essential reading in times of church growth, church decline, church disputes or church persecution, especially the four Gospels containing the words and ministry of Jesus Himself.

Many people believe that we are near the time of great troubles before Christ returns (Mark 13:4 to 8). Many will doubt their faith at this time. Many will be deceived by powerful leaders and by other religions. But many will be saved and stay true to God by obeying the teachings of Jesus Christ and His apostles as we await the return of Jesus.

The church in Antioch-in-Syria sent Paul and others out to preach the Good News of Jesus Christ. Many new fellowships started in the Roman Empire. They, too, sent out ministers and missionaries across the world.

A prayer: Heavenly Father, unite and empower Your people so that Your truth continues to go out to the world. Establish Your eternal salvation and righteousness in and through Jesus Christ, the sacrificed Son of the Lord God Almighty of Jews and Christians everywhere. May Your Kingdom come, on earth as in Heaven. Come soon, Lord Jesus!

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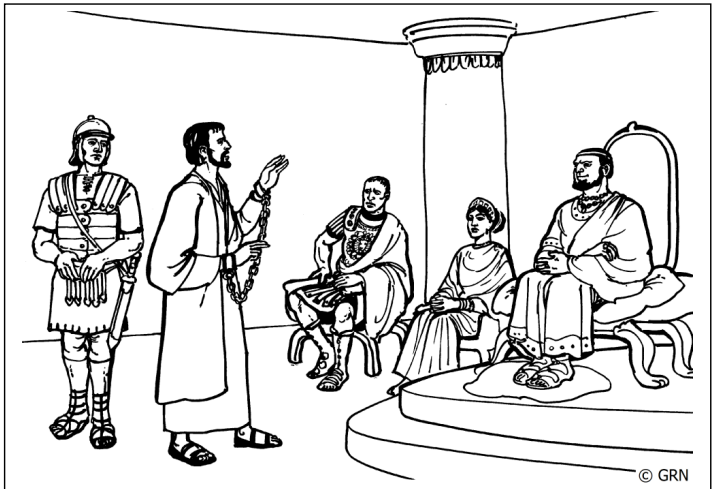
The Early Church of Jesus Christ

A Bible teaching commentary on the Acts of the Apostles in easy-to-read English

Written by Fred Morris



Paul preaches to kings as a prisoner for Christ

Acts Unit 12 of 12

Chapters 25:1-28:30

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Unit 12, Chapters 25:1 to 28:30.

📖 Acts Chapter 25.

Paul Asks to Speak to the Roman Emperor.

The new governor heard the Jewish leaders speak against Paul. They asked the governor to send Paul to the Jewish court in Jerusalem. They wanted to kill him.

Festus did not let them do this. He made the Jews go to the court in Caesarea. So they came from Jerusalem to make their charges against Paul. They brought many charges against him, but they could not prove any of them (25:7).

Finally Paul said, "I appeal to Caesar." The governor spoke with his council, then replied, "You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!" (25:12). Caesar was the Roman emperor Nero, the chief ruler in Rome. Rome ruled over Judea at that time. (Later on, Nero persecuted the Christians.)

A few days later, the King of the Jewish people and his sister came to visit the governor. The Roman Emperor had appointed him king of the Jewish people. The King said, "I want to hear Paul speak" (25:22). This King was the great-grandson of the King who tried to kill Jesus when He was a child (Matthew 2:16).

The governor gladly brought Paul to be questioned by the King. The governor said that he needed the king's help to send Paul to the Roman Emperor with a list of charges against him. "It makes no sense to send a prisoner to Rome without listing the charges against him" (25:26 to 27).

📖 Acts Chapter 26.

Paul Shares his Testimony with the King.

The next day, the King met Paul with the governor. This fulfilled the a prophecy by about Paul in Acts 9:15. "He will carry My name to those who are not Jews and to their kings and to the people of Israel."

of Paul from prison, the churches were encouraged and given understanding of the teachings of Christ and the purposed of God in the Old Testament.

Paul was confident that the Good News of God's salvation in Jesus will be proclaimed to all the nations. He said, "They will listen".

Conclusions.

In Rome, Paul was at the centre of the great Roman Empire. Because of this, the Good News of Jesus Christ spread throughout the known world (Philippians 1:12 to 14). This happened because, while in Rome, Paul spoke to his visitors and wrote to his churches. Paul's calling into ministry fulfilled the words of Jesus Himself (Acts 9:15 to 16; 23:11) to preach to Jews and Gentiles, even to kings.

Jesus warned His followers, "Everyone will hate you because of Me. But the one who stands firm to the end will be saved" (Mark 13:13). Paul stood firm until his work for God was finished. He was probably put to death by the Emperor Nero in AD 67. This was after three missionary journeys and many beatings, imprisonments, plots and threats against him, plus the final dangerous journey to Rome.

During the years following the death of Paul, the writings of Luke (the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts) were copied many times and given to the believers to read. The same happened with the writings of Matthew, Mark, John, Peter, James and the letters of Paul and the other apostles and the writer of the book called Hebrews. The believers were encouraged and grew strong through reading what became our New Testament, along with the Old Testament scrolls.

We can trust the words of the New Testament writers about Jesus Christ and His teachings, because they all knew Jesus personally. The risen Lord Jesus spoke to Paul and told him to be a witness for Him to the world.

So we thank God for the writings of Paul and others which teach everyone the truth about Jesus Christ who is the Son of God. It is a good thing for every believer to read the letters of Paul and the rest of the New Testament in addition to the book of Acts. They are

Paul as a house prisoner in Rome

Some believed the Good News, but others did not. Then Paul used the words of Isaiah (Isaiah 6:9 to 10). The same words were used by Jesus (Matthew 13:3 to 23; Mark 4:3-20; Luke 8:4 to 15).

Luke does not tell us what happened to Paul next. But we believe he was later put to death by Nero during a time of great persecution for followers of Christ.

During the time Paul waited in Rome, he preached boldly the Good News of Jesus Christ (Acts 28:31). He also wrote letters to some of the early Christian congregations (Colossians, Ephesians, Philippians). It was important for Paul to teach them. His letters are also helpful for teaching believers today, in addition to the teachings of Jesus in the gospels.

The wish of Paul to go to Rome was fulfilled in an amazing way. God allowed Paul to go there as a prisoner, not as a free man. He was a 'prisoner for Christ'. In this way, the Good News was preached to those who were willing to come and listen. And, through the writings

Paul thanked the King for the opportunity to speak about his faith and the opposition he had suffered (26:2). He also told the king he was pleased the king understood a lot about the Jewish religion (26:3).

Paul then told the king that he was a faithful Jew who had lived by the rules of the Pharisees (26:5). Paul told the king that at first he did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God. So he had punished those people who were followers of Jesus (26:9 to 11).

Paul then told how he met the risen Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus (26:12 to 18) and how he preached about Jesus to the Jews and the Gentiles (26:19 to 20). Paul said this was why the Jewish leaders tried to kill him (26:21).

He taught about the same things that Moses and the prophets said was going to happen (26:22 to 23):

- Christ the Messiah was going to suffer (Isaiah 53).
- He was going to rise from death (Psalm 16:10).
- He came to save His own people, the Jews, first (Luke 1:54 to 55).
- God's salvation will then be for all people (Isaiah 42:6; Luke 2:32).

The King almost believed in Jesus. He tested Paul by saying that Paul was mad (16:24). Then he asked Paul, "Are you trying to talk me into becoming a Christian?" (26:28). Then he got up and walked away when Paul told him, "I pray to God... that you may become like me, except for these chains" (26:29).

The King spoke to the governor and the others with him. He said, "Why should this man die or even be put in prison? He has done nothing wrong to deserve this" (26:31). The King said to the governor, "This man could be set free. But he has appealed to Caesar" (26:32). So Paul was sent to Rome by ship to be tried by Nero, the Roman Caesar or Emperor.

Acts Chapter 27.

Paul Leaves for Rome but is Shipwrecked.

Paul had been a prisoner for two years. Paul's friend, went with him to Rome. Paul called him 'a fellow prisoner' (Colossians 4:10). Luke travelled with them also.

A centurion of the Imperial Regiment was in charge of one hundred soldiers who guarded Paul and the other prisoners (27:1). The centurion knew he could trust Paul, so at Sidon he let Paul go off the ship to visit the believers who lived there (27:3).

This was after mid-September at the beginning of the stormy season. Paul knew that sailing was too dangerous and told the captain (27:10). The owner of the ship did not listen, so the Roman guard ignored Paul's advice. They sailed towards Phoenix in the island of Crete when the wind was good (27:12,13) This was a safe place to stay for the winter.

But very soon the ship was caught in a storm and driven along by the wind away from land. The seamen threw everything into the sea to lighten the ship and save it from sinking. They went without food for many days. They 'gave up all hope of being saved' (27:20).

One night an angel spoke to Paul: "Do not be afraid," he said. "You must stand trial before Caesar; and God will save the lives of all who sail with you" (27:24). Paul told the men: "Keep up your courage, men. I have faith in God that it will happen just as He told me... We will be saved but we must run the ship onto the beach of an island" (27:25 to 26).

After 14 days in the storm, the water became shallow (27:27). They put down anchors to hold the boat there until it was daylight (27:29). Paul told the 276 men that no one was going to die (27:34,37). He broke bread and gave thanks to God. They were filled with hope and ate more food before throwing the rest of the cargo into the sea to make the ship lighter (27:35 to 37). As daylight came, they saw a sandy beach, and tried to run the ship onto the beach. It was trapped in the shallow water and quickly broke up because of the huge waves.

The soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners, but the centurion saved them because of Paul and his faith. Then some of the men swam to shore. Others held onto pieces of wood; everyone reached land safely (27:44). God saved them all.

Acts Chapter 28.

Paul on the Island of Malta.

The land was the island of Malta. The people of Malta were very kind (28:2). They made a fire to dry and warm the men. While Paul picked up wood for the fire, a snake attached itself to Paul's hand, possibly by its teeth.

"He must be a murderer," the people said as they waited for him to die from the poison. When nothing happened to Paul, they said that he was a god (28:6).

The chief Roman officer on the island took Paul and his friends to his home. His father was sick in bed, so Paul prayed for him and laid hands on him and God healed him. Many other sick people came to Paul for prayer and healing (28:8 to 9).

During Paul's stay on the island of Malta, the whole island heard about Jesus. Christianity in Malta dates from this time. Many times Malta was attacked by the nations around it. But the people of Malta trusted in God for their freedom.

Three months later Paul was taken to Rome by ship. The winter storms had ended. Before he reached the city, many believers came out to meet him. At the sight of them, Paul was encouraged and he praised God (28:15).

The Ministry of Paul in Rome.

For two years, Paul was under house arrest. He stayed in his own rented house 'and welcomed all who came to see him' (28:30). Paul explained the Kingdom of God to the Jews. He used the Books of the Law of Moses and the Prophets to teach them. And he spoke to them of Jesus and His resurrection (28:23).