

## The Acts and Torah of the Apostles Study Guide

### Chapter 27

#### 27:1-44

At the conclusion of the hearing with Festus and Agrippa, Paul's journey to Rome finally began. He was placed in the custody of a centurion and he was accompanied on the journey by two other believers. One was Aristarchus, a Gentile believer from Thessalonica. He had accompanied Paul to Ephesus during the last missionary journey (19:29) and then traveled with Paul to Jerusalem (20:4). Later, in Colossians 4:10 Paul states that Aristarchus sends his personal greetings and Paul calls him "my fellow prisoner." Since the book of Colossians was most likely written by Paul from Rome, this indicates that Aristarchus stayed with Paul all the way to Rome and continued to stay with him after he was confined there. Paul's other companion on this journey from Caesarea to Rome was Luke because the writer of Acts uses the terms "we" and "us" continually throughout the story.

Their route took them north along the coast to Sidon, then west across the Mediterranean Sea, using Cyprus to block out some of the strong winds in their face, and then they went west along the coast of Asia.

v. 6 – They changed ships in the city of Myra. This vessel was carrying grain from Alexandria, Egypt to Rome.

v. 7-8 – This time they sailed along the southern coast of Crete until they reached a place near the mid-point of the island's coast called Fair Havens.

v. 9 – They stayed there for some time, and we are given an indicator of the lateness of the season, because we are told, "the fast was already over." That is a reference to Yom Kippur. Luke mentioned that detail because Paul was Torah-observant and the same may have been true for Luke, or at least he was accepting of the validity of the feasts for those who kept them.

Yom Kippur takes place in late September or early October. That means they had reached the time of year when the weather on the sea made it difficult to sail in a westerly direction, and soon, by the month of November, most ships stopped sailing until the next spring, usually around the month of March. So that put the captain and crew and passengers into a dispute regarding what to do next.

v. 10 – Paul was qualified to recommend that they remain in the current harbor for the rest of the winter because he was an experienced traveler in the region. That indicates that believers should be able to use their skills of discernment in areas besides those that are spiritual in nature.

v. 11-12 – But the captain of the ship wanted to seek another harbor called Phoenix and Paul's advice was ignored.

v. 13-16 – When a moderate wind from the south came up, they set sail because that would easily allow them to travel westward on what is called a "reach" (perpendicular to the wind). But the wind changed directions and began blowing strongly from the northeast, driving the boat away from the island of Crete. They came to a small island south of Crete called Clauda (modern Gandos) and used the island to shield the boat from the wind.

v. 17-20 – The concern was that they would be driven all the way across the Mediterranean Sea to

the shallows of Syrtis, which were sandbars off the coast of Libya in North Africa that had become an extensive graveyard for ships. Once you bottomed-out there, you would die there, typically from lack of water to drink. So that was a very fearful thing for the crew of the ship. That set off a series of maneuvers intended to prevent getting stranded. First they attached cables under the hull to support the ship. Then, in order to slow the ship, they let the anchor drag behind them in the water. After that, they began tossing the cargo overboard, followed by the ship's tackle. But nothing worked as the great storm continued unabated. The assumption was that they would all die.

- v. 21-26 – At that point, Paul exhorted everyone by saying that he had received a message from an angel that the ship would be lost, but everyone would survive. He said they would run aground on a certain island, but that must have seemed impossible since they assumed they would instead be stranded on the deadly sandbars of Systis.
- v. 27 – Instead, they were blown west into the Adriatic Sea between Greece and Italy. At this point the storm had continued for fourteen days and they had been driven 475 miles to what they later learned to be the island of Malta.
- v. 28-30 – Sensing that land was approaching in the darkness, the sailors decided to abandon the ship by getting into the lifeboat and stranding the passengers onboard, who would not be able to survive hitting the rocks.
- v. 31-32 – So Paul convinced the centurion to take action, who then had his soldiers cut the ropes to the lifeboat, causing it to drift away empty before the sailors could get onboard.
- v. 33-38 – Paul then did two things – one practical and one spiritual, but both serve as a testimony. How does encouraging the passengers and crew to eat bread serve as a testimony? It shows that believers can be clear-thinking people and can assess a problem and come up with a solution. His prayer of thanksgiving was a testimony because he was not afraid to praise the name of the Lord (*Adonai/Kurios*) in the presence of non-believers. That demonstrated having confidence and conviction about what he believed.  
  
Notice also that Luke describes Paul's actions as "breaking bread." This episode disproves the claim that "breaking bread" refers to communion. That is important because those same claimants say that the use of "breaking bread" on the first day of the week in 20:7 shows that the early believing community changed the day of worship and rest to the first day of the week.
- v. 39-44 – Then the sailors attempted to beach the ship on a sandy part of the island. But before that could happen, they hit a reef and the ship was stuck and doomed. The centurion had to stop his soldiers from killing the passengers, including Paul. Instead, everyone had to swim or use debris from the shipwreck to float ashore.