

Resurrection Life of Jesus Church

BACK TO THE BOOK OF ACTS (BBA)

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PART 49: THE FINAL CHAPTER

We have now come to the last chapter of the Book of Acts and the final story of the Apostle Paul in the New Testament. There are several stories within this chapter, so let's look at them one by one.

ARRIVING IN MALTA

Once the people from the shipwreck came ashore, they found out the island was called Melita or Malta as it is known today. This island is about seventeen miles long and nine miles wide. The first known inhabitants were the seafaring Phoenicians who were descendants of people who had lived in Palestine prior to Joshua bringing Israel into the land. They had been driven to the northern coast of the Mediterranean Sea of what is now known as Lebanon.

The Phoenicians not only inhabited Malta, but also formed a great empire in northern Africa known as Carthage in what is today Morocco and Algeria. They traveled to Spain and their coins have been found in Florida and in the northern part of South America, dating back to 900 years before Christ. They were also into idolatry and took with them their horrible Canaanite gods.

When the Greeks rose to power, they moved westward and Malta was conquered. In 528 B.C., the Carthage Empire was strong enough to drive out the Greeks, only to be driven out themselves in 242 B.C. by the Romans.

So when Paul arrived on Melita, it was a Roman colony and the political leaders submitted to the centurion Julius and his soldiers. **Acts 28:1-2**

THE MIRACLE WITH THE SNAKE

Standing around a fire and gathering some wood to throw on the fire, Paul was bitten by a poisonous snake. When the natives saw the serpent hanging from his hand, they expected Paul to drop dead in just a few minutes. But when he shook the serpent loose into the fire and wasn't harmed, they thought he was a god. **verses 3-6**

HEALINGS BY THE POWER OF GOD

The shipwreck happened close to the dwelling place of governor Publius and he temporarily took in Paul, his companions and Julius and his soldiers. Luke doesn't mention where the rest of the people from the ship went. **verse 7**

The father of Publius was very ill and suffered from an ongoing fever and dysentery. Since the miracle of not dying from the snake bite had become known among the native people, Paul must have been asked if he could cure the sick



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man. When God answered Paul's prayer, it must have made a deep impression upon the people living there. **verse 8**

News spread all over the island and people brought the sick to Paul so he could pray for them. **verse 9**

SOMETHING IS MISSING

Luke is the author of the Book of Acts. He would record the number of people who were saved:

- About 3,000 souls saved. **Acts 2:41**
- Added to the church. **Acts 2:47**
- Many were saved and baptized. **Acts 8:5-13**
- The jailer and his household. **Acts 16:27-33**

Luke doesn't record anyone getting saved in the household of Publius, only that Paul and his companions were greatly honored and received gifts. **verse 10**

As a matter of fact, Luke doesn't tell us anything more of what happened during their three month period on Malta. My conclusion is that there must not have been anyone saved during this time; the people were dazzled with the miracles but they had no desire to be born again and forsake their idols. Compare this with the many healing and miracle meetings held in the United States for the last 80 years, where the focus was on miracles and not on salvation. I am not saying that Paul didn't preach the Gospel, but if he did, Luke did not record it. **verse 11**

ARRIVING IN ITALY

The new ship from Alexandria, Egypt sailed north and landed at the large seaport of Syracuse on the island of Sicily, where they stayed for three days, then went on to Rhegium, another seaport further north, before they headed into the straight of Messina. Once they left Rhegium, the south wind was strong and they were able to sail 180 miles in the next 24 hours and arrive in the seaport of Puteoli, which at that time was the nearest seaport for Rome, since Rome was situated 17 miles inland. **verses 12-14**

ON FOOT TO THE CITY OF ROME

There were no telephones, radio or form of electronic mass communication and yet the Christians in Rome had heard Paul was on his way. This meant that Paul was big news and word had been sent to Rome from Malta he was on his way. The city of Appius and its marketplace, the Appiiforum, was located 40 miles south of Rome on the famous "Appian Way." The village of the Three Taverns was located closer to Rome by ten miles. That believers in Christ would travel such a long way to meet a prisoner must have impressed Julius and his soldiers. It was no small wonder that Paul's faith was boosted, knowing that God had people in Rome who cared for him. **verse 15**

ARRIVING IN ROME

Luke doesn't give us too many details, but in order for Paul to be able to rent his own dwelling place and have a Roman soldier stay at his place instead of being locked up in a prison, indicates that Paul was treated more like a celebrity than a prisoner. **verse 16**

CALLING UPON THE JEWS OF ROME

The Jewish leadership had done nothing but harm to Paul over the years but his action to summon the Jewish leadership in Rome to his dwelling place indicated the deep love that Paul had for his own people. **verse 17; Romans 9:1-5**

The Jewish leadership in Rome wielded strong political power and influence on the Roman lawmakers, including the Emperor. Paul took a great risk when he summoned these leaders, since they could influence the Roman authorities to strip him of his rented house and put him back in prison. But the love of God was stronger than his concern for his own safety and he did not hide anything from these Jewish leaders. **verses 18-20**

They responded by saying that they had not been notified from Jerusalem about him but had certainly heard a lot about the followers of Jesus. **verses 21-22**

A day was set when they would hear Paul and the same thing happened like in times past when some Jews believed in Jesus, while others rejected Him. But the Holy Spirit stopped the unbelieving Jews from interfering with Paul. **verses 23-29**

For the next two years he continued under house arrest but was able to freely teach and meet with all the people who came to him. This is how the Book of Acts abruptly ends. It doesn't tell us the outcome of his trial at the end of the two years. **verses 30-31**

THE END OF PAUL'S LIFE ON THIS EARTH

In order to find out what happened to Paul after his trial, we have to look at a number of the epistles he wrote and also turn to historical records.

At end of his trial Paul was released and able to travel again. **Philippians 2:19-24; Philemon 19-22**

During this time period, he wrote the first epistle to Timothy and the epistle to Titus. Tradition states Paul traveled to Spain but this cannot be substantiated. However, we do know that Paul wanted to travel to Spain. **Romans 15:24, 28**

According to historical records, Paul continued to travel and minister for about three to four years until he was arrested a second time by the Roman government in 65 A.D. some thirty-two years after the resurrection of Jesus. The second imprisonment in Rome was different in that he was treated like a criminal, as indicated by his letters. **2 Timothy 2:9**

The hostility toward Paul was so great that most of his friends didn't dare to be around him. **2 Timothy 4:10-11**

During his first trial, no believer in Christ was with him in court, but despite this, he was still able to defend himself and given a reprieve. **2 Timothy 4:16-18**

The second epistle to Timothy was written in prison after the second arrest. Paul said that the only one who came to visit him regularly apart from Luke was Onesiphorus. **2 Timothy 1:15-18**

Paul knew his life was coming to an end on this earth and expressed himself strongly about this. **2 Timothy 4:6-8**

Paul was still hoping to see Timothy. **verse 9**

Most likely Timothy came and saw Paul, was arrested himself but later released. **Hebrews 13:22-25**

This is the last biblical written record in Hebrews we have of Paul. There is no written records of the last trial of Paul, all we know is that he was beheaded either in the summer of 67 or 68 A.D. on the order of Emperor Nero. **Matthew 26:52; Revelation 13:10**

Was it a coincidence that Nero was removed as emperor, and on June 9, 68 A.D., he committed suicide rather than suffering the fate of crucifixion that the Roman Senate had mandated?

THE BOOK OF ACTS IS STILL BEING WRITTEN

The Book of Acts ended with the arrival of Paul to Rome but it is still being written. ***Every human being has a book written about himself that has been recorded by God's holy angels.*** One day this book is going to be opened and each individual will be judged according to what is found written in there. **Revelation 20:11-13**

There is also a *Book of Life*, and if your name is not recorded in this book, you will end up in the Lake of Fire. **Revelation 20:13-15**

IS YOUR NAME WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF LIFE?

WHAT ARE THE ANGELS RECORDING IN YOUR BOOK OF ACTS?

Remember, it's not so important how you begin your life after salvation, but how you finish it!

DO YOU HAVE AN EAR TO HEAR WITH?