

International Bible Lessons Commentary

Acts 28:1-10

International Bible Lessons

Sunday, November 18, 2012

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The **[International Bible Lesson](#)** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, November 18, 2012**, is from **Acts 28:1-10**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lessons Commentary* (formerly, *Bible Lesson Forum*) below. **Study Hints for Thinking Further** discuss the five questions below to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion; these hints are available on the **[International Bible Lessons Commentary](#)** website. For additional **International Bible Lesson Commentaries**, see the complete and comprehensive **[International Bible Lessons Commentary Index](#)**. The weekly **[International Bible Lesson](#)** is posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught at **<http://InternationalBibleLessons.org>** and in **[The Oklahoman](#)** newspaper.

International Bible Lesson Commentary

Acts 28:1-10

(Act 28:1) After we had reached safety, we then learned that the island was called Malta.

God uses a variety of means to spread the Good News about His Son, Jesus. Some of these means may surprise us; such as, the persecution of the Christians in Jerusalem led to the spread of the gospel to Samaria. A shipwreck with Paul, Luke, and Aristarchus led to the gospel (the Good News about Jesus) arriving on the island of Malta, and possibly the conversion of some sailors, soldiers, and prisoners who survived the shipwreck.

(Act 28:2) The natives showed us unusual kindness. Since it had begun to rain and was cold, they kindled a fire and welcomed all of us around it.

The natives did not need to be Christians to show the survivors unusual kindness, perhaps motivated by the Holy Spirit. However, their natural or cultural leaning toward helping the unfortunate may have given them soft hearts that God prepared in advance for them to be open to receiving the Good News about Jesus, and about God saving the lives of everyone on board the ship in answer to Paul's prayers and prophecies. As they warmed around the fire, the survivors would naturally share their stories with the natives.

(Act 28:3) Paul had gathered a bundle of brushwood and was putting it on the fire, when a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand.

From the facts surrounding Paul's shipboard experiences as a Roman citizen and prisoner, we learn that Paul served others in every way possible. He did not direct Luke to pick up sticks for them. Paul led by example and showed great practical and spiritual knowledge when he helped build the fire. Once again, God used an unusual way to

prepare the natives to learn the Good News from Paul, for a snake fastened itself to his hand.

(Act 28:4) When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, “This man must be a murderer; though he has escaped from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live.”

The natives could distinguish a poisonous snake from a nonpoisonous snake in the light of the fire. They would know the consequences of such a snake biting someone. They stated what many would say whenever something bad happens to someone else: “he probably deserves it.” They knew the soldiers guarded prisoners, and they had some sense of understanding regarding living in a just universe where no crime can go unpunished eventually.

(Act 28:5) He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm.

Paul knew that God intended and promised that he would preach the Good News in Rome. Paul was full of faith, and even if the snake were poisonous, Paul knew that because of God’s promise he would not die until God achieved His plans and purposes through him. Paul showed faith in God, not fear, and Paul shook off the snake into the fire; which is some evidence it might have been poisonous and Paul needed to destroy it to protect others from harm.

(Act 28:6) They were expecting him to swell up or drop dead, but after they had waited a long time and saw that nothing unusual had happened to him, they changed their minds and began to say that he was a god.

The natives knew the possible consequences of the bite of that snake – sickness or sickness and death. When Paul did not show any ill effects, they concluded he was not a murderer and then they jumped to the other extreme conclusion: “he was a God.” Paul corrected this misconception and over time taught them more about the true God as God worked through him.

(Act 28:7) Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the leading man of the island, named Publius, who received us and entertained us hospitably for three days.

Publius was the leading man, who was under the authority of the Roman government and who would treat Roman citizens and soldiers with respect. Paul stayed in Malta for three months, which gave him plenty of time to give a reasonable account of why he believed in Jesus the Messiah. An intelligent leader, such as Publius, would enjoy conversation with someone he has learned as the Apostle Paul. God used a shipwreck to share the Good News of Jesus and establish a church on Malta.

(Act 28:8) It so happened that the father of Publius lay sick in bed with fever and dysentery. Paul visited him and cured him by praying and putting his hands on him.

Signs and healings attended the preaching of the apostles, the deacons, and the Apostle Paul. No doubt, the best island cures and doctors available had been tried in order to

heal the father of Publius, but all had failed; therefore, God gave Paul the ability to heal him by “praying and putting his hands on him.” By praying, Paul pointed people to God as the true healer; and when God healed the man, God pointed people to Paul as one who knew the truth about God so they could learn about God from Paul.

(Act 28:9) After this happened, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured.

Since the Good News of Paul’s ability to heal spread, many others came and he healed them in the name of Jesus Christ. Paul would pray in the name of Jesus the Messiah, and he would tell them that Jesus rose from the dead and Jesus offered them spiritual life, forgiveness of sins, eternal life, freedom from fear of evil spirits, freedom from slavery to sin, and many other blessings in addition to physical healing.

(Act 28:10) They bestowed many honors on us, and when we were about to sail, they put on board all the provisions we needed.

The people honored Paul for all he did for them. Luke showed how God met all of their needs through the people who honored Paul – from saving their lives on the shore, to providing them food and shelter and fellowship for three months, to giving them the opportunity to serve God and others through healing and preaching the Good News. Finally, God sent them to Rome with all they needed when God led the islanders to show their appreciation and share what they had with Paul and his traveling companions.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Why do you think God allowed the snake to bite the Apostle Paul?
2. Why do some people suffer troubles?
3. How did the islanders demonstrate the fact that they understood justice, right, and wrong, but did not know the true God? How might someone demonstrate this fact about himself or herself today, while not knowing the true God?
4. How did Paul demonstrate the pure grace of God when he prayed and healed Publius’ father? How did this make a difference?
5. How can Christians look upon every difficulty, hardship, suffering, and trouble as an opportunity to serve God and share the Good News about Jesus?

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