



THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

LESSON 21 – STUDY QUESTIONS ACTS 28:1-30

DAY ONE

1. Was there something that you heard in the Reflection (Lesson 20, Acts 27) or read in Father McBride's commentary that “jumped out” at you?

Read Acts 28:1-6

2a. We read in Chapter 27 of Acts that Paul, Luke, and their companions have been shipwrecked on their voyage to Rome. As today's lesson begins, the disciples swam safely to an unknown shore, which they learned was Malta. How were they treated by the natives of Malta in verse 2?

b. Paul immediately pitched in to help with the fire by gathering brush. What happened to him when he placed the brush on the fire (verse 3)?

3a. When the natives saw the viper hanging from Paul's hand, they jumped to a conclusion. What was it and what was their reasoning, according to verse 4?

b. To their surprise, Paul shook off the creature into the fire. What was the outcome for Paul in verse 5?

4a. What did the Maltese expect to happen to Paul from the snakebite (beginning of verse 6)?

b. They waited a long time and saw that nothing unusual happened to Paul. In what way did they change their minds (remainder of verse 6)?

5. We read of another time in our study where Paul was mistaken for a god. Refer to Acts 14:8-18 and record a few details of that occasion.

6. CONNECTION: The Maltese attitude toward Paul depended on his circumstances. In the documentary, "Serving Life," prisoners in the Angola, Louisiana Maximum Security Prison volunteer in a hospice program to nurse dying prisoners. Without knowing the crime of their patient, they learned to love and care for him simply as a fellow human being. Many came to understand the dignity and value of human life, including their own, regardless of the circumstances. We too, sometimes judge people by their circumstance. How can we better see the humanity of those around us regardless of who they are or what they have done? Share some thoughts with your small group.

Read and record Mathew 25:36 and begin your prayer today asking God to help you see Christ in all those around you.

DAY TWO
Read Acts 28:7-10

7. As today's passage begins, Luke related that the lands of the leading man of the island were located near the shore of Malta where the ship had wrecked. What was his name, and how did he treat Paul and the others (verse 7)?

8a. The father of Publius could not join in the festivities. What was wrong with him (from the beginning of verse 8)?

b. Paul visited Publius' father and cured him by praying and putting his hands on him. Record Acts 3:6-7 and note who also laid on hands in order to effect a cure through the Holy Spirit.

THINK: St. John Chrysostom said: “the proof of the resurrection is the apostolic miracles; and of the apostolic miracles, the Acts of the Apostles is the school.”

9. Jesus made a promise to his apostles that foretold Paul's visit to Malta. Read and record Mark 16:18 and consider the connection between that promise and today's passage.

10. After Paul cured Publius' father, what happened according to verse 9?

11. The people on the island of Malta were grateful to Paul and his companions. According to verse 10, what did they do to show their gratitude?

12. CONNECTION: In today's passage, we saw outpourings of love and goodness. Publius offered Paul and his shipmates gracious hospitality and Paul healed Publius' father. Paul healed the islanders who were suffering from disease and, in return, they provided Paul's ship with provisions needed for the journey. Later, Publius became the first Bishop of Malta and his conversion led to Malta being one of the first Christian nations. Good begets good. Think of an example of a kindness you have seen from a Christian institution in your community that has multiplied. Share some thoughts with your small group.

Read and record Romans 12:12-13 and write a prayer today thanking God for our heritage of good works.

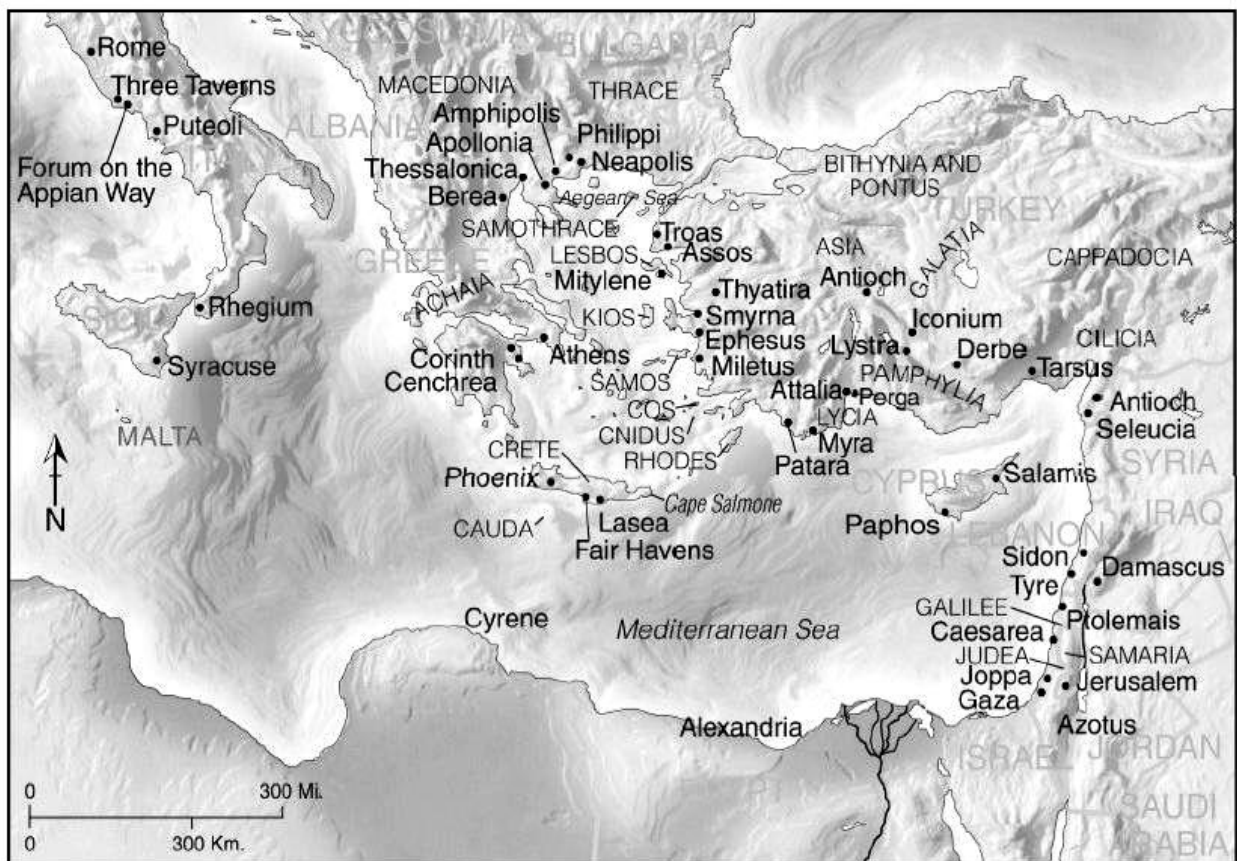
DAY THREE
Read Acts 28:11-15

13a. As today's passage opens, Paul has been in Malta for three months, the length of time when winter navigation was impossible. Luke stated that in the spring Paul and the others

sailed for Rome on a ship that had wintered in Malta. Describe the ship they boarded (verse 1).

b. The Twin Brothers to whom Luke refers are of Roman mythical origin and were considered by the Romans as the patrons of sailors. Can you find any information about them? If so, briefly describe them.

14a. Trace the ship's journey on the map below. List the places they stopped and record the number of days spent at each place (verses 12-14).



b. How long do you think it took them to travel from Malta to Puteoli?

15. According to verse 14, at Puteoli, Italy, their final stop, what welcome surprise did they find?

THINK: Look at Puteoli on the map: it is in Naples Harbor and was a large naval and trading center. Imagine how Christianity has spread in the short time between the Ascension of Jesus and Paul's arrival in Rome!

16. From the last sentence of verse 14, we learn that Paul and the others travelled by land from Naples to Rome, probably on the famous Roman Highway, the Appian Way. Who came to welcome Paul and where did he meet them?

b. Paul has finally reached Rome, which to Luke was “the ends of the earth.” Read and record Acts 1:8, in which Jesus proclaimed his disciples’ mission.

17a. Paul had already written his Letter to the Romans before arriving there. With that in mind, how do you think all of these believers felt and acted when they met Paul?

b. According to the end of verse 15, what effect did all of this have on Paul?

18. CONNECTION: Paul arrived in Rome under guard, but had the freedom to be greeted by his fellow Christians. Once again Paul is in a dangerous place, but he finds support and encouragement from his friends. More importantly, he has never given up on his mission to proclaim the Good News of the Resurrection, which he received from Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 4). Describe someone you know who, like Paul, has faced great trials but stayed true to the mission given them by Christ. Comment on how this person has inspired you through their faith.

Read and record Galatians 1:15-16 and write a prayer thanking God for each adversity which has brought you closer to Him.

DAY FOUR
Read Acts 28:16-22

19a. Today’s lesson begins with a statement that “we came into Rome,” presumably including Luke and Aristarchus. From verse 16, what words tell us that Paul was treated as a Roman citizen under house arrest?

b. Not only could Paul live independently, he could call meetings. What group did he call together in the first part of verse 17?

20a. At the end of verse 17, Paul spoke to the local leaders assembled. Summarize his opening statements (verses 17 to 19).

b. In verse 18, Paul said that the Romans “wanted to release” him. Do you agree or disagree with his assessment of Festus’s and Agrippa’s intentions? Refer to Acts 26:31-32.

21. Although Paul was well treated, he was still a prisoner of the Roman state. Record Paul’s explanation to the Jewish leaders according to verse 20.

22. When Paul spoke of “the hope of Israel,” he was telling them that Jesus Christ was truly the promised Messiah, the descendant of David and Jesse. Read the following passages and record the lines that include specific prophetic references to the “Davidic kingship” of Jesus.

Isaiah 9:6-7

Isaiah 11:1-4

23a. After Paul spoke to the Jewish leaders, they told him they had heard nothing bad about him. What did they say (verse 21)?

b. Although they had heard nothing bad about Paul, apparently they had questions about the sect to which he belonged. What reason did they give for this?

24. CONNECTION: Paul has finally arrived in Rome. He was there to be a witness to Jesus, as the apostles were directed in Acts 1:8. According to the belief of the apostles, Rome was the ends of the earth. Paul and a small Christian contingency were voices for Jesus at the center of the world, the Rome of that day. The Catholic Church of today, still based in Rome, with its one billion plus members, does not closely resemble the Church of the Acts of the Apostles. But as St. Charles Henry Newman stated nineteen centuries later: although an acorn does not resemble an oak tree, yet it is the same plant in a more developed form.

Share some thoughts with your small group regarding the continuation of the Church for 2000 years.

Read Matthew 16:15-19 and record verse 18. Let this thought lead you into prayer.

DAY FIVE

Read Acts 28:23-27

25a. As yesterday's passage closed, the Jews said they would like to hear more from Paul. According to the first sentence of verse 23, what followed?

b. From morning to evening he spoke to the Roman Jews. To what was he testifying (middle of verse 23)?

26. Throughout the second half of Acts Paul proclaimed Jesus' kingdom. Read the following passages and record the phrase in which "kingdom of God" is located:

Acts 14:22:

Acts 19:8:

Acts 20:25:

Acts 28:31:

27a. In verse 23, Paul continued trying to convince his audience about Jesus as Messiah. What were his arguments and to what do you think he was referring?

b. Read and record Luke 24:27, in which, on the road to Emmaus, Jesus pointed out why it was necessary that the Messiah should suffer before he entered into his glory.

28. In verses 24 and 25, we read of the outcome of Paul's arguments. What was it?

29a. When they started to leave, Paul was obviously frustrated. He likened them to the people of Israel who had failed to listen to the prophet Isaiah. In one short sentence, summarize what he said to them (verses 26 to 27)?

b. Paul's admonishment ended on a positive note. Record the last four words of verse 27.

30. CONNECTION: "And I would heal them." These words of God are poignant. Like the Israelites, our hearts can grow dull, our eyes blind and our ears deaf to His message. Separated from God, we become confused, miserable and lost. Yet despite our failure to look, listen or believe, God yearns to heal us. This is the message Paul has worked so hard to proclaim: Come into the Kingdom of God, be reconciled to Him, live in communion with God and each other; let God heal you! How has God's healing grace brought you closer to Him and others? Record some thoughts to share with your group.

Reread Jesus' words from Matthew 13:13-16. Then record verse 16. With eyes, ears and heart wide open begin your prayer.

DAY SIX
Read Acts 28:28-31

31a. Today's passage concludes our study of Acts. As the passage opens, Paul was still speaking to the Jewish leaders, some of whom would not accept Jesus as Messiah. With what statement did Paul warn them that even Gentiles were open to the Word (verse 28)?

b. Just before His Ascension, Jesus prophesied that the Gentiles would join the Jews in His kingdom. In fact he told the apostles that they would spread His Word to all the world. Record his statement from Acts 1:8.

32. Jesus' prophecy provides the framework for Acts. The apostles' ministry started in Jerusalem, (Chapters 1-7); extended to Judea and Samaria (Chapters 8-12); and then to the ends of the earth (Chapters 13-28). This was a restoration of the Davidic kingdom of Israel which under first David, and then his son Solomon, had also extended to those places. Read Acts 15:14-17 and record verses 16 and 17 which relates how the kingdom of David would be rebuilt and extended to the Gentiles.

THINK: While Solomon extended the kingdom through military power, Jesus' kingdom is drawn together by the Holy Spirit.

33. Paul lived in Rome for two years. How does verse 30 describe the way he lived?

34a. According to verse 31, Paul did not change. He remained the same energetic apostle for Jesus that he was when he was first converted. What are the words of verse 31 that indicate this?

b. Verse 31 concludes with two important and remarkable words. Record them here. What do you think is remarkable about those words?

35. Throughout Acts we have seen the Church growing as a visible institution. Read Acts 10:44-48 and Acts 13:1-4. Then identify in which of these passages we see the following aspects of the church.

a. Baptizing and celebrating the Eucharist and other sacraments

b. Creating permanent institutions- hierarchy of priests, bishops and deacons – to carry on the work into the future.

36. CONNECTION: The Holy Spirit lit up the souls of the apostles at Pentecost and changed their lives and ours forever. Simon Peter, who ran away and denied Jesus at the Crucifixion, was transformed into Peter, the Rock on whom Jesus built his church. Saul, the persecutor of the early Christians, became Paul, the great evangelizer of the Gentiles. Jesus has given us the Holy Spirit, our greatest advocate and friend. Share some specific ways in which the Holy Spirit has worked in your life. Record some details of this experience to share with your group.

Read and record Romans 15:13 and may the blessings of the Holy Spirit be with you!

After completing this lesson, read Chapter 28 (refer to pages 145-148 in the edition copyrighted in 1992 by Our Sunday Visitor or pages 191-196 in the edition reprinted in 2013 by Saint Benedict Press) in the *Meditation and Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* by Alfred McBride, O. Praem. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible: Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Be sure to read the Conclusion of “Meditation and Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles” by Father McBride (pages 149-152) and end your study with his thoughts, “We must be souls on fire. We will be warm so long as we stay near the fire...The old revival hymn states, “What a friend we have in Jesus.” The hymn of Acts extends this sentiment: “What a friend we have in the Spirit!”