

There's No Place Like Rome

Session Twenty-One

Acts 28:11-16

Paul & Crew (276 in all) spend three winter months on Malta before catching another Alexandrian ship.

In Greek and Roman mythology, Castor and Pollux are the sons of Jupiter and the gods of navigation and patrons of seafarers.

The final stretch of Paul's journey to Rome is by land, not sea. The *Appian Way* goes straight north to Rome and has been called "the oldest, straightest, and most perfectly made of all Roman roads" (Stott, 396).

Three Taverns is about 30 miles south of Rome; Forum of Appius is ten miles further. The brothers that meet Paul had likely read his letter to them—*Romans* (AD 58). It would have been encouraging to Paul to not only be greeted, but also see how people had received what he wrote. Among his many exhortations, "Practice hospitality" (Rom. 12:13).

Acts 28:17-23

Paul is in the Gentile capital of the world and the first group of people he meets with are _____. Why?

T / F The Jews in Rome had received news about Paul from Judea.

What does Paul talk about? What is the main focus of his message?

Acts 28:24-31

Paul quotes Isaiah 6:9-10, just as Jesus had done (see Matt. 13:14-15 and Mark 4:11-12) and John (see John 12:37ff)! What is the meaning of this prophecy?

"J.A. Alexander writes, 'In this fearful process, there are three indistinguishable agencies expressly or implicitly described: the ministerial agency of the prophet, the judicial agency of God, and the suicidal agency of the people themselves.' In other words, if we ask now why people do not understand and turn to God, their unbelief could be attributed now to the evangelist's preaching, now to the judgment of God, and now to the obstinacy of the people. Alexander goes on to point out that in the Isaiah verses, the first of these is most prominent, in John 12:40 the second, and in the Matthew and Mark passages, as here in Acts 28, the third" (Stott, 399).

Three times before, stubborn Jewish opposition has led Paul to turn to the Gentiles—in Pisidian Antioch (13:46), in Corinth (18:6) and in Ephesus (19:8-9). Now for the fourth time, in the world’s capital city, and in a yet more decisive manner, he does it again” (Stott, 399).

“Though his hand was still bound, his mouth was open for Jesus Christ. Though he was chained, the Word of God was not” (Stott, 400).

The last few words of Acts are “with all boldness” and “without hindrance”. Looking back on the whole story, why are these phrases well chosen as the last word from Luke?

That’s the End?

Paul is in Rome AD 61-62, during which he writes *Philippians*. We don’t exactly know what happened to him after this house arrest.

Jesus did say that Paul would testify of Him in Rome (23:11). “In this case, we are permitted to imagine that the prisoner that stood before Felix, Festus and Agrippa, stood before _____ also, and that in the world’s most prestigious court, to the world’s most prestigious person, he faithfully proclaimed Christ. Yes, Nero himself, that artistic but bloodthirsty genius, heard the gospel from the lips of the apostle to the Gentiles. That would not have been possible if Paul were not a prisoner on trial” (Stott, 403).

It’s likely that Paul was released in AD 63 after his trial. Paul had previously written of his desire to go to Spain (Romans 15:24, 28). “In 1 Clement, a valuable postbiblical document written in the name of the Roman church in AD 95, Paul is said to have come to the ‘utmost west’ (1 Clem. 5:7), which from a Roman perspective refers to Spain” (Reicke, 38). Paul was likely martyred, as was Peter, during the Neronian persecution of AD 64 or early 65, as 1 Clement 5:3-7 mentions.

5:3 Let us place before our eyes the good Apostles.

5:4 Peter, through unjust envy, endured not one or two but many labours, and at last, having delivered his testimony, departed unto the place of glory due to him.

5:5 Through envy Paul, too, showed by example the prize that is given to patience:

5:6 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;

5:7 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.

Luke’s point: Acts isn’t about Paul. It’s about the _____!

Homework: Read *Philippians* in the context of Paul’s life...he is awaiting trial under house arrest in Rome, at the end of his ministry and missionary journeys. How does it change your interpretation of *Philippians*?

“The peace that passes all understanding” (Phil. 4:7) is even greater than the *Pax Romana*!