

Episode: Acts Series No. 18

Narrator: Theophilus

Primary Scriptures: Acts 28

Story Summary: Some thoughts about what happens after Acts ends

Location: Roman Empire

Time: 30 AD	Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives
46 AD	First Missionary Journey starts
48 – 51 AD	Second Missionary Journey
52-57 AD	Third Missionary Journey
57-59 AD	Paul arrested in Jerusalem; Paul imprisoned in Caesarea
59-62 AD	Paul sent to Rome and imprisoned for two years
66 AD	Start of First Jewish-Roman War
70 AD	Destruction of the Temple

The book of *Acts* abruptly ends with Paul possibly still being imprisoned in Rome. What happens then?

There is no direct information in the Bible about what happens to Paul after the end of *Acts*. From 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and church traditions, many scholars have surmised that Paul was released from prison after two years, then actively evangelized for another five years before being martyred by Nero.

This may be the case, but there is still a little mystery about the cause of his death even if it is later. Apparently, the Christians were relatively small in number, were being peaceful, and were not doing anything illegal. Why would the Roman rulers have been intent on executing Paul?

Church historians seldom talk enough about the First Jewish-Roman War, which is surprising since the Romans probably placed the Jews and Christians in the same category. The war began in 66 AD over disputes concerning taxation and Roman incursion into the Temple. The conflict quickly escalated, and the Romans sent Vespasian and Titus to quell the rebellion. They used sieges and force to slowly take control of all Judea. While Jerusalem held out for many months, it was finally captured in 70 AD, when the Temple was destroyed. Isn't it possible that the Christian leaders—including Paul—got identified with this rebellion?

In this episode, Theophilus surmises there may be only about 10,000 Christians in 62 AD. This is a much lower number than most modern Christians think because of there being 5,000 a short time after Jesus' death. However, at the time of Paul's jailing, consider how many churches were mentioned in the Bible, and how many members each church had. Unfortunately, we have no hard information about the numbers of Christians existing as the church grew.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do we know what happened to Paul after his first imprisonment at Rome?]
 2. Why did Luke possibly end *Acts* so abruptly?
 3. Did Luke write any more books after *Acts*?
 4. How might the First Jewish-Roman War in 66 AD have affected the Christians?
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1. No, but from comments in some of his letters, we can infer he was released from prison and then evangelized for several more years. Many believe Paul was martyred by Nero in 68 AD. 2. he ran out of room on the scroll, he was finished with the story, he might have intended to write another account about Paul. 3. We have no evidence that he did. 4. The Romans probably associated the Christians with the Jews.

Application Questions:

1. Christianity is the dominant religion in Western culture, so it can be difficult to put ourselves in the shoes of those early Christians who were scattered and small in number. What would you find attractive about Christianity at that time? How can you bring that into your life today, in this culture?
2. Theophilus theorizes a much easier, less complicated way of preaching the gospel, but Jesus wanted to use people empowered by Holy Spirit. Why do you think this was the case? How can you go about living out your Holy Spirit mandate?
3. Think about some of the characters you've met over the course of this study. Which ones do you most identify with? Why? How can you live out their faithfulness today?
4. Christians took advantage of Rome's infrastructure to grow the early Church. What are some avenues of infrastructure in our world you can use to increase discipleship?
5. Theophilus offers a challenge: make sure you don't lose sight of Jesus while following the exploits of Paul. How can you keep Jesus in the forefront of your heart and mind?

Application Questions for Teens:

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