

## Acts 28

1 Malta is about 58 miles south of Sicily and 180 miles north of Libya. At the longest point it is 17 miles and widest point is 9 miles. It was taken by Rome in 218 B.C.

2 Islanders = *barbaros* the word from which we get barbarian, but meant all who did not speak Greek as their native language. The natives of the island were Phoenician and spoke a Phoenician dialect. Being a Roman province, some of them would have known Greek or Latin and been able to translate to the others.

The fire would have warmed and dried their clothes on a cool late October day.

3 The word that was used for the "poisonous snake" was the same word Jesus used for the Pharisees – viper. There are none on the island today, but they may have been exterminated over the last 2000 years.

4 In Greek mythology, the daughter of Zeus was *Dike* or Justice. When they say "Justice has not allowed him to live," they are referring to her. She was thought to watch over the affairs of men and report to Zeus any that escaped the punishment they deserved. They thought Paul perhaps escaped drowning, but Dike would be sure he met his just fate. Things aren't always as they appear. We might have made a similar judgment, when actually, God was using it to get their attention and open their hearts to the Gospel, and open another door to witness.

5-6 Though Luke does not tell us how Paul used this to witness, we can be sure he did. Acts 14:8-20

7 There is no surviving record of Publius, but a first century inscription was found that referred to the chief official of the island as the *protos* of the island. That is the same term Luke used here.

8 "Them" is surely not the 276 but must include Julius, Paul, Luke, and possibly Aristarchus. The snakebite and the awe of Paul having no ill effect, may have put him in a favored status to be invited to be a guest. The healing then opened more doors of opportunity. We should use every opportunity to pray for the sick as God may open more doors for us to share the Gospel.

9-10 The word quickly spread and the rest of the sick of the island came and were cured. We don't have a record of how many came to Christ, but surely there were many converts. It also made it possible for them to continue their journey.

11 –14 They stayed during the winter months, November through January of 60 A.D. The Alexandrian ship had probably sought refuge there (port of Valletta) during the same storm that sank the other ship. Those winter months were too rough to sail. Julius must have booked passage for all 276 of them when the ship was ready to depart. It was still early for safe sail, but they made it from port to port safely. The ship was dedicated to the gods that rescued sailors, we know them by the zodiac sign of Gemini. They make the 180-mile trip in two days.

Puteoli was the principle of three grain ports for Rome. Most of the shipments from Africa were unloaded there. A breakwater was constructed to calm the water in the port. It was a quarter mile long and had arches with statues including at least one triumphal arch. The port itself was one and a quarter mile long. The estimated population was 100,000. Evidence suggests that it was a home for wealthy Romans, had a sizable Jewish population, and many immigrants from the East which probably included Christians.

One wonders how this trip has affected Julius. He saw Paul's prophecy come to pass. He saw the healings on the island of Malta. Now he is probably experiencing Christian hospitality and fellowship in Puteoli. He will now make a six-day journey with Paul on foot on the Via Appia to Rome. If he wasn't converted, he has no excuse.

15-16 Someone from the church in Puteoli must have made a quick trip to Rome to let them know Paul was coming. He had already written them a letter a few years earlier in which he told them of his desire to visit and addressed many individuals he must have known personally. Romans 15:23; 31-32 Paul met the brothers in a market town about 40 miles from Rome. Horace, a Roman author, complained of the Forum of Appius that the tavern keepers were stingy, the water made him sick, and the gnats and frogs kept him up.

Another group met Paul 30 miles south of Rome at Three Taverns (Inns not bars). Paul would have been taken to a military facility but then, probably at Julius recommendation, he was allowed the freedom of renting an apartment. The ordinary soldier attached to Paul by chain is probably the next convert. Talk about a captive audience! He'll be the first to read 4 of Paul's letters! (unless they were rotated out)

17-20 Paul calls for the elders of the local synagogues and gives a defense of why he is there, insisting he has done nothing to violate the Jewish faith. "Hope of Israel" = Jesus is the Messiah, the atoning sacrifice, the way to resurrection life.

21-23 It's surprising that the Jews there did not receive a letter from the Sanhedrin. They did get reports from travelers about how the message of Jesus was dividing Jewish communities. They do the honorable thing and invite Paul to tell them what he believes. Paul takes the entire day to convince them from Scripture that Jesus is the Messiah.

24 The fact that some of the elders of synagogues were convinced must have been a great encouragement to Paul. Surely the Holy Spirit was at work as he went through the Scriptures.

25 -28 Paul sees their rejection as fulfillment of Scripture (Isaiah 6:9-10) as well, that the Gospel might go to the Gentiles. Romans 11:11

30-31 Paul will use this time to write Philippians, Colossians, Philemon and Ephesians. Ephesians 6:19-20 God uses everything to further His kingdom. Paul could have become depressed and given up, thinking these 4 years of imprisonment were all just too unfair, but that is not the Paul we see. He takes advantage of the situation just as we should, regardless of the circumstances or conditions.