

Acts of the Apostles Session 9
Journey to Rome

1. What is the name of the Roman procurator, known for cruelty and ineptitude, under whom Paul appealed to Caesar?
2. Who were some characters from Acts described as having the gift of prophecy, and why is that gift (and office!) important today?
3. Who was the leader of the Jerusalem community of Christians by the time Paul returns in chapter 21?

Recap of Chapters 25-28

- In Caesarea, in front of Festus, avoiding the assassins and appealing to Caesar
- Felix, Festus, King Agrippa and Bernice
- Paul's testimony/testimonial before King Agrippa
- Festus and Agrippa—differing reactions
- Chapter 27: to the Sea!
- Leaving on an Alexandrian ship on the way to Rome
- Paul advising fellow travelers
- Shipwreck, and winter, on Malta
- Sea, snake and healings
- Arrival in Rome and testimony before Roman Jewish community
- Two years of house arrest, "...and with complete assurance and without hindrance he proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ."

Theresa Prejean on the Holy Spirit

- Often ignored Person of the Holy Trinity
- Intentionally praying to the Holy Spirit
- God has not left us alone!
- Not a "substitute" for the other members of the Trinity!

Acts 1-28: a story about Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, active in the Church and taking Lordship of the entire world: "...in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (1:8)

"The Deeds and Teachings of King Jesus"

Paul vs. Game of thrones (Caesarea version)

- Paul appeals to Caesar, Festus and the leaders of Jerusalem (plotting to kill Paul)
- Paul: model of reason and logic in the face of attacks
- 25:13-26:32—King Agrippa, his sister(!) Bernice and Festus.

NT Wright: Sometime after the judicial session in which the Jewish authorities brought accusations against Paul, King Agrippa and Bernice arrive in Caesarea for a state visit to Festus, the new governor. Agrippa, Bernice, and Festus's wife Drusilla (Acts 24:24) were all siblings, children of Herod Agrippa I, who had James the apostle killed (12:1-2) and whose own death was recounted in Acts 12:23. Agrippa II was the last of Herod's line to rule in Palestine; he died about the year 92. After Bernice was widowed, she came to live at her brother's court... We already met Herod Agrippa I in chapter 12, where we saw him attack the church and then meet a swift and horrible end. [Bernice] had been married to their uncle, another Herod, Herod of Chalcis, and after his death had set up house with Agrippa. At one point, perhaps to silence the

whispers, she married the king of Cilicia, a man by the name of Polemo, but then went back to Agrippa, which of course started the whispers going again. At one point it was rumoured that she had become the mistress of Titus, the adopted son of Vespasian, the conqueror of Jerusalem in AD 70, and Vespasian's successor as emperor.

- Paul Preaches to this group:
 - gives his testimony (26:1-22)
 - connects with the OT
 - “that the Messiah must suffer and that, as the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim **light** both to our people and to the gentiles” (26:23)
 - points to the Resurrection
 - “Why is it thought unbelievable among you that God raises the dead?” (26: 8)
- Immorality hates/fears resurrection
 - Festus: you are mad!
 - Agrippa: you will soon persuade me to play the Christian!
- Paul confronts the Sea (chapter 27) –Read 2 Corinthians 11: 23-27
 - Sea throughout the Bible, Old and New Testament.
 - Jonah parallels
 - Paul's angelic guidance (27:24)
 - Paul's eucharistic action on the boat
 - Soldiers ready to kill prisoners (difference of culture)
- Paul confronts the serpent
- Healing from a place of captivity (28:8-10)
- **Hospitality of the Maltese**
- Arrival in Rome (Jesus is the hero, not Paul, not Luke, not us!)

NT Wright: Jesus of Nazareth, Messiah and Lord: through his servants, through their journeys and their trials, through their pains and their puzzles and their sufferings and their shipwrecks, still reaching out into the future, out beyond Rome and the first century, out across the tracts of time and geography, still confronting men, women and children, rulers, disabled people, local authorities, artisans, governors of islands, wandering tent-makers, philosophers in the marketplace, and young men nodding off on windowsills. Luke has brought them all before us, in a dazzling display both of writing and of theology, drawing us in, reminding us once more that this is a drama in which we ourselves have been called to belong to the cast. The journey is ours, the trials and vindications are ours, the sovereign presence of Jesus is ours, the story is ours to pick up and carry on. Luke's writing, like Paul's journey, has reached its end, but in his end is our beginning.

Review Quiz questions!

For next week, read the article (white paper) “Re-imagining what a Catholic Parish can be” from the ministry Acts XXIX. A special guest and I will be discussing this next week for our final session of the Acts of the Apostles.

Small Group Questions! (Choose one spokesperson)

1. How was it to carefully study an entire book of the Bible? Was this your first time doing so? What will you do to ensure it isn't the last time?

2. Which sections of this study do you want to revisit? Which parts of the story of the early Church have special significance or challenge for your life today as a follower of Jesus?
3. This whole book has been about Jesus Christ, the rightful King, acting in this world through His Church by the Holy Spirit. How do you see Jesus working right now in and through His Church (either locally, nationally, or universally)?
4. Several aspects of Christian life were highlighted and emphasized throughout the book: rootedness in Scripture (the Old Testament); reliance on prayer; healings and miracles; the Eucharist (the “breaking of the bread”); hospitality; evangelization at all costs; and the importance of martyrdom. Which of these do we/you need to emphasize more in your own life as a Christian and a member of the Church?