

### Paul's Journey to Rome

Acts 23:12–28:31

Following Paul's imprisonment in Jerusalem, the rest of the book of Acts gives an account of his journey to Rome and his stay there. It does not detail the final four years of his life. The book of Acts is not a biography of the apostle Paul, but is a segue book leading the reader from Law to Grace and from God dealing with Israel to His establishment of the Body of Christ through the Apostle Paul. During the time period covered in the book of Acts, Paul wrote 10 books, excepting 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus. All of his books were written during the last 15 years of his life.

Acts details Israel's call to come into the Kingdom, and her rejection of that call. It then shows the results of that rejection with the raising up of the apostle Paul to reach out to the Gentiles with the Gospel of Grace, including the uncircumcised of heart Jews. In other words, Paul was sent to all non-believers, and ministered to the resulting Grace churches that were formed.

#### **Overview of Paul's journey to Rome**

Following Paul's arrest in Jerusalem, the unbelieving Jews banded together to plot his demise. Having heard of the plot, the chief captain assigned 200 soldier to protect Paul and transport him to Caesarea. He was there for about two years, and during that time he had the opportunity to testify before the governor Felix, who left Paul in prison because it pleased the Jews, and later before Festus, who replaced Felix. When Festus, desiring to have peace with the Jews, asked Paul if he would go to be tried by the Jews in Jerusalem, Paul appealed to Caesar. Since Paul was a Roman citizen, he had every right to be tried by the Romans government.

Before being transferred to Rome, King Herod Agrippa II and Bernice came to visit Festus in Caesarea. He was the son of King Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:1–3), and Bernice was his sister. Festus filled in King Agrippa about all the events surrounding Paul, and Paul was able to testify Christ to King Agrippa. After King Agrippa heard Paul's case, he declared that he should be released, except that Paul already demanded that he stand before Caesar in Rome.

Paul is taken north along the coast from Caesarea to Sidon where he boards a ship and sails to Myra on the southern coast of modern-day Turkey. There he is put on an Alexandrian ship which is headed for Italy. With much effort, they arrive at Cnidus, a city at the extreme southwest tip of modern-day Turkey. They continue on with much difficulty to Fair Havens near the city of Lasea on the island of Crete. It was now late October or November and they had to continue their journey because Fair Havens was not a safe place to stay during winter. They decided to continue even though Paul warned them that there would be great damage. They were going to try to reach Phoenix, a city about 50 miles from Fair Haven with a safe harbor for wintering a ship.

Before they could dock safely at Phoenix, a violent storm drives them out to sea and they are tossed violently for two weeks. They finally get shipwrecked on the island Malta. They stay in Malta for three months and they eventually are transported to Rome while stopping at a number of ports along the way. Paul was under house arrest, so he rented a house but was guarded by a Roman soldier. He was free to have visitors, and it during this time that he wrote Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, and Philippians. He was able to openly, without hindrance preach the gospel while in Rome for two years before being released.

During his all-expenses-paid trip, Paul was able to share the gospel with many Roman authorities and soldiers. He was also given the freedom to see people even while under house arrest. This

gave him protection from the unbelieving Jews who desired to kill him, and gave him the time to write letters to a number of churches. All of this was possible because he was born a Roman citizen (Acts 22:26–28). As a Jew (Philippians 3:5), he was able to effectively minister among the Jews by gaining access to many synagogues. The Jews were more likely to listen to a Jew than they would to a Gentile. Being a Roman citizen allowed him to minister among the Gentiles and gained him a number of advantages. Spiritually, Paul is a perfect example of the Body of Christ which is composed of both Jews and Gentiles in one body.

### **Paul's messages**

As Paul stood before Felix, he discussed faith in Christ including righteousness, self-control, and the coming judgment (Acts 24:24–25). These topics caused Felix to become frightened and caused him to send Paul out of his sight. He was also hoping Paul would pay him bribe money for his release.

King Agrippa was very knowledgeable in the ways of the Jews. Paul used this to his advantage by explaining that he, as a Pharisee, was commissioned to destroy believers in Jesus. Paul was accused by the Jews that he was preaching that a man had been raised from the dead. Those who understood the teachings of the Pharisees, as King Agrippa most likely did, would know that claiming someone being raised from the dead is not an incredible claim, since they taught life after death. Paul then related the account of how Jesus Christ, having been raised from the dead, came to him while traveling to Damascus. His mission was to open the eyes of the Gentiles so that they would have faith in Jesus Christ and receive forgiveness of sins. The Jews were trying to kill Paul because he was preaching to the Gentiles that they could repent and turn to God. He used the Old Testament to show that what he was preaching did not conflict with Scripture, including the suffering of Jesus Christ and His resurrection for a light to all people.

Finally, after arriving in Rome, Paul was able to preach about the kingdom of God and of Jesus Christ by using the writings of Moses and the prophets (the Old Testament). The book of Acts finishes with Paul using the Old Testament to show that salvation would be sent to the Gentiles (Genesis 12:3; Isaiah 56:6–7; 60:1–3; Malachi 1:11; Romans 15:9–12).

Paul's Jewishness is often misunderstood and misused, especially by those who try to prove that the Body of Christ was not formed until after Acts 28. They point out that Paul preached in synagogues, quoted the Old Testament, and went to the Jews first. From this, they conclude that he was preaching a kingdom gospel. For instance, when Acts 28:31 says he was preaching the kingdom of God, they interpret this as the Millennial Kingdom which will be set up on earth with Jesus Christ sitting on a throne in Jerusalem. However, Paul never offered the kingdom to Israel, as Peter did in Acts 3:19. Paul spoke in a very general manner about the kingdom of God, often a reference to all believers from all times. Members of the Church, the Body of Christ, are in a kingdom, but we are not looking forward to ruling in the earthly Millennial Kingdom (2 Timothy 4:1; Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 4:11). The kingdom of God includes the kingdom of heaven (Millennial Kingdom) and the kingdom of Christ (the kingdom that the Body of Christ has joined). Paul has been consistently preaching Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, and the revelation of the Mystery. Paul preached the Mystery beginning with his salvation up to the end of his life, although he learned of the details over many years (Acts 26:16). There is no evidence that he preached one message for the first 20 years of his life, and then another message for the last 10 years, contrary to those who believe that the church began after the end of Acts 28.

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