

Resurrection Life of Jesus Church

BACK TO THE BOOK OF ACTS (BBA)

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PART 48: THE GREAT SHIPWRECK

We are now coming down to the beginning of the end of the recorded life for Paul. He would be taken to Rome in a commercial cargo ship, that in addition to the cargo, was also large enough to hold 276 persons. There also was a military escort because the Roman government used the ship to transport prisoners.

THE ROMAN SOLDIERS

Augustus' Band refers to an elite Roman army unit, also known as a cohort, that consisted of 300 to 600 soldiers. Each cohort was under the direct command of the Emperor himself. According to historical records, the Roman government had stationed five cohorts in Caesarea. The cohort that the centurion Julius commanded contained soldiers from Italy which would have made them more loyal to the Emperor. It wasn't practical for Julius to bring his entire unit onboard since it would have filled the ship to capacity. We aren't told by Luke how many soldiers Julius had on the ship. **Acts 27:1**

BOARDING THE SHIP

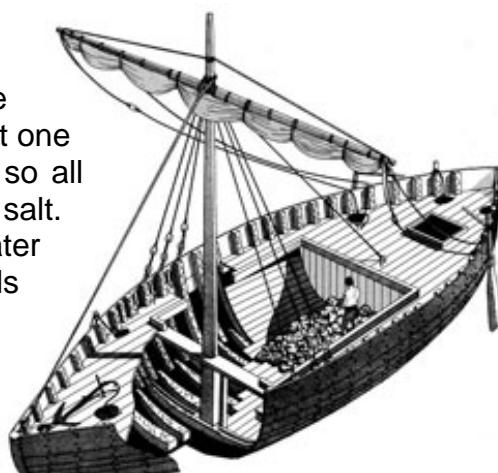
We know the ship was from the seaport of Adramyttium, which was in the province of Mysia not far from Troas. It is important to note that Paul was allowed to have bring along the physician Luke, who recorded and wrote the book of Acts, and Aristarchus, a disciple of Paul from the Greek city of Thessalonica.
verse 2

Aristarchus (Greek name meaning "the best ruler") was a veteran Gospel worker with Paul and can be found in the following references: **Acts 19:29; 20:4; Philemon 24**

Aristarchus was allowed on this trip as an aid to Paul but was later arrested in Rome as described by Paul around 60 A.D. **Colossians 4:10**

CONDITIONS ON THE SHIP

There were no hot meals on the ship since fire was not compatible with a wooden ship with just one deck. There was no electricity or refrigeration so all food had to be dried or preserved through salt. There were no showers or toilets. Drinking water would get stale since it was stored in vessels which had no sterilization. Riding a ship in those days was rough.



STOPPING AT SIDON

This seaport was located about 70 miles north of Caesarea and shows how far the ship was able to sail in just 24 hours. It becomes clear that Julius the centurion had great respect for Paul and treated him very well by allowing him to leave the ship and spend time with other believers in Christ in this city. Luke didn't say how long the ship was docked in Sidon; it could have been a day or several days since cargo was unloaded and new cargo was taken in. **Acts 27:3**



CONTINUED SAILING

Once the ship left Sidon, the captain took the ship straight out to Cypress and then kept a course that took them north of the island and on a straight line to the seaport of Myra in the province of Lycia. This must have taken at least four days, judging by the distance they traveled. **verses 4-5**

Once in the harbor, Julius found a ship from Alexandria, Egypt which was going to sail straight to Italy and moved his soldiers and prisoners to this ship. **verse 6**

The weather and the winds were not cooperating with the Egyptian ship and the captain hugged the coast of what today is southern Turkey until he came in sight of a city named Cnidus. He then turned south and sailed on the western side of the island of Rhodes, then across open water until he came to the eastern tip of Crete, then proceeding around the south side of Crete until he sailed into the "The Fair Havens" harbor of the city of Lasea. **verses 7-8**

GOD SPEAKS THROUGH PAUL

The sailing from Myra to Lasea took much longer than expected due to contrary winds. We can determine by the phrase, “the fast was now already past,” that it was sometime in the middle of September, and sailing in the Mediterranean Sea during the fall and winter was very dangerous because of the storms. God spoke through the apostle Paul that Julius should wait until spring. **verses 9-10**

JULIUS REJECTED THE WARNING

The owner of the ship was traveling with them and wanted to get his cargo as fast as possible to Italy for financial reasons. The decision was made to leave Lasea and try to reach a better harbor on the western tip of Crete. **verses 11-12**

DISASTER

It looked like smooth sailing at first but it didn’t take long before they encountered a strong storm which could be classified as a category 1 hurricane. **verse 13-14**

The relentless winds drove them southwest so that they almost crashed on the island of Claudia but were able to miss the island with much labor. **verses 15-17**

Picture a one deck wooden sailing ship that was drifting violently in the fierce winds and the crew began to lighten the ship by throwing more and more items overboard. **verses 18-19**

ALL HOPE OF SURVIVAL WAS GONE

The ship was out in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea and moving quickly westward. Even though Paul didn’t know how things were going to end, God was in control and steered them to the tiny Island of Malta. **verse 20**

A WORD FROM GOD

During the many days of drifting, Paul must have stayed underneath the deck praying. In the darkest night, at the worse possible moment God is still near and speaks to His people.

Once Paul had gotten the word from God, he stood up in the midst of the wildly rolling ship, scolded Julius and the owner of the ship and then gave them the good news. **verses 21-26**

GOD BUILDS FAITH BY HAVING HIS PEOPLE WAIT

Fourteen days later (two weeks in a rolling pitching boat) God would deliver them. Imagine the mindset of Paul, as people were asking him “Are you sure that you have heard from God?” Two weeks in a ship rolling in the storm is a long time. **verses 27-29**

PAUL TOOK COMMAND OF THE SHIP

The man or woman of God must learn to take command, and that can only be done if there is faith in the person. The Holy Ghost strengthened Paul and he

began to give orders to Julius, who recognized that God was moving and submitted to Paul. **verses 30-32**

How do you get seasick people to eat? The Holy Spirit moved upon the entire group who believed that Paul was a man of God and could lead them to safety. **verses 33-37**

The precious wheat cargo that the owner of the ship had tried to protect was cast overboard and the ship was run aground. **verses 38-41**

Most likely there were no more than 20 Roman soldiers on board who faced a crowd of some 250 people. The soldiers feared that the prisoners would escape in the commotion and wanted to kill them. They wanted to secure their own safety because Roman military law demanded their death if they let a prisoner escape. **verse 42**

In order to save Paul's life, Julius overruled them and ordered all the people to leave the ship and escape to land. **verse 44**

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS CHAPTER?

1. If God has given you a message, be fearless and deliver it regardless if people accept it or not. **Matthew 10:27-33**
2. There are no circumstances that are too difficult for God. Learn to have total faith in Him regardless how terrible the circumstances are. **Daniel 3:12-18**
3. No man can willfully take your life. It is only when God has decreed that your life on earth is finished that your life can be taken away. **Daniel 3:19-30**

Are you a faith walker? Hebrews 11:6-13

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?