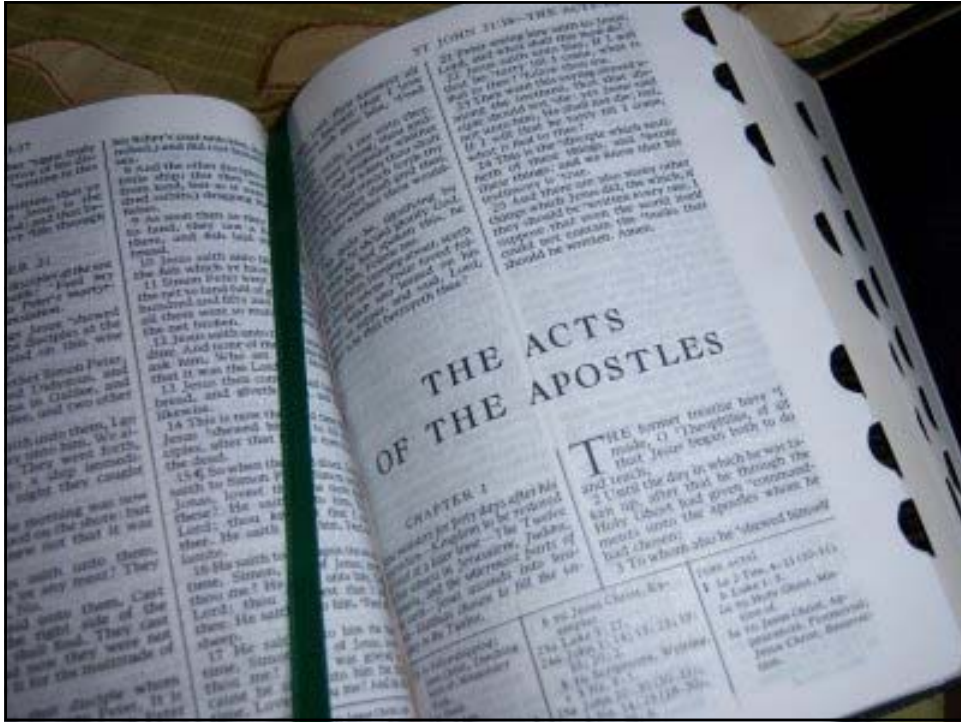




4 **WHAT THE BIBLE Is ABOUT**

Book of Acts
Part 11 – Chapter 28 plus

A dark blue rectangular box containing the number "4" on the left and the title "WHAT THE BIBLE Is ABOUT" on the right. Below this, a white-bordered box contains the text "Book of Acts" and "Part 11 – Chapter 28 plus".



KEY THEME

Jesus offers salvation to everyone.

Acts

KEY VERSE

⁷ And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

⁸ But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Acts 1:8

The book of Acts in two acts

THE MINISTRY OF PETER (Chapters 1-12)

- Peter and the Jews, Acts 1—7
- Peter and the Samaritans, Acts 8
- The conversion of Paul, Acts 9
- Peter and the Gentiles, Acts 10—11
- Peter’s arrest and deliverance, Acts 12

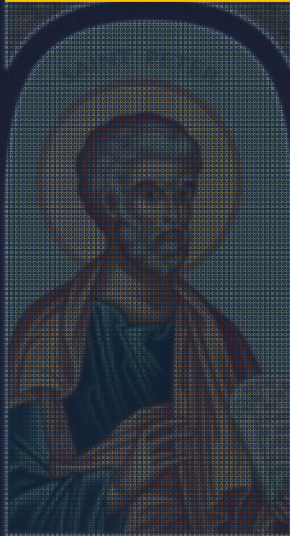
THE MINISTRY OF PAUL (Chapter 13-28)

- Paul’s first missionary journey, Acts 13—14
- The Council of Jerusalem, Acts 15
- Paul’s second missionary journey, 16:1—18:22
- Paul’s third missionary journey, 18:23—21:25
- Paul’s arrest and trial in Caesarea, 21:26—26:31
- Paul’s voyage to Rome, Acts 27-28

Seven Progress Reports

1. ~~“And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).~~
2. ~~“So the Word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly” (Acts 6:7).~~
3. ~~“Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria...was strengthened; and [it was] encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord” (Acts 9:31).~~
4. ~~“But the Word of God continued to increase and spread” (Acts 12:24).~~
5. ~~“So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers” (Acts 16:5).~~
6. ~~“In this way the Word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power” (Acts 19:20).~~
7. “Paul...welcomed all who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 28:30-31).

*But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and **unto the uttermost part of the earth.***
Acts 1:8



The Acts of Paul 13-28



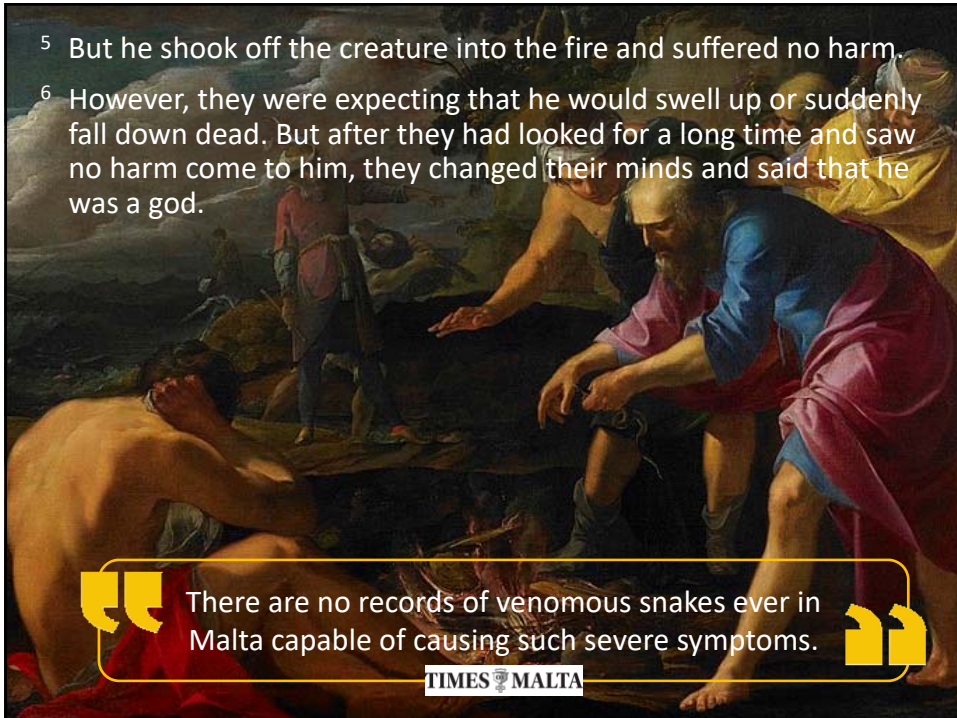
Acts 28

Paul's Ministry on Malta

- ¹ Now when they had escaped, they then found out that the island was called Malta [Melita, KJV 1611].
- ² And the natives [barbarous people, KJV] 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.
[“Barbarians” so-called, because they spoke no Greek or Latin.]
- ³ 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.
- ⁴ 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.”

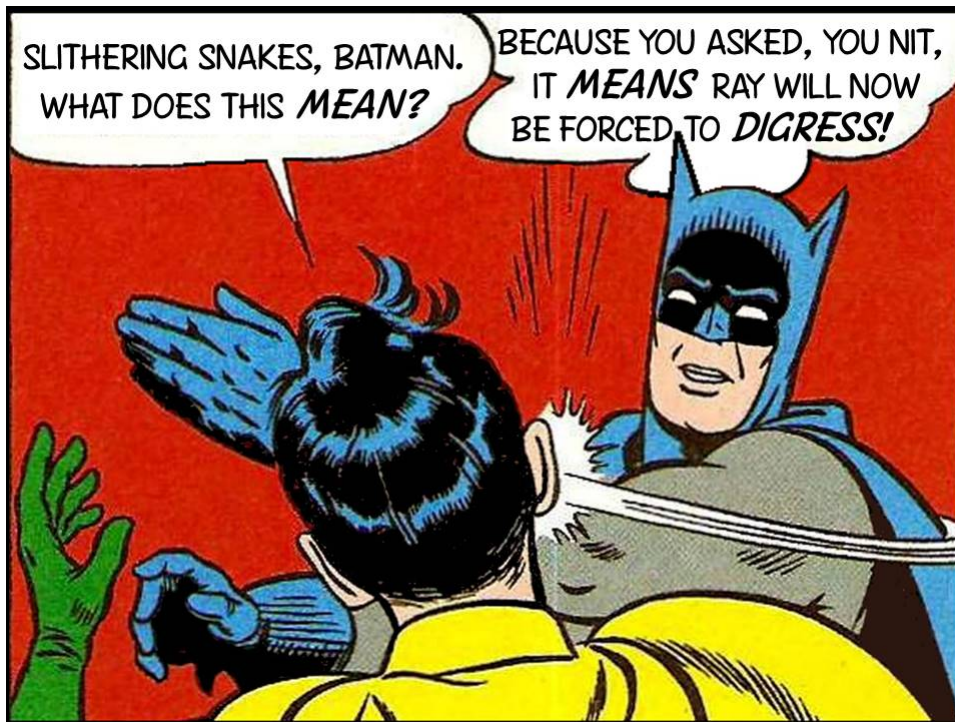
[A local goddess was named “Justice”.]

- ⁵ But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm.
- ⁶ However, they were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.



There are no records of venomous snakes ever in Malta capable of causing such severe symptoms.

TIMES MALTA



A Herpetological Mystery

Why did locals believe Paul would die? **Malta has no vipers.**

Possible answers:

1. Witnesses mistakenly assumed that it was a venomous viper, when in actual fact it was a harmless species of snake.
2. The snake may have coiled around Paul's hand rather than bitten it, leading Luke and the Maltese to assume that he had been bitten.
3. The snake was not native to Malta, but had arrived by ship.
4. Malta's mystery 'viper' was actually a cat snake *Telescopus fallax* - a species of venomous rear-fanged colubrid that usually measures up to 2.5 ft long and is native to Malta. Its preferred habitat includes dry stony areas overgrown with low shrubs in which it can climb, this fairly small, lithe snake could easily be picked up with a bundle of sticks.



Maltese Cat Snake

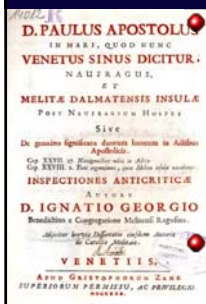
Horned viper, *Vipera ammodytes*

- The most dangerous true viper in Europe lives on the island of Melita, an island in the Adriatic Sea, today known as Meleda or Mljet.
- The island was so heavily infested with the horned viper *Vipera ammodytes* that a predatory mongoose was introduced on the island in 1910 to control them.
- Symptoms of a bite by this viper coincide with those reported in the Acts; immediate 'swelling' due to hemorrhagic edema, 'falling down' due to faintness/dizziness, followed by circulatory shock, pulmonary congestion and internal bleeding, all of which can lead to death if not treated properly.



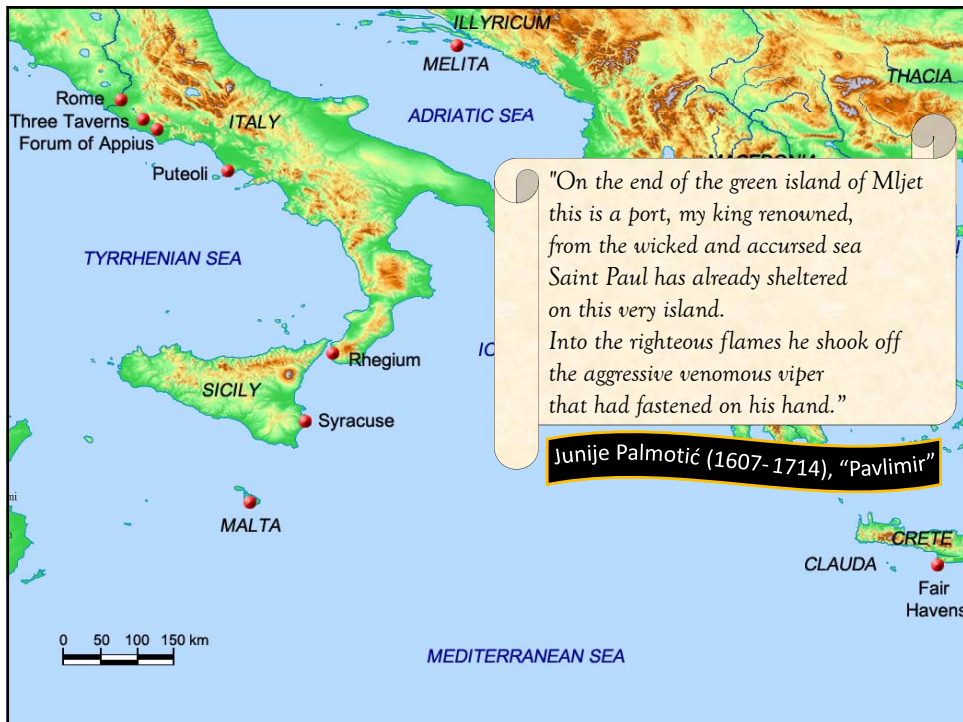
5. So perhaps Paul's shipwreck was not on Malta but on Mljet (Melita), Illyricum (now Croatia), home of the native Horned Viper and two millennia of Ragusan tradition.

- Acts conforms with geographical, meteorological, oceanographic, historical, and navigational characteristics of the island of Mljet.
- Paul and Luke's stay in Illyricum was mentioned by early Christian writers, Jerome (AD 345-420), Gregory of Nazianus (330-390), etc.
- Word of mouth stories and legends were recorded from the 6th century onwards by historians, men of letters, artists and scholars such as Ananias of Shirak (600-650) and Porphyrogenitus (905-959).



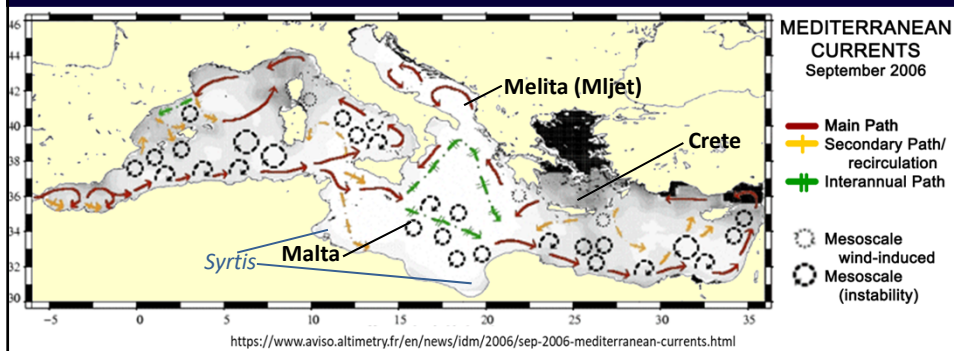
A Knights of Malta (in Malta from 1530-1798) effort to transfer the legend to Malta was disputed by scholars including historians Serafino Razzi (1531-1606) and Junije Palmotić (1607-1714), archaeologist Jakov Salečić of Kročula (1678-1747), writer and scholar Ignjat Đurđević (1675-1737), Stjepan Šuljaga (1719-1790), philosopher Vicko Paulnko (1842-1921), and others.

Archaeologists found evidence of an early church built on the foundation of a Roman villa from mention in a 7th century Will.

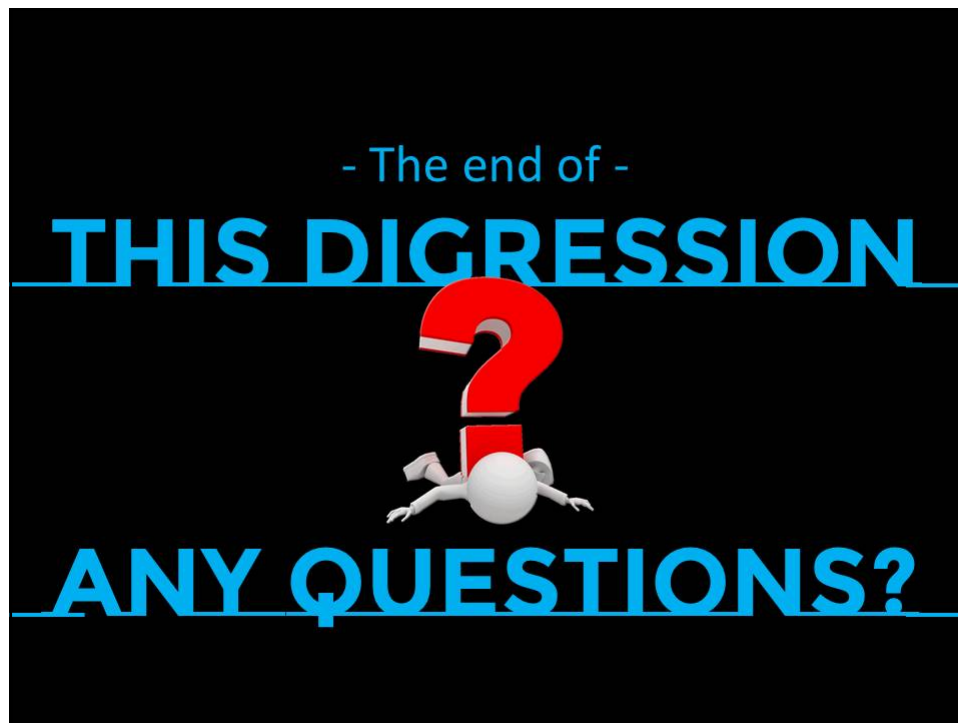


Basic arguments for Mljet as Melita

1. Per Luke, the island was called Μελίτα , not Μάλτα (Acts 28:1).
2. Per Luke, the ship was in the Adriatic Sea (Acts 27:27). Mljet is. Malta is in the Central Mediterranean, below the Ionic Sea.
3. Late autumn storms in that part of the world usually blow out to sea and then northwards into the Adriatic Sea.
4. Prevailing ocean currents would cause a disabled ship to drift northwards, up the Adriatic coast towards Mljet. It would be almost impossible to drift from Crete to Malta (or the Syrtis).



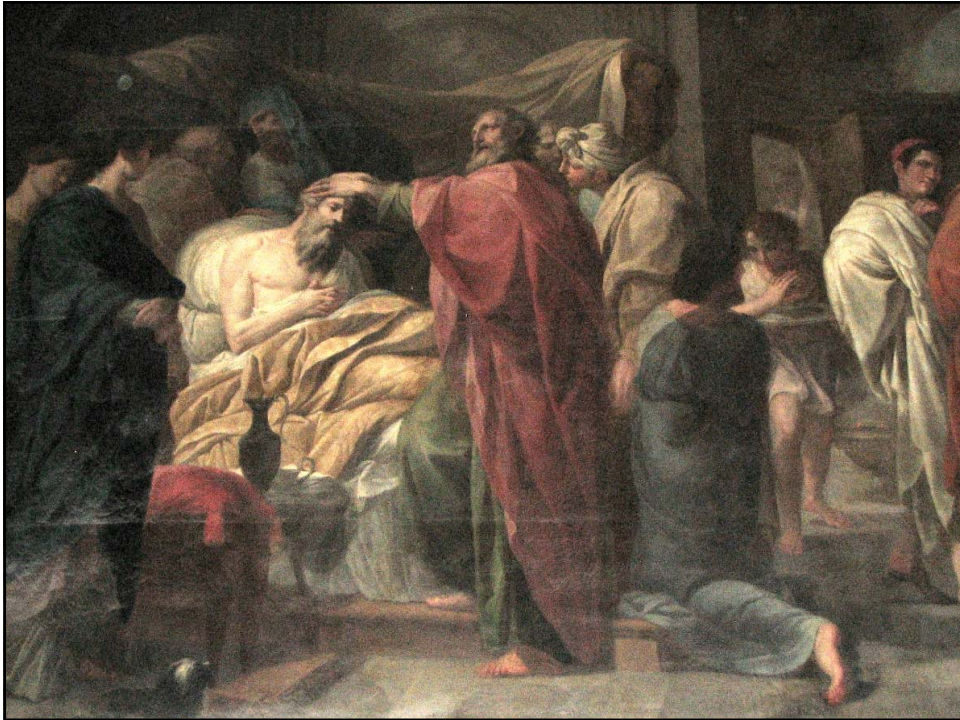
5. The sailors feared the Σύρτιν (Syrtis, Acts 27:17), translated as “quicksands”; generally thought to be the so-named Gulfs of Gabès and Sidra hundreds of miles away on the African coast, but could also refer to underwater shoals, rocks or sandbars.
6. The description of the beach at Melita more closely matches Mljet than it does Malta (other than at St. Thomas Bay).
7. Mljet is home to Europe’s most venomous viper, the Horned viper (*Vipera ammodytes*). No known snake on Malta meets Luke’s description.
8. Melita was accepted to be Mljet until the Knights of Malta (1530-1798) controversially claimed it to be Malta.
9. Early English bibles including Wycliffe (AD 1382) and Douay-Rheims (1582) translated from the Latin Vulgate and Tyndale (1526) and KJV (1611) translated from the Greek *Textus Receptus* refer to Melita. Malta appears in most English texts translated after 1881 (e.g., RV (1883), ASV (1901), etc.).
10. Paul wrote in Romans 15:19 that he preached in Illyricum.



⁷ 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 for three days. ⁸ And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him.

⁹ So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed.

¹⁰ They also honored us in many ways; and when we departed, they provided such things as were necessary.





Arrival at Rome

¹¹ After three months we sailed in an Alexandrian ship whose figurehead was the Twin Brothers, which had wintered at the island.



Typical 1st Century Alexandrian Grain Ship

¹² And landing at Syracuse, we stayed three days.



¹³ From there we circled round and reached Rhegium.



Modern-day Reggio Calabria

The "toe" of the Italian boot, Southern Italy's third largest city (560,000), it is separated from Sicily by the Strait of Messina.

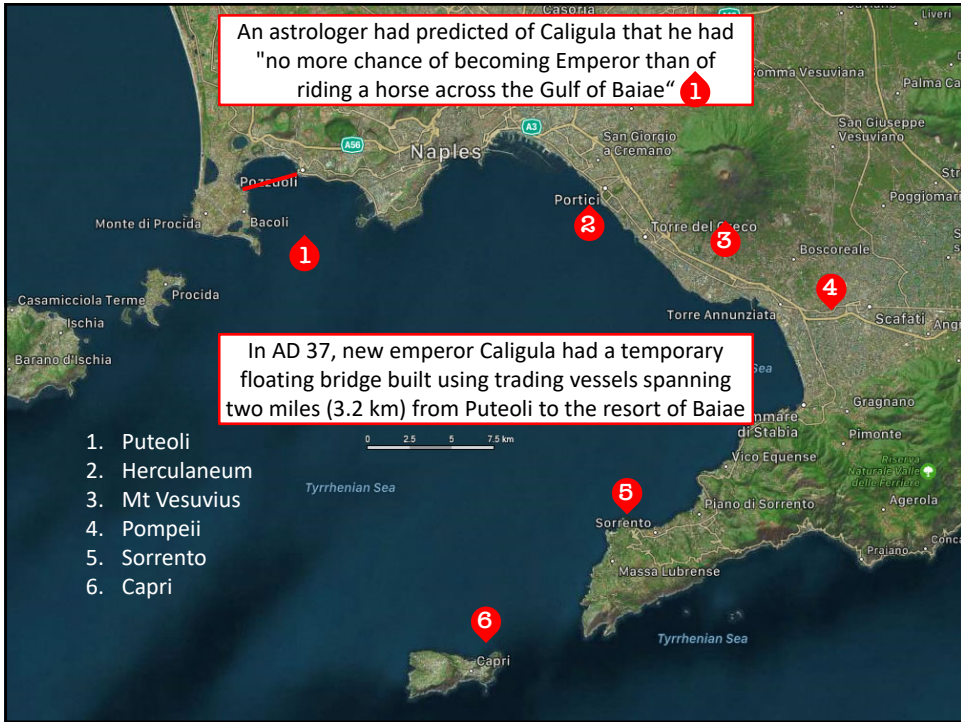


And after one day the south wind blew; and the next day we came to Puteoli,¹⁴ where we found brethren, and were invited to stay with them seven days.



Modern-day Pozzuoli

Although 170 miles (272 km) from Rome, it was Rome's main port until AD 64 and terminus for Alexandrian grain ships. It was named for its sulphureous odour.



An astrologer had predicted of Caligula that he had "no more chance of becoming Emperor than of riding a horse across the Gulf of Baiae" 1

In AD 37, new emperor Caligula had a temporary floating bridge built using trading vessels spanning two miles (3.2 km) from Puteoli to the resort of Baiae

- 1. Puteoli
- 2. Herculaneum
- 3. Mt Vesuvius
- 4. Pompeii
- 5. Sorrento
- 6. Capri



Paul's Ministry at Rome

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ And it came to pass after three days that Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. So when they had come together, he said to them:

“Men *and* brethren, though I have 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, ¹⁸ who, when they had examined me, wanted to let *me* go, because there was no cause for putting me to death. ¹⁹ But when the Jews spoke against *it*, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, not that I had anything of which to accuse my nation.

²⁰ For this reason therefore I have called for you, to see *you* and speak with *you*, because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.”

²¹ Then they said to him,

“We neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren who came reported or spoken any evil of you. ²² But we desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere.”

²³ So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at *his* lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening.

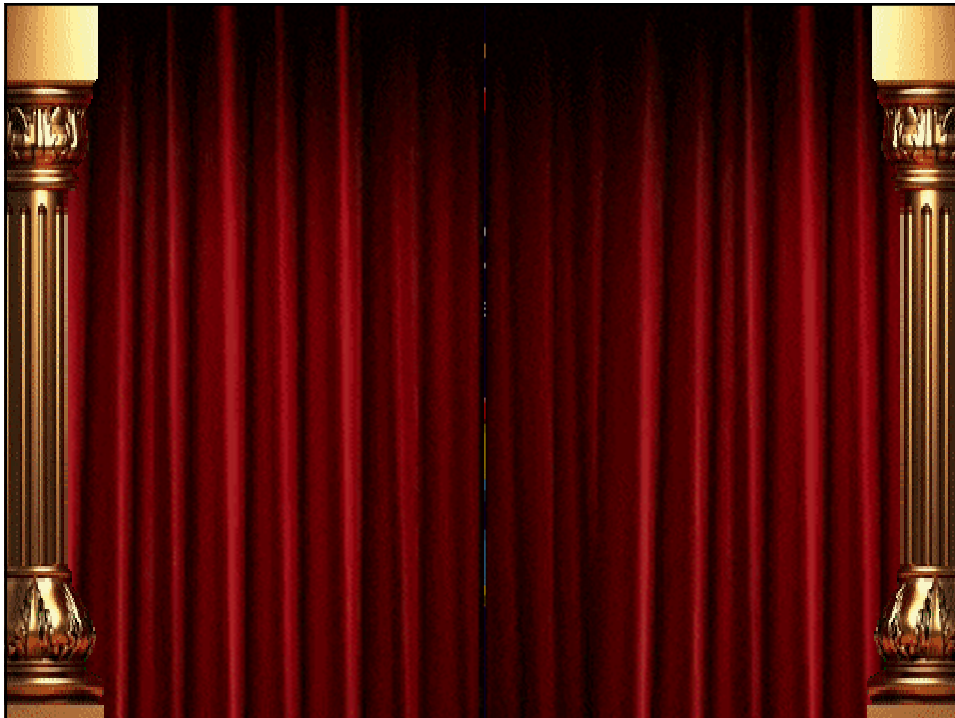
²⁴ And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved. ²⁵ So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word:

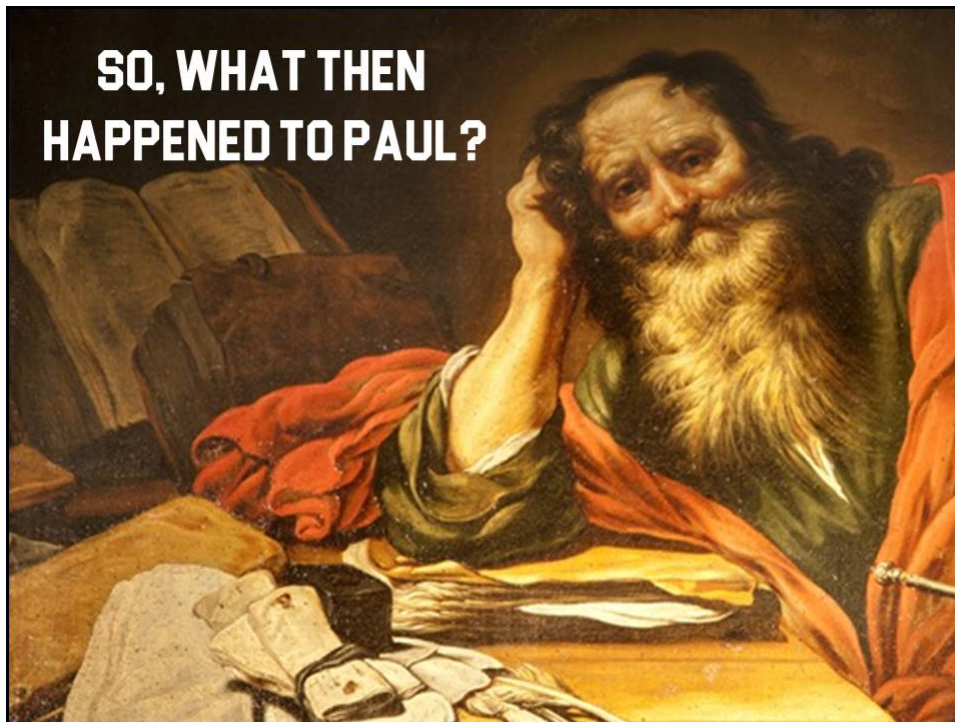
“The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, ²⁶ saying,
 ‘Go to this people and say:
 “Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand;
 And seeing you will see, and not perceive;
²⁷ For the hearts of this people have grown dull. *Their* ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed,
 Lest they should see with *their* eyes and hear with *their* ears,
 Lest they should understand with *their* hearts and turn,
 So that I should heal them.” ’

²⁸ “Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!” ²⁹ And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves.

³⁰ Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, ³¹ preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, **no one forbidding him.** [unhindered, KJV]

The End of the beginning!





Paul's Roman imprisonment

1. During the two years of Paul's house arrest in Rome covered by Acts 28 (AD 61-63), he wrote four "Prison Epistles":

<u>Epistle</u>	<u>Delivered by / Reference</u>	<u>Paul as prisoner</u>
Ephesians	Tychicus and Onesimus: Ephesians 6:21, Colossians 4:7-9	Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20
Colossians	Tychicus and Onesimus: Col 4:7-9	Colossians 4:3,18
Philippians	Epaphroditus: Philippians 2:25-30	Philippians 1:13-14
Philemon	Tychicus and Onesimus: Philemon 1:12, Colossians 4:7-9	Philemon 1:1, 4:3

2. Paul may also have written the Epistle to the Hebrews during the two years of Roman "house arrest". [To be discussed.]
3. Paul ministered to the Roman community (Acts 28:30-31), supported by Timothy, Tychicus, Luke, Demas, Epaphroditus, Onesimus, Epaphras, Aristarchus, and John-Mark.

4. The letters indicate Paul was fairly confident of release:
 - a. Philippians 2:24: "I trust in the Lord that I myself also shall be coming shortly." Read full passage in Phil 1:19-26.
 - b. Philemon 1:22: "And at the same time also prepare me a lodging; for I hope that through your prayers I shall be given to you." [Philemon hosted the Colosse *ekklesia*].
5. Paul appeared before Nero some time during his house arrest in Rome. (God had promised Paul in a vision in Acts 27:24 that he would stand before Caesar.)
6. Paul was acquitted by Nero early in AD 63. Eusebius (c. 324), recorded that Paul was not martyred during the period of Acts (*H.E.2.22.6*).



Nero

- Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus (37-68) became Emperor in the year AD 54 at the age of 16.
- His mother, Agrippa the Younger (sister of Emperor Caligula (r. 37-41)) became fourth wife of Emperor Claudius (r. 41-54) in 49 and had Nero adopted and then proclaimed Claudius' heir.
- Agrippina poisoned Claudius in 54 and Nero became emperor. They struggled for power as Nero matured, so Nero unsuccessfully sought to assassinate her in 59, thrice with poison and then with a self-sinking boat. Panicked she swam to shore, Nero ordered a guard to drop his sword and declared it an assassination plot by Mum and had her executed. He then felt haunted and hired Magi to exorcise her.
- Nero's rule is associated with tyranny and extravagance. Suetonius said many believed the Great Fire of Rome in July 64 was instigated by Nero. He blamed and persecuted Christians to deflect attention.
- Finally declared a public enemy, Nero committed suicide in 68 after muttering, "*Qualis artifex pereo*" ("What an artist dies in me").



NERO AND MUM

7. Paul had indicated a desire to visit Rome and Spain in Romans 15:22-28, written before he returned to Jerusalem from his Third Missionary Journey. It was now five years later.
 - a. Upon his acquittal, he had spent two years in Rome under house arrest, but with a fruitful ministry (Acts 28:30-31).
 - b. Paul's desire for many years had been to visit Rome and then move on to Spain, but there is no record he did.

Church tradition* says that Paul did go to Spain, and possibly to Britain, after he was released, largely based upon Clement of Rome writing c. 97 AD that Paul "had preached in the East and in the West, he won the genuine glory for his faith, having taught righteousness to the whole world and having reached the farthest limits of the West" (1 Clement 3:5-7).

- c. **IF** Paul did go to Spain (or Britain), he would have stayed for some months. His trail can then be picked up again.

*"Church tradition is not always to be trusted." The Wiersbe Bible Commentary, 2007.

Post-prison Missionary Journey(s)

1. Paul always had the desire to work in Rome (Romans 15:22, 28). He perhaps stayed awhile in Rome.
2. Paul wrote Hebrews in Rome in 63 AD [*although most modern New Testament scholars contest Paul's authorship*]:
 - a. Earliest NT manuscripts include Hebrews among Paul's books (usually immediately after the book of Romans).
 - b. Clement of Alexandria (c. AD 150–215) and Origen (AD 185–254) claimed the epistle to the Hebrews as Pauline.
 - c. Protestant reformers (Calvin, Luther, etc.) and the King James Bible (1611) assumed Pauline authorship.
 - d. Hebrews is thoroughly consistent with Paul's teaching.
 - e. Hebrews 13:23-24 reads as if written by Paul: "23Take notice that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I shall see you. 24Greet all of your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you."

Modern NT scholars contest Paul's authorship of Hebrews and propose as possible authors: Apollos, Luke, Barnabas, Timothy, or Clement of Rome; modern feminists make a case for Priscilla.

Case for Pauline authorship

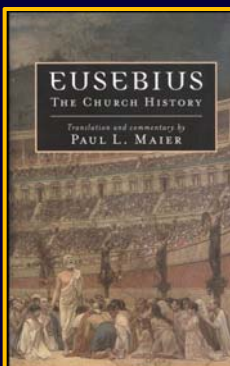
1. Earliest NT manuscripts include w/Paul's
2. Clement of Alexandria (c. AD 150–215) and Origen (AD 185–253) claimed Hebrew was Pauline.
3. Protestant reformers (Calvin, Luther, etc.) and the King James Bible (1611) assumed Pauline authorship.
4. Hebrews is consistent with Paul's works.
5. Hebrews' theology is very compatible to the Pauline letters (except #3 at right).
6. Hebrews 13:23-24 reads as if written by Paul: ²³"Take notice that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I shall see you. ²⁴Greet all of your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you."
7. Paul had a heart for his own people.

Case against Pauline authorship

1. Paul didn't introduce himself as author.
2. The Greek is very high Greek.
3. Nowhere else is Jesus alluded to as the Great High Priest and final sacrifice.
4. Eusebius' Church History (c. 324 AD) raised doubts:
 - a. 3.3.5: "... some have rejected... on ground it was not written by Paul."
 - b. 6.20.3: "... Caius... mentions only thirteen epistles of the holy apostle, not counting that to the Hebrews with the others. And unto our day there are some among the Romans who do not consider this a work of the apostle."
5. Hebrews 2:3, states that the gospel was confirmed "to us" by those who heard the Lord announce salvation.

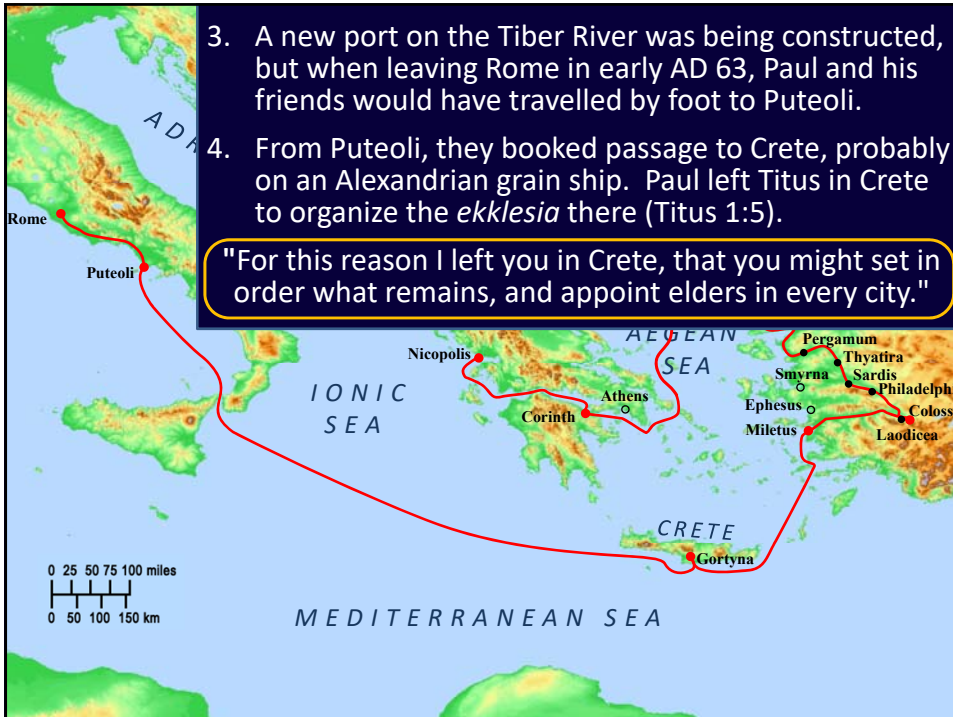
Hebrews authorship?

- If Paul wrote Hebrews, it would have been in 63 AD as it fits at a time when Timothy was in prison in Italy and Paul was out (Hebrews 13:23).
- If Paul was not the author, it would likely have been written after Paul and Peter were martyred shortly after the persecution of Jews by Nero in 64 AD, but prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.



[Per Origen AD 185-254] "If I gave my opinion, I should say that the thoughts are those of the apostle, but the diction and phraseology are those of some one who remembered the apostolic teachings, and wrote down at his leisure what had been said by his teacher. Therefore if any church holds that this epistle is by Paul, let it be commended for this. For not without reason have the ancients handed it down as Paul's.

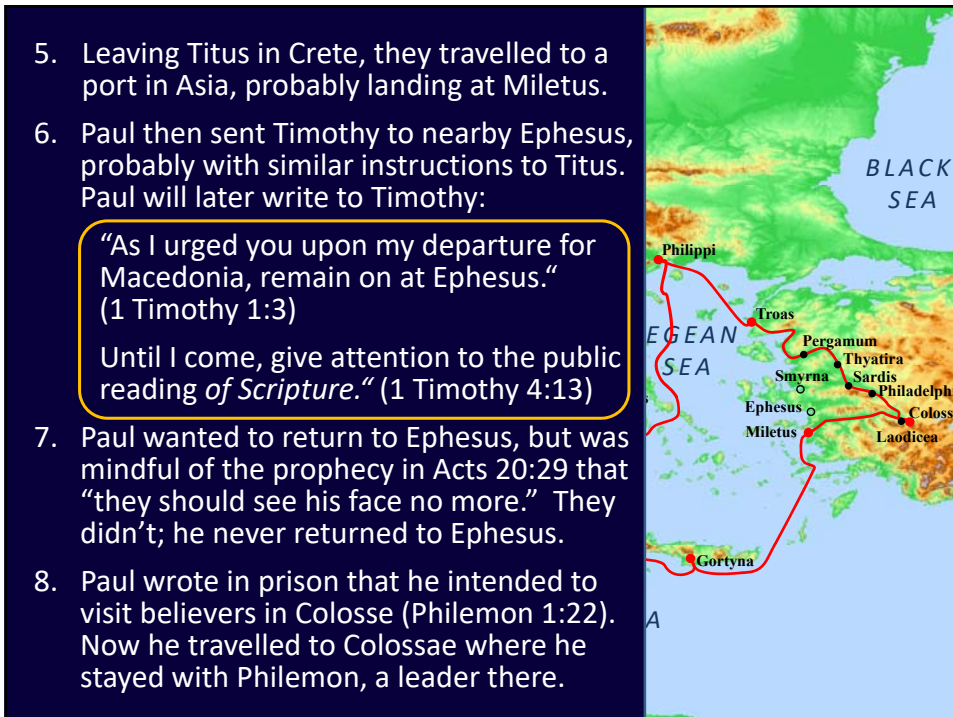
"But who wrote the epistle, in truth, God knows."



A map showing Paul's journey. It starts in Rome, Italy, and goes to Puteoli. From Puteoli, it goes to Crete, specifically Gortyna. From Gortyna, it goes to Miletus in Asia Minor. The map also shows other cities in Asia Minor: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Colosse, and Laodicea. The map labels the ADRIATIC SEA, IONIC SEA, AEGEAN SEA, and MEDITERRANEAN SEA. A scale bar shows 0, 25, 50, 75, 100 miles and 0, 50, 100, 150 km.

3. A new port on the Tiber River was being constructed, but when leaving Rome in early AD 63, Paul and his friends would have travelled by foot to Puteoli.
4. From Puteoli, they booked passage to Crete, probably on an Alexandrian grain ship. Paul left Titus in Crete to organize the *ekklesia* there (Titus 1:5).

"For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city."



A map showing Paul's journey from Crete to Asia Minor and back to Crete. It starts in Gortyna, Crete, and goes to Philippi in Macedonia. From Philippi, it goes to Troas, then to Miletus in Asia Minor. From Miletus, it goes to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Colosse, and Laodicea. From Laodicea, it goes to Gortyna, Crete. The map labels the BLACK SEA, AEGEAN SEA, and MEDITERRANEAN SEA. A scale bar shows 0, 25, 50, 75, 100 miles and 0, 50, 100, 150 km.

5. Leaving Titus in Crete, they travelled to a port in Asia, probably landing at Miletus.
6. Paul then sent Timothy to nearby Ephesus, probably with similar instructions to Titus. Paul will later write to Timothy:
 "As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus."
 (1 Timothy 1:3)
 Until I come, give attention to the public reading of *Scripture*." (1 Timothy 4:13)
7. Paul wanted to return to Ephesus, but was mindful of the prophecy in Acts 20:29 that "they should see his face no more." They didn't; he never returned to Ephesus.
8. Paul wrote in prison that he intended to visit believers in Colosse (Philemon 1:22). Now he travelled to Colossae where he stayed with Philemon, a leader there.

9. Paul would probably have remained in Colosse for some time, visiting the nearby believers in Laodicea and Hierapolis.
10. Paul and company then left for Troas to take passage to Macedonia, greeting and possibly visiting believers in Philadelphia, Sardis, Thyatira and Pergamum enroute.
11. In the warm weather, Paul decided to leave his winter cloak in Troas. He will later ask Timothy to collect it when he passes through Troas to catch a ship to visit Paul during his second imprisonment:

"When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus." (2 Tim 4:13)

12. While in Rome, Paul had written to the Philippians saying, "I trust in the Lord that I myself also shall be coming shortly." (Philippians 2:24). Now Paul returned.



13. Paul would have stayed for a while in Philippi.
14. Rather than repeat the arduous overland journey south that he took before, it is probable that Paul and his companions returned to the nearby port of Neopolis and booked passage on a ship (or ships) to Cenchreae, the Aegean port of Corinth.

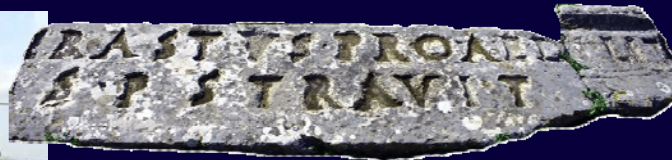


15. Paul earlier spent two years in Corinth, leaving behind a vibrant *ekklesia*. It was his last major stop now for he intended to spend the coming winter (63-64?, 64-65?, 65-66?) in nearby Nicopolis.

"When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, be diligent to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there" (Tit 3:12).

16. It is believed that Paul wrote 1 Timothy and Titus while in Corinth. Corinth was ideally situated to send the letters.
17. Before leaving for his winter headquarters, Paul left local man Erastus (2 Tim 4:20) in Corinth. In fact, Erastus was City Treasurer in Corinth (Romans 16:23).

This stone (known as the "Erastus Stone") was found in 1929:



ERASTVS· PRO· AED· S· P· STRAVIT

abbreviation for

ERASTUS PRO AEDILITATE
SUA PECUNIA STRAVIT

"Erastus in return for his aedileship
paved it at his own expense."

18. It is apparent from 1 Timothy 3:14 and 4:13 that when winter was over, Paul intended to once again visit Ephesus.

"These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly." (1 Timothy 3:14)

"Until I come, give attention to the public reading of *Scripture*." (1 Timothy 4:13)

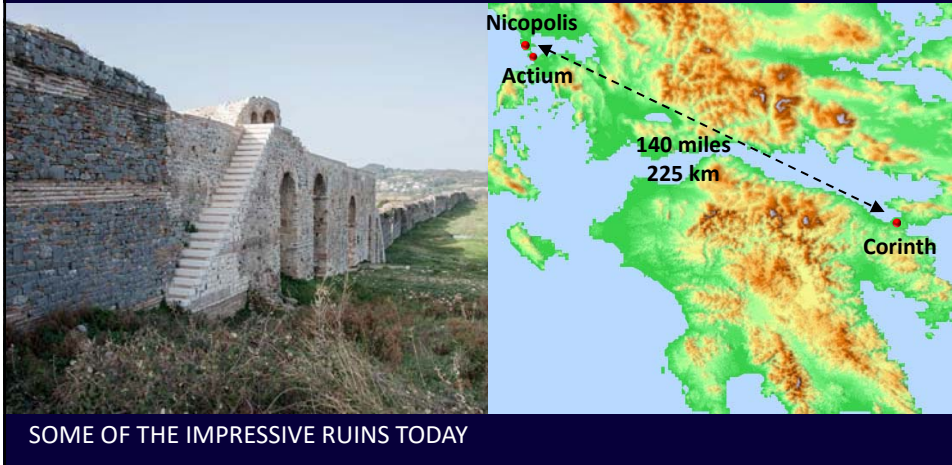
19. For Paul was aware of some dissension in Asia.

"Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme." (1 Timothy 1:19-20)

"O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane *and* vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith." (1 Timothy 6:20-21)

Why Nicopolis?

- Nicopolis (“victory city”) was **the largest city in Greece**, area wise, and capital of the Roman Province of Epirus Vetus. It was built by Roman emperor Octavian in 29 BC to commemorate his naval victory at nearby Actium in 31 BC against Antony and Cleopatra of Egypt and forcibly populated from neighbouring city-states.





“To perpetuate the glory of his victory at Actium, he built the city of Nicopolis on that part of the coast, and established games to be celebrated there every five years; enlarging likewise an old temple of Apollo, he ornamented with naval trophies the spot on which he had pitched his camp, and consecrated it to Neptune and Mars.”
 (Suetonius, Life of Augustus 18.2)







Battle of Actium

2 September 31 BC

Belligerents

 Octavian's Roman and allied supporters and forces	 Mark Antony's Roman and allied supporters  Ptolemaic Kingdom (Egypt)
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Commanders and leaders

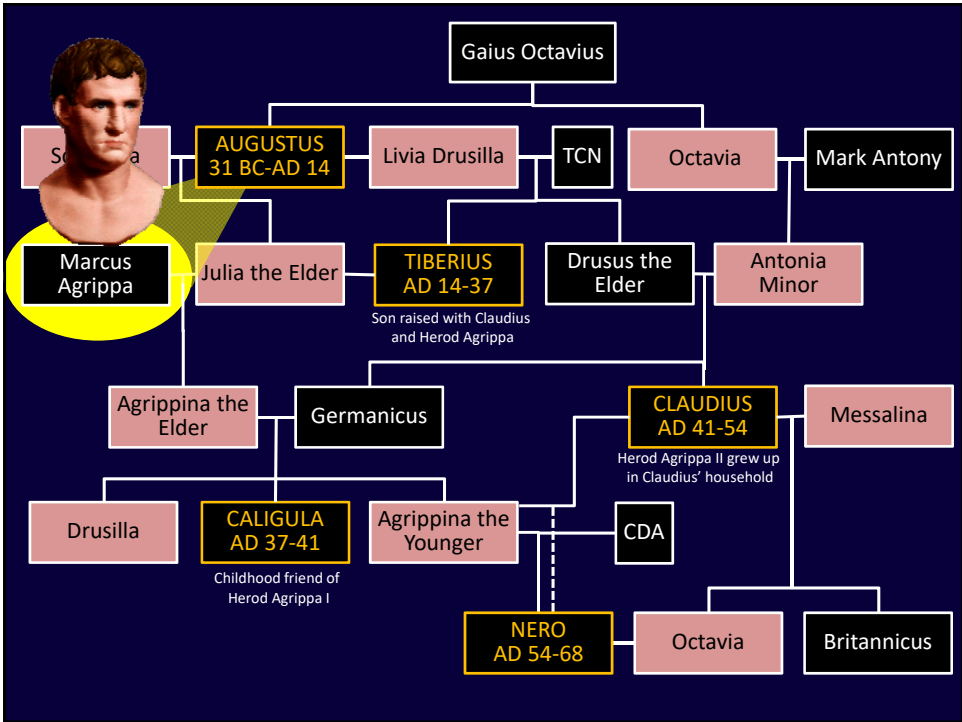
 Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa  Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus  Lucius Arruntius  Marcus Lurius	 Marcus Antonius  Gaius Sosius  Cleopatra VII
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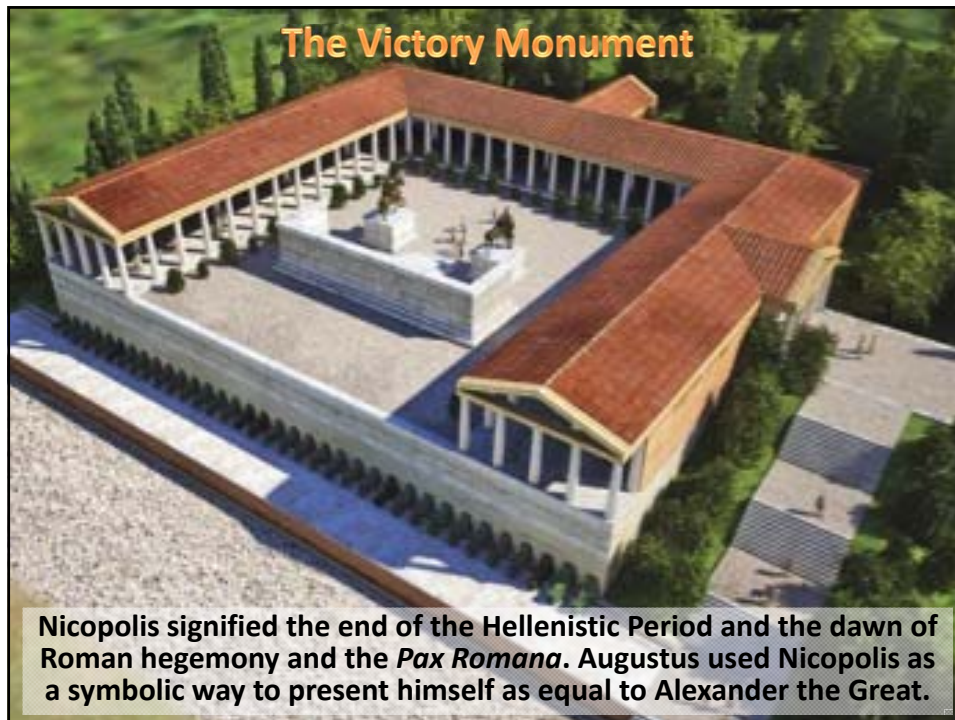
Strength

250 galleys; 150 other ships 16,000 infantry 3,000 archers.	140 larger galleys; 50 transports; others 20,000 infantry 2,000 archers
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Casualties and losses

About 2,500 killed	Over 5,000 killed 200 ships sunk or captured
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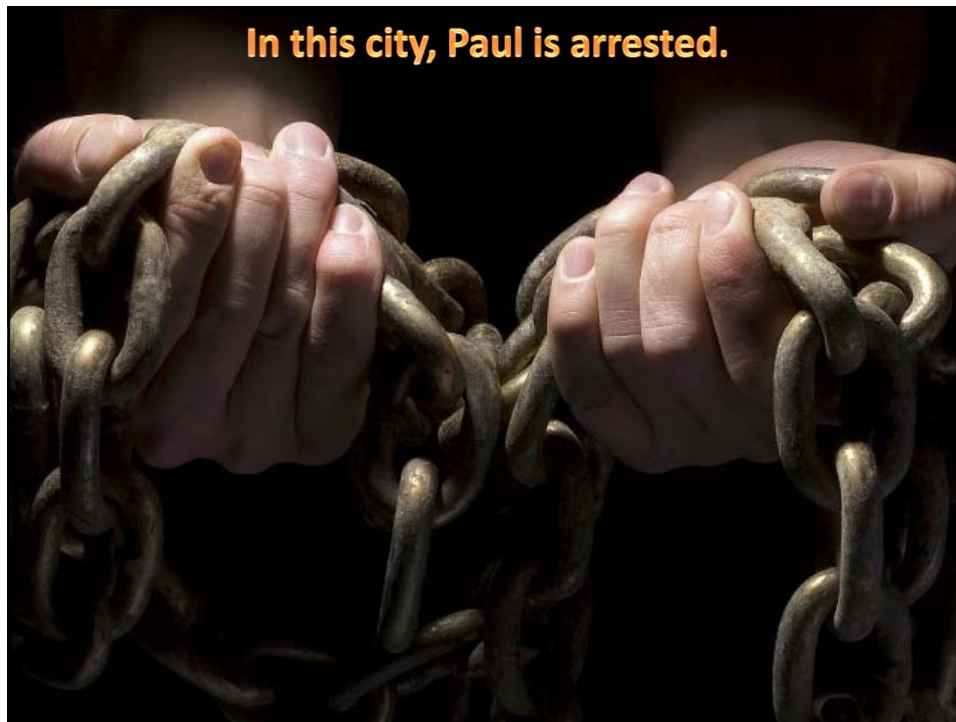




Ruminations

- From the city that was both monument to Caesar's victory and the birth of the Roman Empire, Paul strategically organized the spread of the Good News of God's Kingdom.
- Paul summoned Titus – who shares his name with Caesar's general at the Battle of Actium and Vespasian's son and general who levelled Jerusalem and became emperor (79-81) – to Nicopolis.
- He commissioned Apollos – no longer a mythical god working for Caesar - but a faithful servant of Jesus Christ.
- In this city renowned for its games, Paul prepared to finish his race.
- While Paul waited "for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13), he laboured in the certain belief that:-

"the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ" (Revelation 11:15).



OPTIONS

Recap how we got here

- 1** After his acquittal in AD 63, Paul travelled to Crete, Miletus, Colosse, Troas, Philippi and Corinth before wintering in Nicopolis. This may have taken two or three years.
- 2** Paul was acquitted in AD 63 and went to Spain and/or Britain, then returned via Crete, Miletus, Colosse, Troas, Philippi and Corinth before wintering in Nicopolis. This may have taken two or three years.
- 3** Following acquittal, Paul travelled to Crete, Miletus, Colosse, Troas, Philippi and Corinth before wintering in Nicopolis. He then retraced some of his steps during previous missionary journeys and returned to Nicopolis for yet another winter.
- 4** Other. We simply don't know precisely.



- On 18 July 64, the great fire of Rome began. Six days later, much of Rome was destroyed. Only four of Rome's 14 districts were unscathed. Hundreds died and thousands were homeless.
- Roman emperor Nero was 35 miles away in Antium (Anzio) when the fire broke out. He let his palace be used as a shelter.
- Emperor Nero used the disaster to further his political agenda.

1 Nero did not like Rome's aesthetics; he used the devastation to rebuild in marble and instituted new building codes.

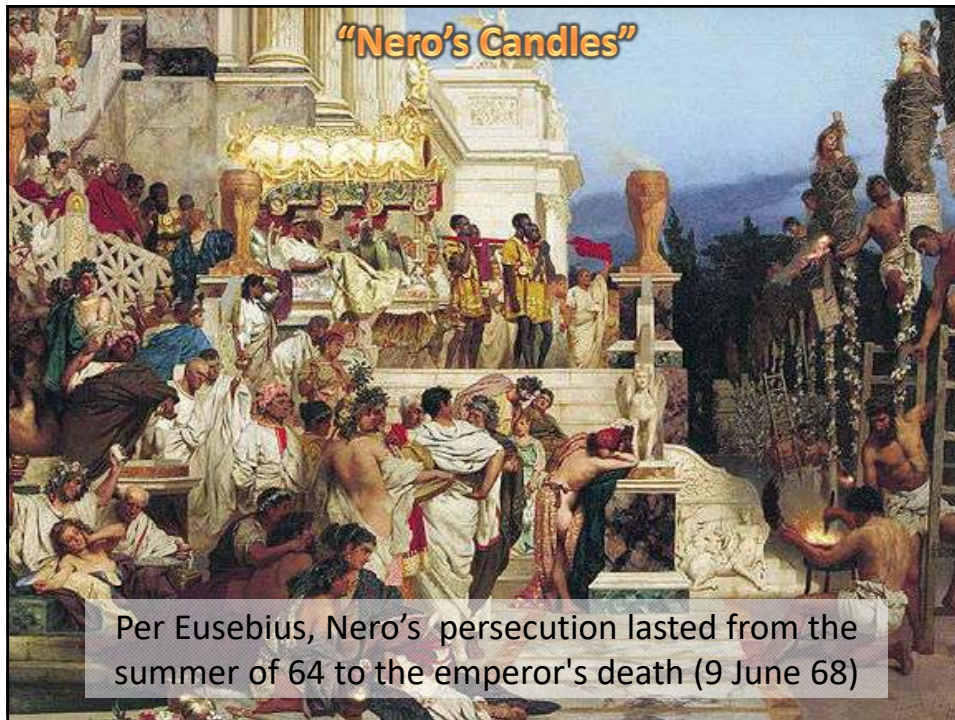
2 Nero also clamped down on the growing influence of Christians, arresting and executed hundreds on the pretext that they were somehow involved.



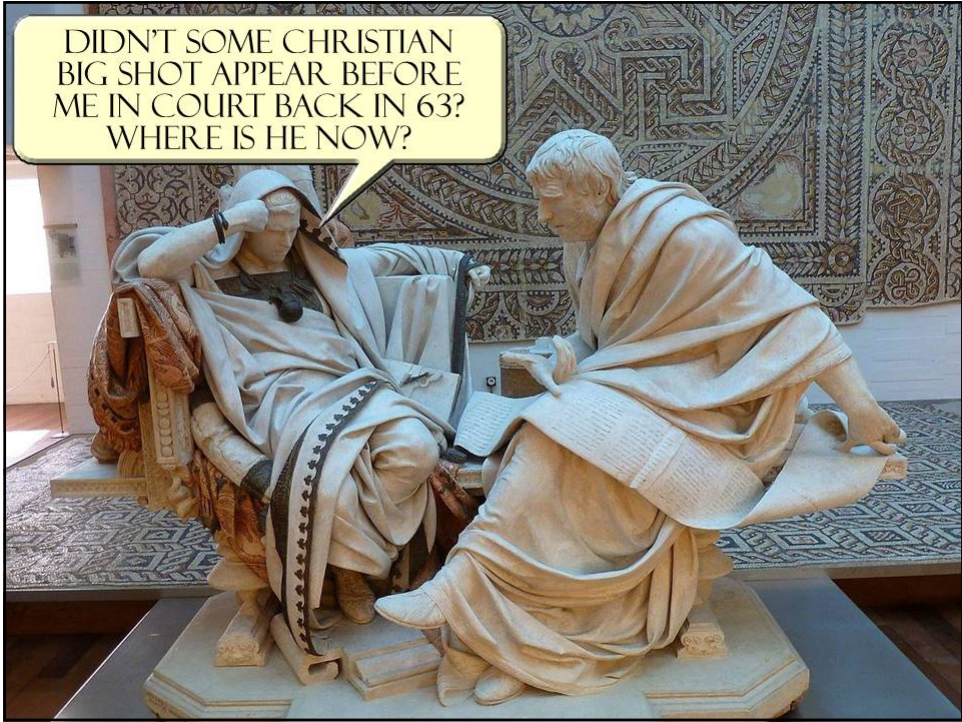
The Great Fire of Rome, Tacitus (56-120)

“But all human efforts, all the lavish gifts of the emperor, and the propitiations of the gods, did not banish the sinister belief that [it] was the result of an order [by the emperor]. Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their center and become popular.

“Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired.”



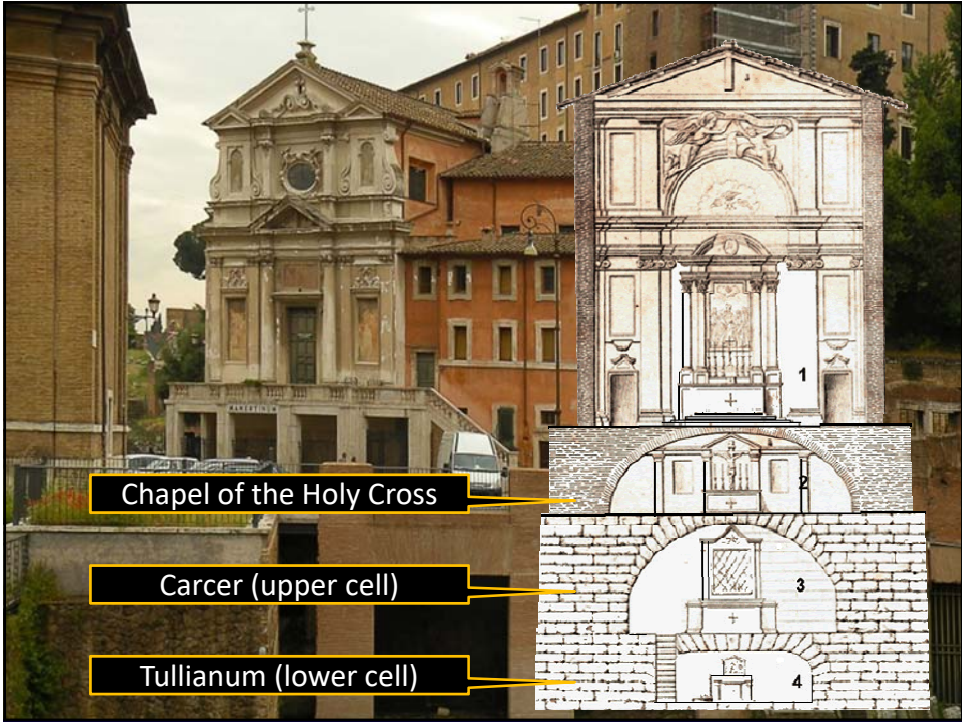
Per Eusebius, Nero's persecution lasted from the summer of 64 to the emperor's death (9 June 68)



The end of the line for Paul

- After Paul's arrest, he was taken to Rome and imprisoned, likely in the notorious (2 Timothy 4:13, 21) Mamertine Prison around the time of egregious persecution against Christians.
- Paul was chained and treated like a criminal (2 Tim. 1:16; 2:9). Winter was coming, and he asked Timothy to bring him his cloak (2 Tim. 4:13). Paul was supported by Onesiphorus and his family (2 Timothy 1:16–18) and aided by Dr. Luke (2 Timothy 4:11).
- Many Christians abandoned Paul (2 Timothy 4:16-17); even Demas forsook him (2 Timothy 4:10-11).
- But he found a way to write Timothy a letter (2 Timothy). In it, he knew that the end was coming (2 Tim. 4:6–8) and longed for Timothy and Mark to come to be at his side (2 Tim. 1:4; 4:9, 21).
- Tradition tells us that Paul was beheaded at Rome on 28 June 67.
- Charles Spurgeon wrote, "What was begun with so much heroism ought to be continued with ardent zeal since we are assured that the same Lord is mighty still to carry on His heavenly designs."







**"Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'intrate"*
"Abandon all hope, ye who enter here."**



*Dante's Inferno

Postscript

- Catholic tradition holds that Paul was buried on the Via Ostiensis. His remains were moved to the catacombs during Valerian's persecution in AD 258, but returned to the original resting place

and Constantine built a basilica over the site, which is now the modern basilica of San Paolo fuori le Mura.



What about Peter?

- Per Catholic tradition, Peter preached and was executed in Rome, citing references from early church leaders. They also point to 1 Peter's reference to "Babylon" as figuratively meaning "Rome".
- Peter's presence in Rome is crucial, but not essential, to Catholic claims that Peter was the first Bishop of Rome (i.e., pope).
- One Protestant view is that, "There is in fact no New Testament evidence, nor any historical proof of any kind, that Peter ever was in Rome. All rests on legend."¹
- Peter's supposed burial place was excavated in the 1950s and no bones were found.³
- In 1968, Pope Paul VI announced that the skeletal remains of St. Peter found under the high altar of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome had been satisfactorily identified.²
- "There is no solid evidence—textual or even archaeological—that Peter died in Rome."³

¹ Boettner, Lorraine. *Roman Catholicism*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed Pub Co, 1962.

² Walsh, John E. *The Bones of St. Peter*. Bedford, New Hampshire: Sophia Institute Press, 2011.

³ Lewis, Nicola Denzey. "The Apostle Peter in Rome." *Biblical Archaeology Society* 8 May 2019.

