

~MALTA (249)

(Mal'ta)

.. Paul's Shipwreck

.. Paul's Experience In Malta

- An island in the Mediterranean lying about 100 kilometers (60 miles) South of Sicily and having an area of about 246 square kilometers (95 square miles). It was at **Malta** that the apostle Paul was shipwrecked, and there he remained for three months. During this time he healed Publius father and others afflicted with sicknesses.
- And when we had made it to safety, then we learned that the island was called **Malta**. (**Acts of Apostles 28:1**)
- Now in the neighborhood of that place the principal man of the island, named Publius, had lands, and he received us hospitably and entertained us benevolently three days. (**Acts of Apostles 28:7**)
- But it happened that the father of Publius was lying down distressed with fever and dysentery, and Paul went in to him and prayed, laid his hands upon him and healed him. (**Acts of Apostles 28:8**)
- After this occurred, the rest of the people on the island who had sicknesses also began to come to him and be cured. (**Acts of Apostles 28:9**)
- Three months later we set sail in a boat from Alexandria that had wintered in the island and with the figurehead, **Sons of Zeus**. (**Acts of Apostles 28:11**)
- In the past some associated the **Greek** word rendered, **Malta**, *Me-li'te* with **Mljet** or, Italian *Meleda*, off the coast of Yugoslavia, because anciently this island was called **Melita**. But tradition and the evidence of Scripture point to **Malta** as the place where Paul experienced shipwreck.
- The designation sea of Adria, where the boat was said to be as it approached **Malta**, came to include the waters of the Mediterranean East of Sicily and West of Crete, and therefore, it could be said that Malta was bounded by this sea.

- Now as the fourteenth night fell and we were being tossed to and fro on the sea of Adria, at midnight the sailors began to suspect they were drawing near to some land. ([Acts of Apostles 27:27](#))

·· Paul's Shipwreck

- Sometime after Atonement Day, in September or October, the ship on which Paul was traveling as a prisoner left the Cretan harbor of Fair Havens and was seized by a tempestuous wind, *Euroaquilo*, apparently from the East-Northeast. It drove the ship away from the coast of Crete to Cauda, and the mariners feared being run aground on the Syrtis, the quicksands along the shores of northern Africa.
- And coasting along it with difficulty we came to a certain place called Fair Havens, near which was the city Lasea. ([Acts of Apostles 27:8](#))
- As considerable time had passed and by now it was hazardous to navigate because even the fast of atonement day had already passed by, Paul made a recommendation. ([Acts of Apostles 27:9](#))
- Moreover, when the south wind blew softly, they thought they had as good as realized their purpose, and they lifted anchor and began coasting inshore along Crete. ([Acts of Apostles 27:13](#))
- After no great while, however, a tempestuous wind called Euroaquilo rushed down upon it. ([Acts of Apostles 27:14](#))
- As the boat was violently seized and was not able to keep its head against the wind, we gave way and were borne along. ([Acts of Apostles 27:15](#))
- Now we ran under the shelter of a certain small island called Cauda, and yet we were hardly able to get possession of the skiff at the stern. ([Acts of Apostles 27:16](#))
- But after hoisting it aboard they began using helps to undergird the boat, and being in fear of running aground on the Syrtis, they lowered the gear and thus were driven along. ([Acts of Apostles 27:17](#))
- An East-Northeast wind could not have caused the vessel to drift toward Mljet, about 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) North-Northwest of

Cauda. Evidently the boat, after drifting some two weeks, neared **Malta**, about 870 kilometers (540 miles) West-Northwest of Cauda.

- Now close to the approach of day Paul began to encourage one and all to take some food, saying; Today is the fourteenth day you have been on the watch and you are continuing without food, having taken nothing for yourselves. (**Acts of Apostles 27:33**)

See Also EUROAQUILO

- What is today called Saint Paul's Bay, situated on the Northeast side of **Malta**, could have been reached on a West-Northwest course without previously touching any other part of the island of **Malta**.
- Perhaps when their trained ears heard breakers dashing against rocky Koura Head, which juts out into the Mediterranean from the eastern side of Saint Paul's Bay, the sailors began to suspect that they were approaching land.
- The depths of twenty fathoms and fifteen fathoms, a fathom equals 1.8 men. (6 feet) ascertained by them basically correspond to soundings made in the Middle of the **19th Century** in the Saint Paul's Bay area.
- Now as the fourteenth night fell and we were being tossed to and fro on the sea of Adria, at midnight the sailors began to suspect they were drawing near to some land. (**Acts of Apostles 27:27**)
- And they sounded the depth and found it twenty fathoms, so they proceeded a short distance and again made a sounding and found it fifteen fathoms. (**Acts of Apostles 27:28**)
- Possibly because of being familiar with another of **Malta's** harbors, the mariners did not recognize the land as Malta even in daylight. The islands largest and best-known harbor is at Valletta, 13 kilometers (8 miles) Southeast of St. Paul's Bay.
- Finally when it became day, they could not recognize the land but they were observing a certain bay with a beach, and on this they were determined, if they could, to beach the boat. (**Acts of Apostles 27:39**)

- Along the western side of Saint Paul's Bay, there are two inlets. Probably at one of these, the sailors hoped to beach the boat, but were unsuccessful, the reason for the failure, according to the literal Greek text, **being their having fallen around into a place of two seas**. This may mean that the ship struck a place where two seas met, **AS**, or a shoal washed on each side by the sea. **NW**
- Or, the vessel was caught between crosscurrents and ran aground. **JB,NE** The ship's bow became immovably stuck, perhaps in the mud and clay that lie three fathoms below the surface in parts of Saint Paul's Bay, while the stern was broken in pieces by the waves.
- Finally when it became day, they could not recognize the land but they were observing a certain bay with a beach, and on this they were determined, if they could, to beach the boat. (**Acts of Apostles 27:39**)
- So, cutting away the anchors, they let them fall into the sea, at the same time loosing the lashings of the rudder oars and, after hoisting the foresail to the wind, they made for the beach. (**Acts of Apostles 27:40**)
- When they lighted upon a shoal washed on each side by the sea, they ran the ship aground and the prow got stuck and stayed immovable, but the stern began to be violently broken to pieces. (**Acts of Apostles 27:41**)

•• Paul's Experience In Malta

- At this time the soldiers determined to kill Paul and the other prisoners. This may have been because of the strict Roman military discipline that held guards accountable for the escape of prisoners under their control.
- Herod made diligent search for him and, when not finding him, he examined the guards and commanded them to be led off to punishment, and he went down from Judea to Caesarea and spent some time there. (**Acts of Apostles 12:19**)
- The jailer, being awakened out of sleep and seeing the prison doors were open, drew his sword and was about to do away with himself, imagining that the prisoners had escaped. (**Acts of Apostles 16:27**)

- Since the army officer, centurion, restrained the soldiers on account of Paul, all those aboard, numbering 276, survived the shipwreck, either by swimming ashore or getting safely to land upon planks and other floatable items from the wrecked vessel.
- Now, all together, we souls in the boat were two hundred and seventy-six. ([Acts of Apostles 27:37](#))
- At this it became the determination of the soldiers to kill the prisoners, that no one might swim away and escape. ([Acts of Apostles 27:42](#))
- But the army officer desired to bring Paul safely through and restrained them from their purpose. And he commanded those able to swim to cast themselves into the sea and make it to land first. ([Acts of Apostles 27:43](#))
- And the rest to do so, some upon planks and some upon certain things from the boat. And thus it came about that all were brought safely to land. ([Acts of Apostles 27:44](#))
- The non-Greek-speaking inhabitants of **Malta** showed extraordinary human kindness to the survivors, even building a fire for them so that they might warm themselves.
- When the apostle Paul placed a bundle of sticks on this fire, a venomous viper came out and fastened itself to his hand. Amazed that Paul did not swell up or die, the people of **Malta** began to view him as a god.
- And when we had made it to safety, then we learned that the island was called **Malta**. ([Acts of Apostles 28:1](#))
- And the foreign-speaking people showed us extraordinary human kindness, for they kindled a fire and received all of us helpfully because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold. ([Acts of Apostles 28:2](#))
- But when Paul collected a certain bundle of sticks and laid it upon the fire, a viper came out due to the heat and fastened itself on his hand. ([Acts of Apostles 28:3](#))
- When the foreign-speaking people caught sight of the venomous creature hanging from his hand, they began saying to one

another; Surely this man is a murderer, and although he made it to safety from the sea, vindictive justice did not permit him to keep on living. (**Acts of Apostles 28:4**)

- However, he shook the venomous creature off into the fire and suffered no harm. (**Acts of Apostles 28:5**)
- But they were expecting he was going to swell up with inflammation or suddenly drop dead. After they waited for a long while and beheld nothing hurtful happen to him, they changed their mind and began saying he was a god. (**Acts of Apostles 28:6**)
- Today there are no vipers indigenous to **Malta**. Great changes have taken place since the **First Century C.E.** Whereas now **Malta** is one of the most densely populated islands in the world, with about 1,280 persons per square kilometers (3,330 per square miles), extensive wooded areas may have existed there in Paul's time.
- The population increase would have had a marked effect on the habitats of wildlife. This could easily have caused all vipers to disappear, as was the case in Arran, an island off the Southwest coast of Scotland. As late as **1853 C.E.**, however, a viper is reported to have been seen near Saint Paul's Bay.