

How to Read the Bible for All its Worth

The Rest of the Story & Lesson Summary

What Happened to Paul?

Acts 28:30-31 confirms that Paul enjoyed at least two years of freedom to preach and teach during his Roman imprisonment. We also know that he wrote at least six epistles while imprisoned there. What happened after that? There are two theories.

Theory #1: After these two years, Paul was released and allowed to again journey freely and preach the gospel, even venturing into Europe. This theory uses Romans 15:24-28 as proof. In this passage, Paul mentions his desire to travel to Spain and preach the gospel there. This was written prior to Paul's imprisonment in Rome. This theory also proposes that sometime during his missionary journey into Europe, he was again arrested and imprisoned in Rome. It was during this second imprisonment in Rome that he was martyred in the manner described below.

Theory #2: Paul never left Rome. He had great desires to accomplish much more work for the Lord, but it was not the Lord's will. After the two years of imprisonment, he was martyred in the manner described below.

Regarding the death of Paul: It is universally agreed that 2 Timothy was the last epistle written by the Apostle Paul. It was there he records these last words to us:

2 Timothy 4:5-8 – “But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished [my] course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

The following excerpt was taken from Foxe's Book of Martyrs¹ and describes the historical account of Paul's death.

“Now let us comprehend the persecutions raised by the Romans against the Christians in the primitive age of the Church, during the space of three hundred years. Wherein marvelous it is to see and read the numbers incredible of Christian innocents that were tormented and slain. Whose kinds of punishments although they were divers, yet the manner of constancy in all these martyrs was one. And yet, notwithstanding the sharpness of these so many and sundry torments, and also the like cruelty of the tormentors, such was the number of these constant saints that suffered, or rather such was the power of the Lord in His saints, that, as Jerome saith, ‘There is no day in the whole year unto which the number of five thousand martyrs cannot be ascribed, except only the first day of January.’

The first of these ten persecutions was stirred up by Nero about the year of our Lord threescore and four. The tyrannous rage of which emperor was very fierce against the Christians, ‘insomuch that (as Eusebius recordeth) a man might then see cities full of men's bodies, the old there lying together with the young, and the dead bodies of women cast out naked, without all reverence of that sex, in the open streets.’ Many there were of the Christians in those days, who, seeing the filthy abominations and intolerable cruelty of Nero, thought that he was antichrist...

Paul, the apostle, who before was called Saul, after his great travail and unspeakable labors in promoting the Gospel of Christ, suffered also in this first persecution under Nero. Abdias, declareth that under his execution Nero sent two of his esquires, Ferega and Parthemius, to bring him word of his death. They, coming to Paul instructing the people, desired him to pray for them, that they might believe; who told them that shortly after they should believe and be baptized at His sepulcher. This done, the soldiers came and led him out of the city to the place of execution, where he, after his prayers made, gave his neck to the sword.”

¹ Foxe, John. “Foxe's Book of Martyrs”, 1563, Whitaker House, New Kensington, PA, pp 11-13

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Summary of Acts

The following is a mnemonic designed to help you remember the events of the Book of Acts. See if you can relate each one to some of the major themes and events of each chapter.

- 1 - Son (Ascension of Christ)
- 2 - Do (Day of Pentecost – empowered to do the work of the church)
- 3 - Knee (Healing of cripple at the Beautiful gate)
- 4 - Pour (God poured out strength upon them when they prayed for braveness to face adversity)
- 5 - Dive (Ananias & Saphiras lie to the church and were slain by God – they “took a dive”)
- 6 - Sticks (Deacons ordained to serve in the church – they “pick up sticks”)
- 7 - Heaven (Stephen preaches to the Jews and is stoned while seeing into Heaven)
- 8 - Gate (Philip preaches to the Ethiopian Eunuch – supposed to represent the gate on chariot)
- 9 - Shine (Paul saw a bright light and was converted on the road to Damascus)
- 10 - Hen (Peter has a vision of unclean animals and is sent to Cornelius, the Gentile)
- 11 - Leaven (Peter has to explain his ministry to the “unclean” to the Jewish Christians)
- 12 – Bad Health (Herod persecutes the Christians and is given a plague by God to kill him)
- 13, 14 - Paul goes a courting (Paul’s 1st missionary journey – seeking a bride for Christ)
- 15 – Meeting (Meeting in Jerusalem about the nature of the gospel)
- 16, 17, 18 - From Philip pie to Corney Dog (Paul’s 2nd missionary journey – Philippi to Corinth)
- 19, 20 - Not so funny (Riot at Ephesus, Paul speaks to them for the last time)
- 21 - Not much fun (Paul journeys to Jerusalem and is attacked by the mob)
- 22 - Two by two (Paul climbs the steps “two by two” and makes his speech to the Jews)
- 23 - Lots of fleas (Jews after Paul like a bunch of flees)
- 24 - Hear him roar (Paul before Governor Felix – Felix the cat “roars”)
- 25 - See him dive (Paul before Governor Festus – He “dives” for Jews and won’t release Paul)
- 26 - Really sticks (Paul before King Agrippa – He finally makes a pronouncement that sticks)
- 27, 28 - Ship of state (Paul journeys to Rome by ship)