

ACTS CHAPTER TWENTY EIGHT

Read vs. 1-10

1. How was the weather when Paul began his winter vacation in Malta? (vs. 1-2)

It had now been about two months since Paul began his trip to Rome. That had included a nightmare two weeks of being on the ship during a hurricane, getting blown off course and finally having to abandon the ship and swimming to an unknown island. As they soon discovered, they were on the island of Malta and they were received warmly by the people who lived there. As you can see on the map in lesson 27, they are actually quite close to Italy now.

2. The people of Malta thought that God was extracting justice by _____
_____ (vs. 3 & 4)

There is a principle in scripture repeated many times that obedience brings blessing and disobedience brings chastisement. It is a principle, not a promise, so we can't interpret that to mean that people living for the Lord will never have any trials, but still, in general, when we walk with the Lord, He generally blesses us.

This is the idea that prompted the thinking in the passage. When Paul was bitten by a poisonous snake, the islanders assumed that it was God's way of punishing Paul, so therefore Paul must be deserving of chastisement. As our great God so often does, He turns this event around to work for Paul's good. (cp. Ro. 8:28) Even the natural consequences of the snake bite didn't occur. After watching him for several hours and not seeing any of the symptoms that they were expecting, they changed their minds about him and decided that he must be divine. Paul wasn't a god, but he did have an open door for ministry now, which is just what God intended to give him.

3. What results from the venomous bite did they expect to see? (vs. 6)

The people were acquainted with this snake and the results of a bite. God truly intervened to protect Paul in this circumstance.

4. When no harm came to Paul, the people changed their minds and thought he must be a _____ (vs. 6)
5. How did the people reward Paul and his company for the healing he did in their midst? (vs. 7-10)

Sometimes the people that are around believers get to enjoy some of their blessings. That's just what happened here. God blessed Paul with a tremendous healing ministry while the boat's passengers were waiting for spring to arrive so that they could continue their voyage on another ship. As a result, the islanders treated them extremely well. They all enjoyed a comfortable winter on Malta.

Read vs. 11-31

6. *How long was Paul's stay on Malta? (vs. 11)*

Soon spring arrived and there was another ship, also from Egypt, probably carrying grain, that they were able to sail on. The ship's sign/masthead was Castor & Pollux, the twin sons of Zeus. It was thought to bring luck to sailors.

7. *How was Paul encouraged in vs. 15?*

8. *Describe Paul's living conditions in Rome. (vs. 16, 20, 30, & 31)*

God has unexpected ways to encourage his people even during the darkest trials. Paul's life was not an easy one, but God sent him rich blessings that strengthened him just when he needed it most. He was in prison, but it gave him opportunity to share the gospel with kings and authorities. He was in a shipwreck, but God spared all of their lives. That led to his ministry among the men and then to the people in Malta. He was bitten by a poisonous snake, but that opened the door to share the gospel with many, many people. He was going to Rome to stand trial that might lead to his death, but all along the way he met other believers and had fellowship with them. He is imprisoned in Rome, but has liberty to call people in and to talk with them. God is ever with his children.

9. *Paul was anxious to give account of his arrest to _____ (vs. 17)*

Paul's great love for his Jewish brethren had not changed even though he had much persecution from the Jewish community. In verse 19 he says that he doesn't have any charge to bring against his own people. He bore them no ill will. He knew that they were lost without Christ and blinded to spiritual understanding. He himself had been in that same position just a few years before.

He is talking now to the Jewish leaders in Rome. He briefly reviews the facts of his arrest for their understanding. In verse 20 he says once again that it is because of the hope of Israel that he is bound in chains. The hope of Israel was for their Messiah. Paul preached that Jesus was the Messiah, that he died and rose again. This is why he was arrested.

10. *Although the Jews hadn't heard much about Paul, they had heard about Christianity. Were the rumors favorable or unfavorable? (vs. 22)*

This shouldn't come as a surprise. Satan knows how to discredit Christians and Christianity and still loves to do it today. But at least they are anxious to hear what he has to say because there were so many people talking about it.

11. *How did Paul try to convince the Jews to believe in Christ? (vs. 23)*

After they arrange for a time to meet with Paul, they begin to arrive. Paul eagerly spent all day explaining and enlightening them about Christ. He uses the Old Testament that they are very familiar with. He explains the passages that probably up to this point hadn't made any sense to them. He tells how those scriptures were talking about Christ. No doubt he tells them of the many prophecies that were fulfilled in Christ's birth, life and death.

12. *What were the predictable results? (vs. 24)*

The results of the gospel being preached are always the same. Some believe and some don't. Only the Holy Spirit can open the minds of unbelievers to understand the gospel. Only God can draw people to Himself. Paul loved these people. He knew the scriptures as well as anyone. He presented them well. He explained it well. He answered their questions well. But in the end, it is a supernatural work that is done when a person becomes a believer.

13. *Why wasn't Paul surprised by the Jewish reaction to the gospel? (vs. 25-27)*

Paul not only knew the scriptures that talked about Christ, he also knew the scriptures that told about the rejection of Israel. He quotes this passage from Isaiah 6:9 & 10. It breaks his heart to see them walk away, but it doesn't surprise him. He knows about God's plan to set aside the nation of Israel for awhile and to draw millions and millions of Gentiles into His kingdom. God isn't done with the Jews yet. For now they can be saved one by one and they become a part of the church along with the believing Gentiles. In the end, God will turn again to the Jewish nation and they will nationally repent of the rejection of their Messiah. This will occur in the 2nd half of the tribulation time. Please compare Zech. 12:10 and Romans 11:17-22.

14. *In what way is vs. 28 a good summary for the whole book of Acts?*

As we have repeated numerous times throughout this study, the book of Acts is a book of transitions. When the book began we saw Christ returning to heaven and giving the apostles directions about waiting for the Holy Spirit to arrive. Ten days later the Holy Spirit came upon them and has indwelt believers ever since.

In chapter two we saw Peter preaching to the throngs on Jews who were in Jerusalem for

the Pentecost holiday. Many of them repented and accepted Christ as the Messiah and Lord, but many others rejected, including the Jewish leaders. This set the pattern for the rest of the book of Acts. Peter and later Paul shared the gospel time and again with the Jews. Each time some would believe and some would reject, but as the book progressed we saw more and more of them reject.

At the same time, we saw both Peter and Paul preaching to the Gentiles. God calls many of them into his kingdom and Gentile churches are started in cities all over the area. This caused considerable division among the Jews. They had great difficulty accepting the fact that God wanted Gentiles to be a part of His kingdom. If they were going to be a part of the church, then they certainly had to convert to Judaism first and begin to live under the law of the Old Testament. We saw the church leaders come together in chapter 15 to consider this. They were convinced that this was not necessary and that God never had that in mind. Freedom was granted to all Christians forevermore to live by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which is what the New Testament is all about. (Heb. Chapter 8)

*God used Paul in a mighty way to spread the gospel in the years following his conversion. He loved his fellow Jews and longed for them to turn to Christ, but he also knew without a doubt that God had given him a ministry to the Gentiles. Paul endured many hardships from the hand of the Jews. He was arrested, beaten and even stoned. But he was faithful to the commission that God had given to him through it all. Now in chapter 28:28, we see Paul's pronouncement that God is sending salvation to the Gentiles. **We have crossed the bridge.** God's favor and focus is no longer with the Jewish nation. A new entity, the church, the bride of Christ, is being formed by believers of all nationalities. These believers enjoy the freedom of walking with the indwelling Spirit. God will turn to the Jews again during the tribulation time and they will nationally repent. God's plans cannot be thwarted. He is in control of history as He always has been.*

15. *List 3 adjectives that describe Paul.*

The book closes with Paul in prison in Rome. Most scholars agree that Paul was released after this 2 year confinement. During this first imprisonment he wrote the books of Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians and Philippians. See Eph. 6:12-20, Phil. 1:12-14, 1:21, 3:7-9, 4:6 & 7, 4:11-13, Philemon 22.

During his second imprisonment he wrote 2 Tim. See 2 Tim 1:12, 2:11-13, 4:8-13. Shortly after that, it is believed that he was beheaded.

16. *Consider the contributions of each of these people to early Christianity . Add any other thoughts that you may have.*

Paul - He helped spread the gospel all over the Mediterranean area; he forced decisions

on some important issues; he helped to apply the scriptures in the correct way; he wrote important scripture, explaining doctrines that have helped millions of believers. Paul joined with the other eleven apostles to become the foundation of the church.

Barnabas – He added the measure of understanding, gentleness and generosity that was needed to help establish Christians. He was instrumental in helping Paul’s ministry to begin and accompanied him on the first missionary journey.

Peter – God used Peter to open the doors for the gospel to the different groups of people. He also helped spread the gospel and took an active part in keeping the work in Jerusalem going forward. He was an important leader of the early church and helped establish precedents for the future.

Luke – Luke helped the gospel to go forth by accompanying Paul and assisting him. His major contributions are the two long narratives he left us – the book of Luke and Acts. Luke wrote more of the New Testament than any other writer. He was the historian of the birth of the church and first century Christianity.

James – James seems to have been the head of the Jerusalem church. He kept the work progressing. He also was influential in deciding issues of doctrine and interpretation of scripture.

Thank you for studying the book of Acts with us. We hope you will return to the website often and that it will be instrumental in your study of the Scriptures.