



Acts Chapter 27 The Sea Attacks!

As we move out of our study in Acts chapter 26 and into chapter 27, we find Paul on his way to Rome to stand in front of Ceaser.. but getting from point “A” to point “B” will prove to be anything but easy. The only way to get to Rome would be by ship, and with the winter months coming Paul knew that this would certainly not be a joy ride.

The soldiers that were with Paul were more interested in listening to the ship's captain and the ships owner than they were in listening to Paul who tries to warn them that this voyage isn't going to go well.. but in time as we move through the story... they'll learn to lend Paul their ear, and to take heed in the things Paul says.

Lets go ahead... and read Acts Chapter 27 and lets see what we can learn from Paul's trip across the sea to Rome:

Acts Chapter 27:

Act 27:1 And when it was decided that we should sail for Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan Cohort named Julius.

Act 27:2 And embarking in a ship of Adramyttium, which was about to sail to the ports along the coast of Asia, we put to sea, accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica.

Act 27:3 The next day we put in at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him leave to go to his friends and be cared for.

Act 27:4 And putting out to sea from there we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were against us.

Act 27:5 And when we had sailed across the open sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra in Lycia.

Act 27:6 There the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing for Italy and put us on board.

Act 27:7 We sailed slowly for a number of days and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, and as the wind did not allow us to go farther; we sailed under the lee of Crete off Salmone.

Act 27:8 Coasting along it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea.

Act 27:9 Since much time had passed, and the voyage was now dangerous because even the

Fast was already over, Paul advised them,

Act 27:10 saying, "Sirs, I perceive that the voyage will be with injury and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives."

Act 27:11 But the centurion paid more attention to the pilot and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said.

Act 27:12 And because the harbor was not suitable to spend the winter in, the majority decided to put out to sea from there, on the chance that somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, facing both southwest and northwest, and spend the winter there.

Act 27:13 Now when the south wind blew gently, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete, close to the shore.

Act 27:14 But soon a tempestuous wind, called the northeaster, struck down from the land.

Act 27:15 And when the ship was caught and could not face the wind, we gave way to it and were driven along.

Act 27:16 Running under the lee of a small island called Cauda, we managed with difficulty to secure the ship's boat.

Act 27:17 After hoisting it up, they used supports to undergird the ship. Then, fearing that they would run aground on the Syrtis, they lowered the gear, and thus they were driven along.

Act 27:18 Since we were violently storm-tossed, they began the next day to jettison the cargo.

Act 27:19 And on the third day they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands.

Act 27:20 When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned.

Act 27:21 Since they had been without food for a long time, Paul stood up among them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete and incurred this injury and loss.

Act 27:22 Yet now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship.

Act 27:23 For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship,

Act 27:24 and he said, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.'

Act 27:25 So take heart, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told.

Act 27:26 But we must run aground on some island."

Act 27:27 When the fourteenth night had come, as we were being driven across the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors suspected that they were nearing land.

Act 27:28 So they took a sounding and found twenty fathoms. A little farther on they took a sounding again and found fifteen fathoms.

Act 27:29 And fearing that we might run on the rocks, they let down four anchors from the stern and prayed for day to come.

Act 27:30 And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, and had lowered the ship's boat into the sea under pretense of laying out anchors from the bow,

Act 27:31 Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved."

Act 27:32 Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship's boat and let it go.

Act 27:33 As day was about to dawn, Paul urged them all to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have continued in suspense and without food, having taken nothing.

Act 27:34 Therefore I urge you to take some food. For it will give you strength, for not a hair is to perish from the head of any of you."

Act 27:35 And when he had said these things, he took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat.

Act 27:36 Then they all were encouraged and ate some food themselves.

Act 27:37 (We were in all 276 persons in the ship.)

Act 27:38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, throwing out the wheat into the sea.

Act 27:39 Now when it was day, they did not recognize the land, but they noticed a bay with a beach, on which they planned if possible to run the ship ashore.

Act 27:40 So they cast off the anchors and left them in the sea, at the same time loosening the ropes that tied the rudders. Then hoisting the foresail to the wind they made for the beach.

Act 27:41 But striking a reef, they ran the vessel aground. The bow stuck and remained immovable, and the stern was being broken up by the surf.

Act 27:42 The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any should swim away and escape.

Act 27:43 But the centurion, wishing to save Paul, kept them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and make for the land,

Act 27:44 and the rest on planks or on pieces of the ship. And so it was that all were brought safely to land.

The first thing to take notice of in chapter 27 is the word “We” in verse 1. This tells us that Luke... the author of the book of Acts was with Paul on this journey. So what Luke is telling us about in the book of Acts is also that Luke himself also survived and went through. So we know that the Physician Luke was with Paul on this particular journey to Rome... so this is not second hand knowledge that Luke is giving us... this is first hand knowledge that comes directly from Luke who was with Paul when all of these things happened.

Another thing to notice in chapter 27 is how different the culture was back in Paul's time. Even though Paul was a prisoner of Rome... he was allowed to have friends and family travel with him. And we see through the scriptures that “Julius” the Roman soldier who Paul was in the custody of.. was pretty lenient with Paul... allowing him to have his friends and family tend to his needs along the way, and we'll even see Julius saving Paul's life when the other Roman soldiers wanted to kill all the prisoners when they knew the ship was going to sink in verses 42 and 43.

And it's important to notice these kinds of things, because it helps us to see the power and the majesty of our Father in Heaven. He knew that this trip to Rome was going to be a rough trip

for Paul.. and yet here we find that Paul almost has this kind of a Guardian Angle figure in the Roman soldier who has charge over Paul. It's not hard to understand through these scriptures that Paul and Julius had a very good relationship. Why this relationship was so good we're not really told...but I would think that it probably had something to do with the faith that this Roman soldier had. Lets face it... who among us would be able to spend any amount of time with the Apostle Paul and not come away with some degree of faith?

So Julius is in Paul's corner, and it's almost as though the hand of God was with Paul through this whole nightmarish journey.

Another thing that's important to understand is that back in Paul's day there were no passenger ships. You weren't getting onto a luxury ocean liner. All of these ships were cargo ships, and they were all carrying grain and commodities most of which came from Egypt. The historian Josephus tells us that almost a third of the grain and food that fed the Roman empire came from Egypt. And so these ships that Paul was traveling on were not built for luxury by any stretch of the imagination.

Someone else that we notice is with Paul is this fellow by the name of Aristarchus from Thessalonica where Paul had already planted the Gospel early on. We can also find this Aristarchus in Colossians chapter 4, and again in Philemon chapter 1 where we're told that Aristarchus is a fellow prisoner with Paul.

Another thing that I want us to understand is that what we find here in the 27th chapter of Acts is a provable, and factually true story. In fact an experienced sailor by the name of "James Smith" actually recreated Paul's journey, and actually sailed the same rout that Paul would have sailed in the book of Acts just to prove the book of Acts was factual, and he wrote a book about his journey called "**The Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul: With Dissertations on the Life and Writings of St. Luke, and the Ships and Navigation of the Ancients**, it's an interesting read.. and you can even buy this book on Amazon today if you're interested in it. Again it's called "The Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul" by James Smith.

https://www.amazon.com/Voyage-Shipwreck-St-Paul-Dissertations/dp/1332037925/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1491286703&sr=8-1&keywords=The+Voyage+and+Shipwreck+of+St.+Paul

Moving forward if we look at verse 9 we're told what time of the year it was when we're told that it was "Passed the Fast". The Jews always refered to the "Day of Atonement" as "The Fast" because it was the day that every Jew Fasted according to the commandment given that every man was to afflict himself on that day according to Leviticus chapter 16 verses 29 through 31.

So we know that it was certainly after Yom Kippur which is also known as the Day of Atonement, and so Winter would have been well on it's way. If this was the year 59 A.D., which

many scholars think it was, then Yom Kippur would have been at the end of the first week of October.

Now.. we know that Paul well understood the ropes when it came to traveling by ship because he tells us in 2nd Corinthians chapter 11 verse 25 that Paul himself was shipwrecked 3 different times... so Paul is well acquainted with traveling by sea. Knowing this.. Paul warns them in verse 10.. that if they continue on in this bad weather... that they would be risking their lives and the ship, and it's cargo... but of course no one wants to listen to the advice of common prisoner... and so instead of listening to Paul's warning... they turn to the captain of the ship and it's owner who decide to forge on and try to continue the journey.

Keeping that in mind... when we look at verse 27 we find that these very same men who didn't want to listen to Paul have now been at sea for 14 days in this storm... that's two full weeks caught in this storm being tossed to and fro by the waves with no food... wondering each day if they were going to live or die. You can imagine the fear the must have struck them in their hearts.

In verse 33 Paul finally convinces them to take some food for strength, and we find Paul breaking the bread and once again giving thanks for it in the presents of everyone there. And this is another place where we need to pause for just a moment.

I have heard several Bible commentators proudly proclaim that Paul was performing a “Communion Service” during this time on the ship. And to take it even farther.. I've even heard that many of the Catholic faith that will try to justify their demonically inspired “Transubstantiation” through this particular scripture. In fact F.F. Bruce once wrote that the words “took bread”, “gave thanks” and “broke it” all point to the fact that Paul was performing what the Catholic faith calls a “Eucharistic meal”. My friends... nothing could be farther from the truth.. and this is just another example of man trying to overwrite the Word of God in order to hold onto his own traditions.

Once again... we find men who should have spent more time reading their Bibles than preaching. Men who have no idea of Jewish culture or the practices of the Jewish people of that time. Men who consistently deny the beginning of the book in order to justify the back of the book where by they totally loose site of the message that the whole book proclaims.

The Jews always began their meal with what was known as the “Barakah” which was the blessing over the meal. Breaking bread and passing it around was a normal, and natural custom in almost every eating situation for the Jews, and in many cases still is today, and it had absolutely nothing to do with church sacrament or Communion. Remember what James had already proclaimed in Acts chapter 21 verse 24:

Act 21:24 take these men and purify yourself along with them and pay their expenses, so that

they may shave their heads. Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself also live in observance of the law.

Paul always lived in observance of the law, and Paul was himself a Jewish Pharisee just as he told the Sanhedrin just a few chapters back in Acts chapter 23 verse 6! Paul did not say “I used to be a Pharisee”, or “I once was a Pharisee”... he said “I AM a Pharisee”... so it was natural for Paul to say the “Barakah” over his meal and to break and to pass the bread around. There is simply nothing mentioned here about a “Communion Service” or a demonically inspired “Eucharistic Service”.

Once again... man just loves to add to and take away from Gods Word even though we have been commanded NOT to add to... or take away from Gods Word in Deuteronomy 12:32, Deuteronomy 4:2, Revelation chapter 22 verses 18 and 19 and all throughout his Word... and yet.. man thinks that he is so smart, so wise, so intelligent... so far and beyond the creator of the Heavens and the Earth that he thinks that he knows better than the one true God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob. My friends... we should know better than to follow after every wind of doctrine that comes out of the mouth of a man.

Moving forward I also want to also stop at verse 31 because I think it's important to make note of something else that we find here in chapter 27. It's important to remember what Paul said to Julius when the soldiers were making ready the life boats. Paul said that if any of the soldiers tried to escape the ship by lifeboat... that they would not survive. Notice that in verse 32.. they cut the ropes and let the life boats go. So it seems as though Julius and the Roman soldiers, and the crew had found some value in the advice of Paul at this point in time.

It's important to remember that Paul tried to tell them not to even start out on this voyage in the first place.. and they choose not to listen to him... and now it seems as though things have changed a little bit. Now what Paul says seems to have some weight.. and the one true God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob seems to be using Paul to get through to the people on board of this sinking ship.

Isn't that often how it works. Most of the time when things are going along just fine we seem to almost ignore the existence of God until we find ourselves on a sinking ship.. and then... our attention span seems to become somewhat amplified does it not?

And so the choice was laid before them...were they going to trust in the one true God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob like Paul told them to in verses 22 through 25... or were they going to trust their own works to try and save themselves? In the end... this is what it's all about. If we have faith in the Gospel message that Paul was trying to proclaim.. and if we believe in the Messiah Yahshua.. then we should know that we're not saved by our own works... trying to paddle your way to shore in a row boat in a massive storm won't work... but by the grace of God we are saved...not that this in any way negates the laws, commandments, precepts and

appointments of God our Father.. after all the very definition of the love of God is found in 1st John 5:3 tells us “*For this is the love of God.. That we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not a burden to us*”.. and yet.. we know that our faith rests in him.. and there is nothing that we could ever do to earn our way into his kingdom. It's important to understand that the reason that they were all saved was because they did what God told them to do through Paul. If they had not listened to what God told them to do.. they would have perished... once again the love of God is keeping his commandments (1st John 5:3 for those of you who don't already know that).

In the end these men were being forced to make a decision... trust in the hand of God... or trust in that lifeboat and what you can do with your own hands. Fortunately... they made the right decision.

Now with that being said.. I've heard more than one Pastor preach on the idea that the ship was the representation of Yahshua.. and that just like the man who does not stay in the Messiah... his life can not, and will not be saved. And although I do agree with the idea that we must repent and turn away from our sins and walk as he walked... I'm not so sure that this ship had anything to do with representing our Messiah.. although we're not really told one way or the other, and so it is open for discussion. But I think it was more likely that this was a test of faith for all those who were on board that ship that day. It was proof of the powerful hand of God and how it is that he can change the minds of the most hardened adversary. Out of the over 276 people on board that ship that day... how many do you suppose walked away from that shipwreck... believers?

And as we move forward and into verse 42 through 44 we again see Paul being saved by Julius, who stops the Roman soldiers from killing all of their prisoners. This was common practice if a Roman Soldier thought that his prisoners might escape. If a Roman Soldier lost a prisoner back in those days the Roman Soldier himself could loose his own life... but Julius stops them from killing the prisoners and all of the people who abandoned ship were all able to swim to shore... just as Paul had prophesied... and not one of them was lost just as Paul told them that it would be.

So now that there on the Island of Malta... lets read chapter 28.. and lets see how the book of Acts concludes:

Acts Chapter 28:

Act 28:1 After we were brought safely through, we then learned that the island was called Malta.

Act 28:2 The native people showed us unusual kindness, for they kindled a fire and welcomed us all, because it had begun to rain and was cold.

Act 28:3 When Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and put them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened on his hand.

Act 28:4 When the native people saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "No doubt this man is a murderer. Though he has escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live."

Act 28:5 He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm.

Act 28:6 They were waiting for him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But when they had waited a long time and saw no misfortune come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.

Act 28:7 Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the chief man of the island, named Publius, who received us and entertained us hospitably for three days.

Act 28:8 It happened that the father of Publius lay sick with fever and dysentery. And Paul visited him and prayed, and putting his hands on him healed him.

Act 28:9 And when this had taken place, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured.

Act 28:10 They also honored us greatly, and when we were about to sail, they put on board whatever we needed.

Act 28:11 After three months we set sail in a ship that had wintered in the island, a ship of Alexandria, with the twin gods as a figurehead.

Act 28:12 Putting in at Syracuse, we stayed there for three days.

Act 28:13 And from there we made a circuit and arrived at Rhegium. And after one day a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli.

Act 28:14 There we found brothers and were invited to stay with them for seven days. And so we came to Rome.

Act 28:15 And the brothers there, when they heard about us, came as far as the Forum of Appius and Three Taverns to meet us. On seeing them, Paul thanked God and took courage.

Act 28:16 And when we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who guarded him.

Act 28:17 After three days he called together the local leaders of the Jews, and when they had gathered, he said to them, "Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.

Act 28:18 When they had examined me, they wished to set me at liberty, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case.

Act 28:19 But because the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar—though I had no charge to bring against my nation.

Act 28:20 For this reason, therefore, I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is because of the hope of Israel that I am wearing this chain."

Act 28:21 And they said to him, "We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brothers coming here has reported or spoken any evil about you.

Act 28:22 But we desire to hear from you what your views are, for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against."

Act 28:23 When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets.

Act 28:24 And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved.

Act 28:25 And disagreeing among themselves, they departed after Paul had made one statement: "The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your fathers through Isaiah the prophet:

Act 28:26 "Go to this people, and say, "You will indeed hear but never understand, and you will indeed see but never perceive."

Act 28:27 For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.'

Act 28:28 Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen."

Act 28:30 He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him,

Act 28:31 proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

Looking back to verse 2 I think it's important to note that the people on the island of Malta where they had shipwrecked were called "Barbarians". Many English Bible versions use the word "Natives" in verse 2... but the original Greek word found in the original manuscripts uses the word "Barbaros" which in effect means "Barbarians"... so this is kind of an oxymoron that we see in verse two. We're told that these "barbarians" were extremely kind to the survivors of the shipwreck, and treated them very well.

Once again.. if we look closely... we can see the hand of God over Paul and his companions. Most natives would have ransacked the ship and killed the survivors and taken all that they could salvage... but God already knew the perfect place for this shipwreck to happen... and the perfect people to accept the survivors. And so it was that these so called barbarians took the 276 survivors in, and ministered to their needs, building a fire for them, and feeding them, and keeping them warm.

How many times have we missed these kinds of blessings in our lives. How many times have we thought to ourselves "wow... I was really lucky" or "wow.. I'm glad this person was there" or "wow.. that was close".. never really stopping to think about the hand of God in our lives. Never really stopping to think that just like it is written in Hebrews 13:2... that some of us have entertained angels... unaware. I would submit to you my friends that the hand of God is not so absent from our lives as some of us may think.

In verse 3 we find Paul had gone to help gather wood for the fire and upon putting the sticks

into the fire a poisonous Viper had latched on to Paul's hand. Notice what the so called "barbarians" thought about Paul when he didn't fall down dead. In verse 6 we're told that they thought Paul was a God. And notice in the preceding verses 7 through 9 that Paul heals not only the father of Publius the chief.. but he also heals the rest of the people on the island who had diseases. Once again... the hand of God knew right were this shipwreck needed to happen, and not only were Paul and the people of the ship saved.. but so to were these natives who needed healing... and even more than the healing of their bodies.. they needed the spiritual healing of the Gospel message that Paul came to deliver.

In verse 11 we see this ship called the "Alexandria" and we're told about it's "twin gods as figureheads". This was customary on the bow of these old cargo vessels. Most of them had these carvings of the many Hellenistic gods adorning the front of their ships. They were most likely the twin sons of the God Zeus, called Castor and Pollux. These twin gods were believed to be the gods of navigation and safe travel, and it was said that their Constellation was the Constellation of Gemini. Once again.. the world was polluted with all kinds of Greek gods at that time. Everywhere you looked there was another idol, another statue, another figure representing another false god.

In verses 13 through 15 we find Paul and his crew finally making it to Puteoli which is located on the northern side of Naples Italy. It's important to notice that there were brothers in Puteoli, who had already heard the Gospel of Yahshua, and that they were all excited to meet Paul. We're told in verse 15 that they came from far and wide to meet Paul and his crew. Luke tells us that they encouraged Paul and that Paul thanked God for them.

One thing to notice here is that Paul did not bring the Gospel message to the people of Puteoli. Someone else had already been there and given them the good news. So it's important to remember that Paul was not the only prophet working in the area. The Gospel message was spreading like wildfire, and had even reached as far as Italy.

So at this point in time Paul was on Italian ground and I think we can be pretty sure that Paul was probably glad to be done with cargo ships, and vipers, and swimming in cold water, and bad storms, and sleepless nights. But once again... think about how many hundreds of people both on that ship.. and of the barbarian natives that were saved, and had become believers in the Messiah all because of what Paul had been willing to go through. Again the mighty hand of God through the wisdom of God.. had reached hundreds if not thousands of people.. and how many more people will those people reach?

And with that I think we'll wrap it up for this session, and we'll come to the close of our study on the book of Acts next Wednesday evening at 7pm eastern standard time.