

Having examined Paul's shipwreck and safe arrival to land last week, we come to his stay at Malta (vv1-10) and arrival at Rome (vv11-16).

- I. Paul's Stay at Malta (vv1-10)
- II. Paul's Arrival at Rome (vv11-16)
- III. Two Observations

- I. Paul's Stay at Malta (vv1-10)

1. V1—"Now when they had escaped, they then found out that the island was called Malta"—which is an island in the Mediterranean half way between Africa and Sicily.
2. The NKJV twice renders the Greek word *barbaros* as "natives" (v2, v4), whereas the KJV has it "barbarous people."
3. But we have to remember the Greeks refers to all non-Greeks as barbarians as they viewed them as uncivilized.
4. Rom.1:14—"I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise"—Greeks were wise and barbarians unwise.
5. But keep in mind, just because the barbarians were not as civilized as the Greeks didn't mean they were animals.
6. It just refers to the fact that they didn't speak Greek but their own tribal language and remained largely free from Roman culture (Luke points out five things about them).
7. (1) Their kindness, v2—"And the natives showed us unusual kindness; for they kindled a fire and made us all welcome, because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold."
8. Now keep in mind they were 267 people, and so the kindness shown them by the natives was indeed unusual.
9. The Greek word rendered "kindness" (*philanthropia*) is a word that literally means "a love for mankind."
10. It refers to a general (or generic) benevolence based upon a sense of common needs as fellow humans.
11. (2) Their assumption (vv3-4), v3—"But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand (that is, a poisonous snake bit him and would not let go)."
12. V4—"So when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, 'No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow to live.'"
13. They no doubt must have noticed the majority of the survivors were prisoners (and the others were soldiers).
14. Given the fact that Paul is bitten by a poisonous snake, they assumed justice finally equaled the score.
15. Yes, it's true he escaped the shipwreck, but now justice was going to punish him for being a murderer.
16. In other words, they believed it was just for murderers to be put to death—it was unjust to let them live.

17. (3) Their idolatry (vv5-6), vv5-6—"But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. However, they were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had looked for along time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god."
18. This means they switched their perspective of Paul from a murderer to a god (all because the snake did not kill or harm him).
19. Now, I take the fact that the snake didn't harm him to be supernatural or the result of God's intervention.
20. Ordinarily, when a poisonous snake bites you, even if you're a Christian, you get sick and possibly die.
21. Thus, the natives rightly understood, what happened to Paul was not normal (there was something supernatural about it).
22. And so they wrongly concluded he was more than a mere man—he had to be more than merely human.
23. They understood there are humans or gods—creatures or creators—and Paul must be the latter (second).
24. Most pagans religions believed their gods or deities would occasionally take human form and walk on earth.
25. (4) Their healing (vv7-9), v7—"In that region there was an estate of the leading citizen of the island, whose name was Publius, who received us and entertained us courteously (respectfully) for three days."
26. We know from history this island was taken from the North Africans about 200 BC (who possessed it at least 600yrs before).
27. It's for this reason, Publius, who seemingly was not only very wealthy but governor, bore a Roman name.
28. And yet, the fact they are called barbarians means, while they were under Roman rule, they remained distant from the Romans.
29. They spoke their native tongue, worshipped their native gods, and failed to have any meaningful relation with Rome.
30. He entertained the entire party (all 267 people) on his vast estate for three days, or until winter lodgings could be arranged.
31. V8—"And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery (disentery), and he laid his hands on him and healed him."
32. Dysentery was a bowel or intestine disease that was both deadly and painful and accompanied with severe fevers.
33. V9—"So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed."
34. It's possible they continued to look at Paul as more than a mere man (as he had ability to heal the sick).
35. Mk.16:17-18—"And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."
36. We learn from v20, these were signs done in the power of Christ, in order to verify or confirm their preaching.

37. Thus, while we are not expressly told, it seems highly unlikely that Paul never preached or taught while at Malta (remember, miracles were never intended to stand alone).
38. (5) Their generosity, v10—"They also honored us in many ways; and when we departed, they provided such things as were necessary."
39. I take this to refer to the natives as a whole—"They also honored us in many ways"—that is, they treated them in honorable ways.
40. And then, having lodged them for three months (v11), they sent them away with arms filled with supplies.

II. Paul's Arrival at Rome (vv11-16)

1. V11—"After three months we sailed in an Alexandrian ship whose figurehead was the Twin Brothers, which had wintered at the island."
2. This means, they took a similar ship as they were shipwrecked in (which likely carried grain from Egypt).
3. Luke then recounts their trip from Malta, up to (Sicily) Syracuse (where they stayed for three days), and then to Rhegium (which was a port city on the southern most part of the boot of Italy), and then a day later they came to Puteoli.
4. It was here Paul and his friends encountered some brethren, and so they stayed there for seven days (v14).
5. Now keep in mind, according to v16, Paul's party not only consisted of his Christian friends, but the other prisoners, and Roman soldiers.
6. Now we know from chapter 27:37, there were in total 267 people (which no doubt included the sailors).
7. So while we have no idea how large Paul's party exactly was, it no doubt included several hundred people.
8. Now this is amazing if you consider that Julius (the Roman centurion) had to give permission for Paul to remain in Puteoli for a full week.
9. According to the end of v14, after the week of fellowship, Paul and his companions finished their trip to Rome (130 miles) on foot.
10. In v15, Luke mentions two additional port-cities they stopped at on their way up to Rome—Appii Forum and Three Inns.
11. It seems these brethren came from the church at Rome and aided Paul and his party for the last 40 miles.
12. Remember, while Paul had never been to Rome, there were people there that he knew, and others no doubt knew about him through his previous letter (his epistle to the Romans).
13. V15b—"When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage"—that is, when Paul saw the Christians from Rome come out to accompany him.
14. He gave thanks to God for them and took courage—his heart was encouraged and he was strengthened in spirit (there was a unique spiritual connection called fellowship).
15. V16—"Now when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him."
16. This underscores something I said last week that Paul was treated differently than the other prisoners.

17. This seems to be because he was a Roman citizen and so had come to Rome to stand before Caesar himself.
18. Thus, while the other prisoners are handed over to the captain of the guard, Paul is permitted to dwell in his own house (though guarded by a soldier).
19. And so, there have been those who've suggested that Julius may have become a Christian by this time.
20. This doesn't seem unlikely given the fact that he's spent that last 9 months with Paul and his companions.
21. But either way, it appears he was an honorable man who finished his task of bringing Paul safely to Rome.
22. And thus, we learn that what God promised came to pass (v24), as Paul would now stand before Caesar.
23. Now as we shall see from the rest of the chapter, after speaking to the Jewish leaders (vv17-29), he remained in Rome for "two whole years in his own rendered house" (v30).
24. Thus, while we are not expressly told, we can safely conclude that eventually stood before Caesar (and as we know from other books written in this time), it appears he was able to have a fruitful ministry in Rome.

III. Two Observations

1. Here I want to suggest two general observations, the first taken from the natives (vv1-10) and the other from the Christians (vv11-6).
2. With respect to the natives I want to discuss the reality of natural religion and with respect to Christians the beauty of saving religion.
3. Now before I do that, let me say a few things about the word "religion"—the term religion is not a bad term.
4. It's found in our Bible, Jas.1:26-27—"If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue...his religion is useless. Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world."
5. The term "religion" simply refers to a set of beliefs and practices—there is true (good) and false (bad) religion.
6. (1) The reality of natural religion—by natural religion (theology) is meant a religion that is native to man.
7. We must remember, the natives on Malta had no Bibles, knew nothing of Christ, and likely never saw a Christian.
8. And yet, they had a native knowledge about certain things that are more clearly revealed in the Bible.
9. Thus, regardless how removed a person is from civilization, all men possess a native or natural religion.
10. And this native or natural religion has two sources—creation and conscience—an outward and inward witness.
11. (a) The outward witness of creation—this means man knows about God through creation around him.

12. Rom.1:18-19—"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them."
13. Rom.1:20—"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse."
14. Here we learn that God's invisible attributes are clearly seen by creation, and especially His eternal power and Godhead.
15. This means we learn at least three things from creation: first, God is eternal (He existed prior to creation); second, God is powerful (only a powerful Being can create and sustain all of creation); third, God is unique and different from creation (it becomes obvious the Creator is distinct from His creation).
16. All of these can be learned without a Bible—these are lessons creation itself teaches all men upon the earth.
17. (b) The inward witness of conscience—as God's image man has the remains of His law within his heart.
18. Rom.2:14-15—"For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them."
19. What law remains written in man's heart by nature but what's called the moral law or the Ten Commandments.
20. This simply means, that all men by nature have a sense of morality that is shaped by this universal law.
21. This is why, regardless of when or where a people lived, they worship a god and treat others with kindness.
22. Because the work of the law is written in their hearts, they know they are to be religious and kind to others.
23. This is why the natives on the island of Malta treated Paul and his party with such unusual kindness and honor.
24. Not because they had the TC in written form, but because they had the echo of those commands in their hearts by nature.
25. Now it's true, a person can become so hardened that these commands are ignored and possibly even silenced.
26. For example, these natives knew that it was just for murderers to die (and unjust for murderers to live).
27. I don't know for sure, but it seems rather likely they enforced the death-penalty upon those who murdered.
28. And yet, I recently heard in the news that the Governor of California is trying to put an end to the death penalty.
29. There are presently 650 inmates in CA prisons on death row and he's trying to lower their sentence to life in prison.
30. But man by nature knows that life is precious and thus, those who take a life should forfeit their life.

31. Let me put it like this—those natives on Malta 2000yrs ago, had better morals than the Governor of CA.
32. (2) The reality of supernatural religion—here of course I am thinking about saving religion as found in these Christians (it's supernatural because it goes beyond mere natural religion).
33. Now if we didn't know better, we may wrongly conclude that they were no different than the natives.
34. But no dear brethren, that would be very wrong as natural religion is but a dim shadow of true religion.
35. Oh it may in many ways look similar (and perhaps even identical) but there are several important differences.
36. (a) It's derived from Scripture—by this is meant, it goes beyond the knowledge of God derived from creation.
37. While we can learn something about God's power and wisdom from creation, we are unable to learn about his love and mercy.
38. (b) It's mediated through Christ—by this I mean, all true and saving religion is through Christ as Mediator.
39. Now, it's true natural theology also teaches man that he needs some form of mediation (this is why all pagan religions have priests).
40. But we only learn about God's provision of Christ, the one accepted mediator, in the pages of Scripture.
41. (c) It's motivated by love to Christ—by this I mean, the reason we obey and serve Him is because we love Him.
42. Yes, it's true both the natives and Christians showed kindness to Paul and his party, but they did so for two very different reasons.
43. Generally speaking, the natives did so out of a natural sense of right and wrong (which ultimately terminates on oneself).
44. Whereas the Christians did so out of love to their Savior—there love for Paul and his companions was but a reflection of their love for Him.
45. This is why Jesus said—"Every cup of water given in My name will not go unnoticed"—what does it mean to give a cup of water in Christ's name but to do so out of love for Christ.
46. This is what makes Christian morality distinctly Christian—we do so as Christians out of love and gratitude to Christ.
47. Let me ask you in closing, Which of these two religions do you possess? Have you come to know the God of Scripture through Christ, and now do you seek to obey Him out of love and gratitude?