

1. First century shipping, trade, and travel
2. Acts 27-28
3. God's sovereignty (or his providence) and man's responsibility

### **First century shipping, trade, and travel**

1. Acts 27:37 - "We were in all 276 persons in the ship." (Comment on this.)
  - a. Noah's ark
  - b. Jonah and the whale
2. The city of Rome had a population of approximately 1 million by the time Paul traveled (was taken) there. That's a lot of people to feed - how did they do it? Shipping.
3. The Romans learned about ships during the Punic wars with Carthage during the third and second centuries BCE. Prior to this they did not have a navy - only an army. Necessity being the mother of invention (or copying), Rome built a navy and eventually defeated Carthage. After becoming the superpower of the Mediterranean world (sea), they continued to develop their navy and their merchant ships.
4. The largest and most reliable ships of that era were the grain ships that ran from Alexandria in Egypt to Rome. One of the largest recorded ships was the *Isis*, at 180 feet long, 45 feet wide, with a hold 44 feet deep. It carried close to one thousand tons of grain and nearly that many passengers.
5. Nearly 1,200 large merchant ships reached the port of Ostia every year, or five ships per navigable day. Ostia was the sea port at the mouth of the Tiber River, about 15 km from the city of Rome.
6. There were no passenger ships then as we know them now, such as cruise ships or luxury liners. If you wanted to sail on a ship, you nearly always stayed on deck for the entire trip, and you took care of your own needs - shelter, cooking, etc.
7. The ship that Paul and his companions took passage on in 27:6 was (most likely) a mid-sized grain ship, based on Luke's numbering of the people on board, and the fact that their cargo was wheat (27:38).
8. The prime shipping season was from May 27 to September 14. Out of necessity or adventure or profit a ship might sail from mid-March to late May, and from mid-September to mid-November. After that, the winter months of mid-November through February were very dangerous for shipping - see Acts 28:11.
9. The emperor Claudius (41-54 AD) offered to pay a bonus to grain ship owners who were willing to make the journey between Alexandria and Rome during the more dangerous seasons of the year, even offering to replace the ships if lost at sea. Why would he do this? To keep the peace and favor of the people - fed people are happy people.
10. Following the collapse of the Roman empire, ships of this size and capability basically disappeared until the 16th century when shipping and ocean travel became very important, and the majority of the world's goods are still traded and moved around the world by ship.

### **Acts 27 - Paul's Journey to Rome**

1. Approximately 2,344 miles, mostly by ship.

### **Acts 27:1-8 (READ)**

1. The first ship they boarded was probably a smaller ship that stayed closer to shore (27:2).
2. Who was Paul traveling with? At a minimum, Aristarchus and Luke.
3. In 27:6 they switched ships, boarding a grain ship sailing from Alexandria to Rome.
4. Luke tells us that the sailing was already becoming difficult.

### **Acts 27:9-12 (READ)**

1. Sometime after October 5 (Day of Atonement) - this is the dangerous time of the year for sailing.
2. Paul warned them not to go, but the centurion really wanted to keep moving, so he listened to the ship's owner and pilot (captain).
3. They were not planning on completing the trip to Rome at this point, but they hoped to make it to a harbor on the western side of the island of Crete and stay there for the winter.

### **Acts 27:13-38 (READ)**

1. At first it seemed like their plan would work, but then the Nor'easter struck down from the land (8,000 foot mountain) and they had to give way to the wind.
2. They had a small break while they passed the island of Cauda, and at that point they brought the ship's boat on-board.
  - a. Ship's boat? Used to transport between the ship and land.
3. They then beefed up the ship to try and hold it together.
  - a. Either ropes underneath the ship from side to side, or
  - b. Ropes above deck tying the bow and stern together, to keep the ship's backbone from breaking.
4. Syrtis - an area of shallow water and sandbars off the northern coast of Africa where ships became stranded.
5. "Lowered the gear" dropped the mainsail or more likely, put out a sea-anchor to slow them down.
6. You know it's getting bad when they start to toss their cargo overboard. Cargo = profit.
7. "...all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned."

### **Acts 27:21-26 (READ)**

1. "Men, you should have listened to me..."
  - a. I told you so?

- b. Or, reaffirming that he is someone worth listening to?
- 2. God sent a messenger, an angel, to Paul. Dream or vision? Or reality? Reality. Compare to Peter in prison and the angel comes and gets him out.
- 3. "...the God to whom I belong and whom I worship..."
  - a. Why did he say it like this? They were pagans, and probably represented many religions and "gods," and he needed to specify which God he was talking about.
- 4. "You must stand before Caesar." We aren't told anywhere that Paul did finally, but we can believe that he did because of this promise from God.
- 5. "I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told."
  - a. Faith in extreme situations
  - b. "Exactly" = God's providence

### **Acts 27:27-32 (READ)**

1. Around midnight on the fourteenth night, the sailors sensed land approaching.
2. Soundings = rope with a weight, knots tied every 6 feet. Twenty fathoms = 120 feet, fifteen fathoms = 90 feet.
3. To avoid running aground in the dark they set out four anchors from the stern (back) of the ship.
4. The sailors wanted to escape, so they pretended to want to set anchors from the bow (front) of the ship as well.
5. Paul sees through their pretense, and warns the centurion and the soldiers, who cut the ropes holding the ship's boat, keeping the sailors on-board.

### **Acts 27:33-38 (READ)**

1. The day of reckoning - would all that God had promised to Paul actually take place?
2. Paul encourages everyone to eat something, and he leads the way, giving thanks to God before he eats.
  - a. Breaking bread = communion? Not likely in a group of pagans.
  - b. But, surely a testimony of his faith in God during the darkest times.
3. 27:37 - textual variants: 276, 76, about 76
4. After eating, they threw the wheat into the sea to lighten the ship. Why? To get as close to shore as possible after they cut the anchors loose.

### **Acts 27:39-44 (READ)**

1. Daylight! And land!
2. They saw a bay with a beach and planned to try and hit that beach.
3. They cast off the anchors, leaving them in the sea, untied the rudders so they could steer the ship, and hoisted the foresail to get some speed. (Multiple sails)
4. They didn't get far, hitting a reef and getting stranded.
5. The ship was beginning to break apart.

6. The soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners - why?
7. The centurion wanted to keep Paul alive so he stopped the soldiers from carrying out their plan.
8. Time to go swimming!

### **Acts 28:1-10**

1. They learn that the island was called Malta, and the native people help them out by lighting a fire.
2. Paul helps out by gathering sticks for the fire, is bitten by a snake, the natives reason that Justice has not allowed him to finally escape his fate, but then they decide that Paul is a god since he did not die from the snake bite.
3. Paul and company are guests of the Roman "governor" of the island, Paul heals this man's father, and then heals many more. Assuming he preaching the gospel to them as well.

### **Acts 28:11-16**

1. Winter is over and it's now safe to sail again, so they board another Alexandrian ship for the final part of the trip to Italy.
2. They got off the ship at Puteoli and walked the rest of the way to Rome.
3. Once in Rome, Paul was in "house arrest" rather than prison.

### **Acts 28:17-31**

1. Paul meets with the Jewish leaders in Rome, they say they have not heard anything about Paul as of yet, but they do want to hear more about Christianity.
2. Paul meets again with more of them, and he expounded the Scriptures from morning till evening, reasoning with them and showing that Jesus was the Christ.
3. Some believed, some didn't.
4. Paul lived there in Rome for two years, preaching and teaching.

### **God's sovereignty (providence) and man's responsibility**

1. Paul in Acts 27:10, "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."
  - a. In 59 AD, the Day of Atonement (27:9) was on October 5.
  - b. Was this prophetic insight, or simply the common sense of a seasoned traveler (3,500 miles by sea, over eleven voyages)?
2. In 27:20 Luke writes "...all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned."
  - a. Did this include Paul? Surely he recalled the words of Jesus in Acts 23:11, "The following night the Lord stood by him and said, 'Take courage, for as you have testified to the facts about me in Jerusalem, so you must testify also in Rome.'"

3. In 27:21-26 Paul received word from God through an angel that all would survive the storm and resulting shipwreck.
  - a. Was this just a guess on God's part?
  - b. Was it simply foreknowledge of how the events would turn out?
  - c. Or was God working out the events so that they would unfold exactly as he had planned?
    - i. Was this a difficult thing for God to accomplish? Just think, 276 people aboard the ship, and after the ship was destroyed by the storm, 276 people were now in the sea, trying to make their way to land.
4. 27:30-31 - Sailors were trying to escape from the ship under pretense of setting more anchors, and Paul warned the centurion and the soldiers that if that happens people will die ("Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.")
  - a. Grudem writes that "Paul knew that God's providential oversight and even his clear prediction of what would happen still involved the use of ordinary human means to bring it about." In this case, the sailors needed to stay on the ship until the very end, to do sailor kind of things as described in 27:39-41.
  - b. "We would do well to imitate [Paul's] example, combining complete trust in God's providence with a realization that the use of ordinary means is necessary for things to come out the way God has planned them to come out." Grudem, 336
5. In 27:42-43 the centurion stopped the soldiers from killing the prisoners, which he had to do, whether he knew it or not, to fulfill God's promise that all on board the ship would be saved.
6. 27:44 "And so it was that all were brought safely to land."
7. Introduce the doctrine of God's providence...
  - a. Sovereignty: God's ruling or governing of his creation
  - b. Providence: God's ongoing relationship to his creation (the universe, and everything in it).
    - i. Grudem: God is continually involved with all created things in such a way that he (1) keeps them existing and maintaining the properties with which he created them; (2) cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do; and (3) directs them to fulfill his purposes.
    - ii. Biblical providence is not:
      1. Deism: God created the world and then essentially abandoned it
      2. Pantheism: creation is part of God, or God is in all things
      3. Chance or randomness
      4. Impersonal fate or determinism
  - c. Hebrews 1:3
  - d. Colossians 1:17
  - e. Acts 17:28
  - f. Ephesians 1:11
8. What about God's providence or sovereignty and man's responsibility in salvation?

- a. "...for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth." Titus 1:1
- b. "Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." 2 Timothy 2:10
- c. Romans 10:9-15

### Conclusion

1. Curriculum: "God uses people to accomplish his purposes on the earth."
  - a. Is that comforting to you? Or frightening? Or disturbing?
2. Even with the assurance of God's protection in the storm and shipwreck, this was a very difficult journey. Paul's faith in God held firm - can the same be said about us in our circumstances?

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