paul's later release and additional travels. However, the record of Acts simply ends prior to the time Paul would have been released.

Among the letters Paul wrote during the six years from his first to second imprisonment (AD 60-66) are Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, Philippians, 1st Timothy and Titus. When Paul wrote Philippians and Philemon (AD 61-62), Timothy was with him in Rome. However, in the Philippian letter Paul wrote he was sending Timothy to encourage the brethren in Philippi, with hopes of also joining them "as soon as I see how it goes with me" (Philippians 2:19-24). This seems to indicate Paul's appeal to Caesar was being heard, and the apostle was expecting a favorable outcome and to soon be released.

The letter of 1st Timothy (ca. AD 62) was apparently written while Paul was in Macedonia, after Timothy had returned to Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3). Paul planned to join Timothy in Ephesus, and urged the young evangelist, "Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:13). During this time Paul also wrote the letter to Titus (AD 65), whom he had left in Crete to "set in order the things that were lacking" in the churches there (Titus 1:5). However, in that letter Paul urged Titus to join him as soon as possible in Nicopolis (in Macedonia), where the apostle had chosen to spend the winter (Titus 3:12).

However, when Paul wrote 2nd Timothy (AD 66), he had once again been imprisoned. This time Paul was not placed under house arrest, but suffered under far worse conditions – suffering "as an evildoer, even to the point of chains" (2 Timothy 2:9). Tradition says Paul had been interred in the infamous Mamertine Prison in Rome – a dark, cold dungeon reserved for the worst criminals. In his final letter, Paul urged Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, and to bring the cloak and some of the books he had left in Troas (2 Timothy 4:13). Feeling deserted and all alone, except for Luke, his constant companion, Paul urged Timothy to come without delay from Ephesus and bring with him Mark, whom Paul felt would be useful to him "for ministry" (2 Timothy 4:9-11). Eusebius of Caesarea, who wrote in the 4th century AD, stated that Paul was beheaded in Rome during the reign of the Emperor Nero (AD 66), approximately two years after Nero burned Rome (AD 64), blaming Christians for the terrible destruction.

A dungeon cell in the Mametine Prison, Rome

**Memorization:**

Acts 28:28 – "Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!"

**Key Events of Acts 28:1-31**

* Paul shipwrecked on Malta
* Paul is bitten by a viper with no harm, and heals those with diseases
* Placed under house arrest in Rome
* Delivers a passionate defense of his faith in Jesus Christ

**Link to Online Bible Study Tools:**

These websites contain numerous Bible Versions and Translations, Concordances, Dictionaries, Lexicons and many other useful tools: http://biblos.com/ and http://www.biblestudytools.com/ (Click on "Our Library" at the top of the home page)

**The Exposition:**

**I. Paul on Malta (Acts 28:1-10**

**A. Paul survives the shipwreck (Acts 28:1-6)**

1. How did the inhabitants of Malta treat the survivors of the shipwreck?

2. What happened to Paul as he lay wood on the fire, and what did he do?

3. What was the initial reaction of the inhabitants of Malta, and why did they make this assumption about Paul?

4. What did the inhabitants conclude when Paul showed no symptoms?

**B. Paul heals the father of Publius and others on Malta (Acts 28:7-10)**

1. How does Luke describe Publius? What does the name Publius mean?

2. How were Paul and his companions treated by this man?

3. What member of his household was sick, what did Paul do, and what was the result?

4. In general, how were Paul and the others treated by the inhabitants of Malta from that time until their departure?

**II. The final part of Paul's journey to Rome (Acts 28:11-16)**

**A. Strengthened by brethren (Acts 28:11-15)**

1. How long had Paul been on Malta, and where did they find transportation to take them on their journey to Rome?

2. Use a Bible dictionary or commentary explain who the "Twin Brothers" were, and explain why these images would be on a ship's figurehead.

3. When Paul arrived at Puteoli, Luke says "we found brethren, and were invited to stay with them seven days." What could be the significance of the brethren inviting Paul to remain with them seven days?

4. As Paul and his companions traveled toward Rome who greeted them on the way, and how was Paul affected by this?

**B. Arrival in Rome (Acts 28:16)**

1. What was Paul allowed to do upon his arrival in Rome?

**III. Paul's ministry in Rome (Acts 28:17-31)**

**A. Paul calls for the leading Jews of the city (Acts 28:17-22)**

1. After Paul called together the leading Jews in Rome, what explanation did he give concerning his reason for coming to Rome?

2. What was the reply of the leading Jews to Paul's statement?

**B. Paul boldly testified of the kingdom of God, and concerning Jesus Christ (Acts 28:23-29)**

1. When Paul met with these men again, what was the main theme of his message, and what all would this imply?

2. How did Paul persuade them concerning Jesus?

3. What was the reaction to Paul's message?

4. What was the final message Paul gave to those who did not believe?

5. What other person quoted from this same prophecy of Isaiah, and what were the circumstances?

**C. Paul's next two years in Rome (Acts 28:30-31)**

1. Where did Paul stay during the next two years?

2. To whom did Paul preach during this period of time and what was the theme of his message?

3. What kind of opposition did Paul have to his preaching?

**Application:**Be prepared to discuss what lessons can learn from these events, and how these lessons can be applied to present-day situations.

**Timeline of the Apostle Paul**

Disclaimer:  
The dates below are not certain and are based on AD 30 as the date of the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 2) and the establishment of the church (Acts 2:47). Luke did not provide detailed information about when the events in Acts occurred. The approximate dates come from from the events recorded by Luke and by comparing those events with secular history. Even though immense research has been done to arrive at these dates in the chronology of Paul's life, "scholars" do not entirely agree.

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| **Year** | **The Apostle Paul's Life** |
| AD 5 | - Born an Israelite in Tarsus of Cilicia (Acts 22:3; Philippians 3:5) - A Roman citizen by birthright (Acts 22:28) |
| c. 15-20 | - At the school of Galaliel in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3) |
| c. 30 | - Became a Pharisee (Philippians 3:5) |
| 32 | - Present at Stephen's stoning (Acts 7:58-8:1) |
| 33-34 | - Persecutor of the church (Acts 8:1-3; Philippians 3:6) |
| 34 | - Paul's encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19) |
| 34-37 | - Traveled to Arabia and remained there (Galatians 1:17) |
| 37 | - Returned to Damascus (Galatians 1:17; Acts 9:20-25; 2 Corinthians 11:32-33) - Went to Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-29; Galatians 1:18) - Returned to Tarsus for safety (Acts 9:30) |
| 37-46 | - In Tarsus |
| 46 | - Barnabas traveled to Tarsus to seek Paul (Acts 11:25) |
| 47 | - Went to Antioch with Barnabas teaching many people (Acts 11:26)  - Agabus prophesied of a famine (Acts 11:27-28)  - Aid sent to Jerusalem through Barnabas and Saul (Acts 11:29-30)  - Barnabas and Saul returned to Antioch with John Mark (Acts 12:25) - Barnabas and Saul sent out – John Mark was with them (Acts 12:25 – 13:2-3) |
| **First Missionary Journey** | |
| 47-48 | - Traveled from Antioch to Seleucia, then to Cyprus (Acts 13:4)  - While on Cyprus they went to Salamis and Paphos (Acts 13:5-12)  - From Paphos they went to Perga of Pamphylia where John Mark departed for  home (Acts 13:13)  - Ministry in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:14-50)  - At Iconium (Acts 13:51 – 14-6)  - Fled to Lystra and Derbe, preaching the gospel (Acts 14:6-7)  - In Lystra Paul and Barnabas are mistaken for gods (Acts 14:19-20)  - Stoned at Lystra, supposed to be dead, but re-entered the city (Acts 14:19-20  - Departed with Barnabas to Derbe, preaching the gospel (Acts 14:20-21)  - Returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch to strengthen disciples and appoint  elders (Acts 14:21-24)  - From Pisidia they returned to Antioch of Syria and reported their journey to the  church (Acts 14:24-28) |
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| **Interlude** | |
| 49 | - Went to the Jerusalem council with Barnabas (Acts 15:1-29; Galatians 2:1)  - Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch of Syria, teaching and preaching (Acts  15:30-35; Galatians 2:11-14)  - Contention over John Mark cause Barnabas and Paul to separate, Barnabas and John Mark sailed to Cyprus (Acts 15:36-39) |
| **Second Missionary Journey** | |
| 49 | - Paul and Silas depart and went through Syria and Cilicia strengthening the churches (Acts 15:40-41)  - Went to Derbe and Lystra and picked up Timothy, strengthening the churches (Acts 16:1-5)  - Went to Troas where Paul saw a vision of a Macedonian man (Acts 16:16-25)  - Sailed from Troas to Neapolis (Acts 16:11)  - Went to Philippi where Paul meets Lydia (Acts 16:12-15)  - Paul and Silas imprisoned after casting demon out of a slave girl (Acts 16:16-25)  - Prison doors opened miraculously and jailer and his family were baptized (Acts  16:25-34)  - Departed from Philippi (Acts 16:35-40)  - They passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia (Acts 17:1)  - At Thessalonica they preached Christ, but had to flee (Acts 17:1-10)  - At Berea where Paul left Silas and Timothy (Acts 18:1-17)  - At Corinth and rejoined with Silas and Timothy (Acts 18:1-17)  - Spent 1 ½ years working with the church in Corinth  Wrote Galatians  1 & 2 Thessalonians  - Returned to Antioch after stopping at Ephesus, Caeserea and Jerusalem (Acts  18:18-22) |
| **Third Missionary Journey** | |
| 53 | - Traveled through Galatia and Phrygia strengthening the disciples (Acts 18:23)  - Passed through the upper regions on his way to Ephesus (Acts 19:1) |
| 53-56 | - Ministry in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-41)  Wrote 1 Corinthians |
| 56 | - Went to Macedonia (Acts 20:1)  - Traveled to Greece (Acts 20:2)  - Returned to Macedonia (Acts 20:3)  - Went to Troas to break bread with disciples on first day of the week (Acts  20:4-12)  - Assos, Mitylene, Chios, Samos, Togyllium (Acts 20:13-15)  - Paul exhorted the Ephesian elders at Miletus (Acts 20:15-28)  - Cos, Rhodes, Patara, Phoenicia (Acts 21:1-2)  - At Tyre (Acts 21:3-6)  - At Ptolemais (Acts 21:7)  - At Caesarea (Acts 21:8-14)  Wrote 2 Corinthians  Romans |
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| **Arrest and Imprisonment** | |
| 57 | - At Jerusalem (Acts 21:15-25)  - Paul was arrested in the temple and beaten by mob (Acts 21:26-36)  - Addressed the mob (Acts 21:37-22:21)  - Paul's citizenship saved him from scourging (Acts 22:22-29)  - Before the Sanhedrin (Acts 22:30-23-10)  - Jesus told Paul he will bear witness of Him in Rome (Acts 23:11)  - The plot against Paul's life (Acts 23:12-22)  - Sent safely to Felix the governor (Acts 23:23-35)  - Paul before Felix (Acts 24:1-27) |
| 59 | - Paul before Festus (Acts 25:1-12)  - Paul appeals to Caesar (Acts 25:11-12)  - Paul before Agrippa (Acts 25:13-26:32) |
| **Journey to Rome** | |
| 59 | - Paul departed for Rome and sailed to Myra (Acts 27:1-5)  - Sailed to Fair Havens on Crete (Acts 27:6-8)  - Rather than winter at Fair Havens, sailed on despite Paul's warning (Acts  27:9-12)  - During a terrible storm they took measures to save the ship but eventually  shipwrecked on the island of Malta (Acts 27:13-28:1)  - On Malta 3 months (Acts 28:2-10)  - Sailed to Syracuse (Acts 28:11-12)  - Sailed to Rhegium then Puteoli and met brethren on his way to Rome (Acts 28:13) |
| **First Imprisonment at Rome** | |
| 60 | - Arrived in Rome (Acts 28:14-16)  - Met with leading Jews (Acts 28:17-29) |
| 61-61 | - Preached the gospel without hendrance for 2 years in his own rented house  (Acts 28:30-31)  Wrote Philemon  Colossians  Ephesians  Philippians  1 Timothy  Titus |
| **Interlude** | |
| 63-65 | - Released from imprisonment  - Further missionary work |
| **Second Imprisonment at Rome** | |
| 66 | - Imprisoned again (possibly Mamertine Prison in Rome)  Wrote 2 Timothy  - Martyred (history says Paul was beheaded by Nero) |