

NOON BIBLE STUDY: ACTS 28 & BEYOND

ACTS 28:11-15 - TRAVEL ITINERARY

MALTA (3 MONTHS) → SYRACUSE (3 DAYS) → RHEGIUM → PUTEOLI (7 DAYS WITH BRETHREN) (MAP)

V. 15 - MORE BRETHREN COME AND VISIT → HEARING OF PAUL'S PRESENCE NEARBY

V. 14-15 - ESV STUDY BIBLE - THE BROTHERS AT PUTEOLI ARE EVIDENCE THAT CHRISTIANITY HAD NOT ONLY REACHED ROME BY THIS TIME (C.A.D. 60) BUT WAS WIDELY DISPERSED IN ITALY. LUKE'S COMMENT, SO WE CAME TO ROME, MAY SEEM PREMATURE (ROME WAS STILL 130 MILES OR 209 KM AWAY), BUT PERHAPS FUNCTIONS AS A SUMMARY STATEMENT, INDICATING THE PROCESS BY WHICH PAUL REACHED ROME. PAUL'S PARTY WAS MET BY ROMAN CHRISTIANS AT TWO POINTS ALONG THE WAY TO ROME—THE FORUM (OR "MARKETPLACE") OF APPIUS, SOME 40 MILES FROM ROME, AND 12 MILES FARTHER ON AT THREE TAVERNS. PAUL HAD WRITTEN HIS EPISTLE TO THE ROMAN CHURCH THREE YEARS EARLIER, AND, THOUGH HE HAD NOT PERSONALLY VISITED ROME, HIS GREETINGS AT THE END OF ROMANS (ROM. 16:1—16) SHOW THAT HE ALREADY HAD MANY ACQUAINTANCES IN THE CHURCH THERE.



ACTS 28:16 - PAUL ARRIVES IN ROME, HE STAYS IN HIS OWN HOME, WITH SOLDIER GUARDING HIM.

ANCIENT ROME: THE CITY OF ROME WAS FOUNDED UPON SEVEN HILLS ON THE EASTERN SHORE OF THE TIBER RIVER. ROME GREW FROM A SMALL CITY TO AN EMPIRE THROUGH ITS VARIOUS CONQUESTS (ITALY, CARTHAGE IN NORTH AFRICA, GREECE AND MACEDONIA, WESTERN AND NORTHERN EUROPE, AND EGYPT AND MUCH OF THE NEAR EAST). BY PAUL'S DAY, THE SENATORIAL RULE OF THE ROMAN REPUBLIC HAD SUCCEDED TO A CENTRALIZED EMPIRE UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF EMPERORS (AUGUSTUS (27 B.C.—A.D. 14), TIBERIUS (A.D. 14—37), GAIUS (37—41), CLAUDIUS (41—54), AND NERO (54—68).)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE IN ROME CONFIRMS MONUMENTAL STRUCTURES THAT STOOD DURING THE TIME OF PAUL, SUCH AS THE CIRCUS MAXIMUS, TABULARIUM (STATE ARCHIVES), THEATERS (INCLUDING THOSE OF POMPEY AND OF MARCELLUS), AND MULTIPLE FORUMS. LATER, IN THE THIRD CENTURY A.D., THE UMBILICUS ROMAE STOOD IN THE CENTER OF THE CITY, AND THIS CYLINDRICAL MONUMENT MARKED THE THEORETICAL "CENTER" OF THE ROMAN WORLD (LIKELY THIS WAY OF THINKING ABOUT ROME'S PLACE IN THE WORLD STEMMED FROM WELL BEFORE THE NT PERIOD). THE PRESTIGE OF THE EARLY EMPERORS WAS MEMORIALIZED DURING PAUL'S DAY IN THEIR BASILICAS, ARCHES, & FORUMS, IN THE ALTAR OF PEACE, IN THE MAUSOLEUM OF AUGUSTUS, IN PORTICOES AND IMAGES HONORING THEIR EXTENDED IMPERIAL FAMILY, AND IN IMPERIAL CULT TEMPLES. INNUMERABLE PAGAN GODS RECEIVED WORSHIP IN ROME. ESPECIALLY IMPRESSIVE TEMPLES WERE DEDICATED TO SUCH ANCIENT GODS/GODDESSES AS MARS, SATURN, CASTOR AND POLLUX, VESTA, VENUS AND ROMA, APOLLO, & JUPITER. INDEED, DEVOTION TO ALL THE GREAT ROMAN GODS WAS OFFERED IN THE MONUMENTAL DOMED PANTHEON, WHICH STANDS IN ROME TO THIS DAY.

DAILY LIFE IN ROME COULD BE LUXURIOUS FOR THE WEALTHY BUT ONEROUS FOR OTHERS. MULTIPLE AQUEDUCTS AND A HUGE SEWER SYSTEM PROVIDED FOR THE IMMENSE WATER REQUIREMENTS OF ROME, INCLUDING THE MANY BATHHOUSES, FOUNTAINS, AND LATRINES. FOOD HAD TO BE IMPORTED TO SATISFY THE NEEDS OF THIS THRIVING METROPOLIS, AND THE EMPEROR OFTEN DIRECTLY OVERSAW THE VITAL GRAIN SUPPLY. LUXURY VILLAS IN ROME WERE THE PRIVILEGED POSSESSIONS OF THE WEALTHIEST FAMILIES (OFTEN OF SENATORIAL OR EQUESTRIAN RANK) AND ESPECIALLY OF THE EMPERORS, BUT MOST OF THE HOUSING IN ANCIENT ROME CONSISTED OF INSULAE (MULTISTORY APARTMENT BUILDINGS OFTEN CONSTRUCTED ABOVE FIRST-FLOOR SHOPS). CONTEMPORARY AUTHORS SPOKE OF A SEVERELY OVERCROWDED, LOUD, AND SMELLY CITY—A PLACE THAT PROVIDED EVERY VIRTUE AND VICE KNOWN TO MANKIND. THE RESIDENTS OF ROME WERE MOSTLY PAGAN, ALTHOUGH A SIZABLE JEWISH POPULATION ALSO EXISTED (AS EVIDENCED BOTH BY 1ST-CENTURY LITERATURE AND BY LATER REMAINS OF INSCRIPTIONS). (SOURCE: INTRODUCTION TO ROMANS, ESV STUDY BIBLE)

ACTS 28:17-22 - PAUL CALLS FOR JEWISH LEADERS IN ROME. TELLS THEM WHY HE IS THERE.

- PAUL ACTUALLY APPEALS TO THEM PEACEABLE AND WITH A RECONCILIATION-FILLED TONE.
- THE JEWISH LEADERS IN ROME HAD NOT BEEN INFORMED OF PAUL'S TRIAL/CRIME BUT JERUSALEM COUNTERPARTS. HOWEVER, THEY ARE FAMILIAR WITH "SECT" (V. 22) AND WANT TO HEAR FROM PAUL.
- PAUL ARRIVES IN ROME SPRING C. 60AD. HE HAD ARRIVED IN JERUSALEM AND WAS ARRESTED SPRING C. 57AD.

ACTS 28:23-29 - PAUL SPEAKS BEFORE JEWISH LEADERS.

- THEY CAME TO HIM IN LARGE NUMBERS. PAUL'S MESSAGE - KINGDOM OF GOD & JESUS
- V. 24 - SOME PERSUADED. OTHERS WOULDN'T BELIEVE. PAUL QUOTES ISAIAH 6:9-10 (ALSO QUOTED BY JESUS)
- V. 28 - PAUL WILL SPEAK TO GENTILES OF ROME NOW AS JEWS HAVE REJECTED THE MESSAGE.

PAUL IS A PRISONER IN ROME, JUST SPEND THE LAST 3 YEARS TRAVELING IN POOR CONDITIONS FOR A CRIME HE DIDN'T COMMIT AND UPON ARRIVAL TO ROME, RETURNS TO HIS USUAL MANNER OF SPEAKING THE GOSPEL!

ACTS 28:30-31 - 2 MORE YEARS IN ROME

- WELCOMING ALL WHO CAME IN, PREACHING THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND TEACHING CONCERNING THE LORD JESUS CHRIST WITH ALL OPENNESS, UNHINDERED.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

1 - STANDS BEFORE CAESAR NERO

2 — AQUITTED

3 - TRAVELS WEST

4 - ARRESTED AGAIN

5 - MARTYRED.

ESV STUDY NOTE - THIS SITUATION CONTINUED FOR TWO WHOLE YEARS (A.D. 60—62), AT WHICH TIME LUKE'S ACCOUNT ENDS. INFORMATION AS TO WHAT HAPPENED BEYOND THAT TIME COMES FROM EXTRABIBLICAL SOURCES AND FROM HINTS IN THE LAST FEW

OF PAUL'S LETTERS. FIRST CLEMENT 5:7 (WRITTEN A.D. 95, PERHAPS THE EARLIEST KNOWN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WRITING AFTER THE NT) SPEAKS OF PAUL PREACHING IN "THE LIMITS OF THE WEST," WHICH PROBABLY INDICATES HIS FULFILLING HIS DESIRE TO PREACH IN SPAIN (SEE ROM. 15:24). THAT WOULD POINT TO HIS RELEASE FROM THE FIRST ROMAN IMPRISONMENT.

1 CLEMENT 5:5-7 (TRANSLATED BY CHARLES H. HOOLE, 1885) - 5:5 THROUGH ENVY PAUL, TOO, SHOWED BY EXAMPLE THE PRIZE THAT IS GIVEN TO PATIENCE: (6) SEVEN TIMES WAS HE CAST INTO CHAINS; HE WAS BANISHED; HE WAS STONED; HAVING BECOME A HERALD, BOTH IN THE EAST AND IN THE WEST, HE OBTAINED THE NOBLE RENOWN DUE TO HIS FAITH; (7) AND HAVING PREACHED RIGHTEOUSNESS TO THE WHOLE WORLD, AND HAVING COME TO THE EXTREMITY OF THE WEST, AND HAVING BORNE WITNESS BEFORE RULERS, HE DEPARTED AT LENGTH OUT OF THE WORLD, AND WENT TO THE HOLY PLACE, HAVING BECOME THE GREATEST EXAMPLE OF PATIENCE.

2 TIMOTHY 4:16-18 - AT MY FIRST DEFENSE NO ONE SUPPORTED ME, BUT ALL DESERTED ME; MAY IT NOT BE COUNTED AGAINST THEM. 17 BUT THE LORD STOOD WITH ME AND STRENGTHENED ME, SO THAT THROUGH ME THE PROCLAMATION MIGHT BE FULLY ACCOMPLISHED, AND THAT ALL THE GENTILES MIGHT HEAR; AND I WAS RESCUED OUT OF THE LION'S MOUTH. 18 THE LORD WILL RESCUE ME FROM EVERY EVIL DEED, AND WILL BRING ME SAFELY TO HIS HEAVENLY KINGDOM; TO HIM BE THE GLORY FOREVER AND EVER. AMEN.

"THE CHURCH HISTORIAN EUSEBIUS, WRITING IN A.D. 325, CITES THE TRADITION THAT PAUL WAS FREED FROM CONFINEMENT AND CARRIED ON A FURTHER MINISTRY UNTIL HE WAS ARRESTED AND PLACED IN A SECOND ROMAN IMPRISONMENT, AT WHICH TIME HE WAS MARTYRED (ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY 2.22). IN GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY, PAUL'S TIME IN PRISON WAS NOT WASTED, FOR IT WAS DURING HIS ROMAN IMPRISONMENT THAT HE WROTE THE LETTERS TO THE EPHESIANS, PHILIPPIANS, COLOSSIANS, AND PHILEMON. THE TIME AFTER PAUL'S RELEASE FROM HIS FIRST IMPRISONMENT (MID-60S) WOULD BE WHEN HE WROTE 1 TIMOTHY AND TITUS. HE PROBABLY WROTE HIS LAST LETTER, 2 TIMOTHY, DURING HIS SECOND IMPRISONMENT, AS HE AWAITED EXECUTION"

EUSEBIUS PAMPHILIUS: CHURCH HISTORY, LIFE OF CONSTANTINE, ORATION IN PRAISE OF CONSTANTINE, CHAPTER XXV.—THE PERSECUTION UNDER NERO IN WHICH PAUL AND PETER WERE HONORED AT ROME WITH MARTYRDOM IN BEHALF OF RELIGION.

(1) WHEN THE GOVERNMENT OF NERO WAS NOW FIRMLY ESTABLISHED, HE BEGAN TO PLUNGE INTO UNHOLY PURSUITS, AND ARMED HIMSELF EVEN AGAINST THE RELIGION OF THE GOD OF THE UNIVERSE. (2) TO DESCRIBE THE GREATNESS OF HIS DEPRAVITY DOES NOT LIE WITHIN THE PLAN OF THE PRESENT WORK. AS THERE ARE MANY INDEED THAT HAVE RECORDED HIS HISTORY IN MOST ACCURATE NARRATIVES, EVERY ONE MAY AT HIS PLEASURE LEARN FROM THEM THE COARSENESS OF THE MAN'S EXTRAORDINARY MADNESS, UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF WHICH, AFTER HE HAD ACCOMPLISHED THE DESTRUCTION OF SO MANY MYRIADS WITHOUT ANY REASON, HE RAN INTO SUCH BLOOD-GUILTINESS THAT HE DID NOT SPARE EVEN HIS NEAREST RELATIVES AND DEAREST FRIENDS, BUT DESTROYED HIS MOTHER AND HIS BROTHERS AND HIS WIFE, WITH VERY MANY OTHERS OF HIS OWN FAMILY AS HE WOULD PRIVATE AND PUBLIC ENEMIES, WITH VARIOUS KINDS OF DEATHS. (3) BUT WITH ALL THESE THINGS THIS PARTICULAR IN THE CATALOGUE OF HIS CRIMES WAS STILL WANTING, THAT HE WAS THE FIRST OF THE EMPERORS WHO SHOWED HIMSELF AN ENEMY OF THE DIVINE RELIGION. (4) THE ROMAN TERTULLIAN IS LIKEWISE A WITNESS OF THIS. HE WRITES AS FOLLOWS: "EXAMINE YOUR RECORDS. THERE YOU WILL FIND THAT NERO WAS THE FIRST THAT PERSECUTED THIS DOCTRINE, PARTICULARLY THEN WHEN AFTER SUBDUING ALL THE EAST, HE EXERCISED HIS CRUELTY AGAINST ALL AT ROME. WE GLORY IN

HAVING SUCH A MAN THE LEADER IN OUR PUNISHMENT. FOR WHOEVER KNOWS HIM CAN UNDERSTAND THAT NOTHING WAS CONDEMNED BY NERO UNLESS IT WAS SOMETHING OF GREAT EXCELLENCE." (5) THUS PUBLICLY ANNOUNCING HIMSELF AS THE FIRST AMONG GOD'S CHIEF ENEMIES, HE WAS LED ON TO THE SLAUGHTER OF THE APOSTLES. IT IS, THEREFORE, RECORDED THAT PAUL WAS BEHEADED IN ROME ITSELF, AND THAT PETER LIKEWISE WAS CRUCIFIED UNDER NERO. THIS ACCOUNT OF PETER AND PAUL IS SUBSTANTIATED BY THE FACT THAT THEIR NAMES ARE PRESERVED IN THE CEMETERIES OF THAT PLACE EVEN TO THE PRESENT DAY.

NOTE 541 - THIS TRADITION, THAT PAUL SUFFERED MARTYRDOM IN ROME, IS EARLY AND UNIVERSAL, AND DISPUTED BY NO COUNTER-TRADITION AND MAY BE ACCEPTED AS THE ONE CERTAIN HISTORICAL FACT KNOWN ABOUT PAUL OUTSIDE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT ACCOUNTS. CLEMENT (AD. COR. CHAP. 5) IS THE FIRST TO MENTION THE DEATH OF PAUL, AND SEEMS TO IMPLY, THOUGH HE DOES NOT DIRECTLY STATE, THAT HIS DEATH TOOK PLACE IN ROME DURING THE PERSECUTION OF NERO. ORIGEN (QUOTED BY EUSEB. III. 1) STATES THAT HE WAS MARTYRED IN ROME UNDER NERO. TERTULLIAN (AT THE END OF THE SECOND CENTURY)...IS STILL MORE DISTINCT, RECORDING THAT PAUL WAS BEHEADED IN ROME. EUSEBIUS AND JEROME ACCEPT THIS TRADITION UNHESITATINGLY, AND WE MAY DO LIKEWISE. AS A ROMAN CITIZEN, WE SHOULD EXPECT HIM TO MEET DEATH BY THE SWORD (AS OPPOSED TO CRUCIFIXION)

2 TIMOTHY 4:6-8 - FOR I AM ALREADY BEING POURED OUT AS A DRINK OFFERING, AND THE TIME OF MY DEPARTURE HAS COME. 7 I HAVE FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT, I HAVE FINISHED THE COURSE, I HAVE KEPT THE FAITH; 8 IN THE FUTURE THERE IS LAID UP FOR ME THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, WHICH THE LORD, THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE, WILL AWARD TO ME ON THAT DAY; AND NOT ONLY TO ME, BUT ALSO TO ALL WHO HAVE LOVED HIS APPEARING.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED:

ACTS 1-28 — GOSPEL MOVES, THE WORLD BEGINS TO CHANGE

PENTECOST, PETER, PHILIP, GENTILES, SAUL/PAUL, PERSECUTION, MISSIONARY JOURNIES

GOD & CHRIST WORK THROUGH THOSE WHO ARE SERVING HIM & DEVOTED TO THE MISSION

