

In Rome at Last!

Key Verse:
"...what has happened to me has really served to advance the Gospel."

Philippians 1:12

Extra: Acts 28:28 says, "God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles." How is that good news for us?

Level 4 lesson 41

Read Acts 28:11-31 and Luke 2:30-32

With the winter storms past, Paul again boarded a big grain ship bound for Italy. Leaving Malta, he and the other prisoners sailed for Syracuse in Sicily where they spent three days, before sailing on to Rhegium, on the southern tip of Italy. From there, another day's sailing brought them as near to Rome as they could go by sea, and all the prisoners, including Paul, were put ashore.

Paul had gained the trust of Julius, the centurion in charge, and was allowed to briefly meet with some of the local Christians. How his heart must have rejoiced, to enjoy a short time of fellowship with them. Julius, however, wanted to hurry on to Rome; obviously, once he reached the prison there, he would be free of his responsibility for all the prisoners. So the company of soldiers and prisoners began their walk along the great Roman road to Rome.

A few Christians in Rome heard of Paul's coming, and went out to meet him. At a place called the Forum of Appius they met up with the group, and found Paul, trudging wearily along, linked to the many other prisoners with a heavy chain. Their friendly smiles and companionship must have cheered him up a great deal, as did another little company of Christians who came out as far as the 'Three Taverns,' ten miles from Rome, to greet him.

Finally Paul entered Rome, the capital city of the great Roman Empire! Through the streets the ragged bunch of prisoners marched, their guard clearing a path for them, through the throngs of people. Finally, they halted in front of the large, foreboding jail and Julius handed them over to the guard.

Little did Rome realise, that within its walls was now one of the greatest saints and servants of God the world has ever known! Oh how it needed his message of the Gospel. Despite its magnificent architecture, sculptures, and culture, Rome was a very wicked city. Its slavery, cruelty, and murders were terrible.

Paul was not put in that dungeon though, but under 'house-arrest' with a room of his own near the guards' quarters. However, he was chained to a guard day and night, so although he had a certain amount of physical comfort, he had no privacy. Many times the chains must have annoyed and frustrated him.

Paul had learned to put up with many things, and he knew that by the grace and power of God, he would overcome this trial, too. During Paul's time as a prisoner, many heard the way of salvation and proved the power of the Gospel to deliver from sin.

For two years Paul lived in Rome, and though a prisoner, he was never idle. Each day friends brought visitors to see Paul and hear him boldly preaching and teaching about Jesus Christ. Many believed. However, some of the Jews started arguing with him one day about his preaching. He replied, "It has already been prophesied that you people would not accept the message of salvation when it came, so God has said that the Gentiles (those outside of your nation) shall have the message given to them, and so I will preach to them!" The Jews departed, but Paul's heart still burned with the message. Every day he continued to preach the Gospel to the many people who came to see him. He longed that everyone he spoke to might believe his message and trust in Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What was Paul allowed to do when he first landed in Italy?

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F _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ **W** _ _ _ **T** _ **C** _ _ _ _ _ _ _

2. What did some of the Roman Christians do?

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3. What kind of city was Rome?

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4. Where was Paul allowed to stay?

.....

5. How long was Paul in prison and how did he spend his days?

.....

My Name is _____ Age _____

Homeward Bound

Key Verse:

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”

2 Timothy 4:7

Level 4 lesson 42

Extra: Make a map of Paul's journeys.

Read 2 Timothy 4 and Philippians 1:12-26

Our reading today is from Paul's last letter to his young friend Timothy. Chapter 4 contains some of his final words before he faced death. That fact alone makes them special, but also because Paul had a special brotherly love for Timothy. He had helped him become a Christian, and his two letters to Timothy are very interesting and full of helpful instruction for young Christians.

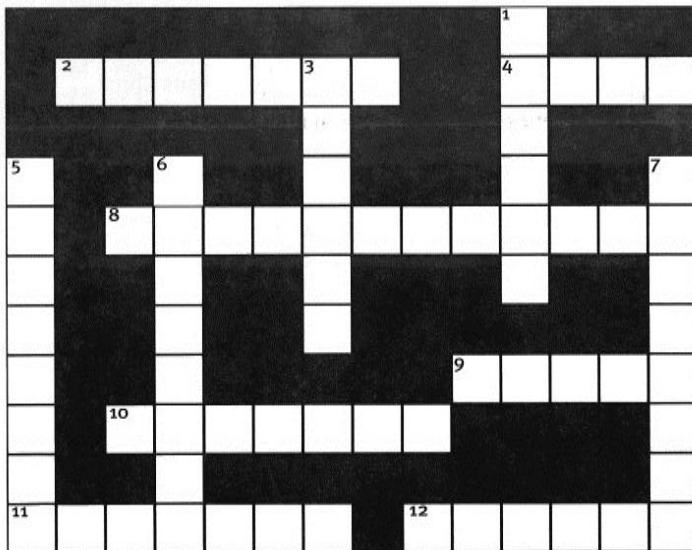
You'll remember from our last lesson that Paul had many visitors and preached the Gospel daily while he was imprisoned in Rome. Not only did he speak with all those who came to see him, but during these two years of imprisonment he also wrote four epistles (or letters) of the New Testament: Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians, and Philemon. Paul never lost the vision of the great work that God had called him to do. He had a care for all Christians everywhere, constantly thinking of them and praying for them.

Even in prison he tried to help those who had been saved (by giving their hearts to Jesus Christ the Saviour) through his preaching. He did not groan or complain, because he was held in captivity, constantly chained to a Roman guard. In fact, we know that he was continually rejoicing in the Lord, for the Epistle to the Philippians is full of joy and rejoicing. At the end of this imprisonment, it seemed that he was set free for a time. Apparently no serious charge could be brought against him, as no witnesses came from Jerusalem, so Paul was released.

The Scriptures do not give us a detailed account of Paul's last days, but we do know a little from other reliable, historical accounts. Shortly after his release, a great fire swept through Rome, and Nero (the insane Roman Emperor) blamed the Christians. Naturally, a terrible persecution of the Christians followed, and many were tortured, burned to death, or executed. Some were even forced to fight with hungry lions in the great Roman Colosseum, which still stands to this day in Rome. What love they had for Jesus, to go to their death in this way, rather than give up their faith in Him!

Soon Paul found himself before the powerful Roman Emperor. A Roman court - with its judges, lawyers, officials, witnesses and soldiers on guard - was a terrifying place for any prisoner, and Paul had to stand alone. Finally, Paul was condemned to death and taken outside the city to be executed. As a Roman citizen, Paul could not be tortured or crucified, and so he was beheaded by a soldier's sword. Later, another Roman emperor, Constantine, built a church in Paul's honour at the place where he was killed. It is still in Rome today.

So Paul, one of the greatest missionaries who ever lived, became a martyr; happy to give his life for his King. He had written to Timothy, "I am ready to be offered." He knew that death would only bring him into the presence of his beloved Saviour and Lord. He was homeward bound to Heaven and glory! He knew this because he had trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour. This is the only way that we, too, can prepare for Heaven. Are you ready to go? If you are a Christian, are you prepared to stand for your faith in Christ, even when facing death?



ANSWERS:
ACROSS 2. Corinth 4. Tyre 8. Thessalonica 9. Troas 10. Ephesus 11. Antioch 12. Paphos
DOWN 1. Athens 3. Tarsus 5. Caesarea 6. Philippi 7. Damascus

ACROSS

2. Where Paul was accused before Gallio. (Acts 18)
4. Where he landed and was warned not to go to Jerusalem. (Acts 21:3)
8. He wrote his epistle to the Thessalonians for the people of this town.
9. Where he restored Eutychus to life. (Acts 20:6-12)
10. He was driven from here by riots stirred up by Demetrius. (Acts 19)
11. Where he first preached to the Gentiles. (Acts 13:14)
12. When he was here Elymas, a false prophet, was struck blind. (Acts 13:6-11)

DOWN

1. Where he addressed the Council of the Areopagus. (Acts 17:15-34)
3. Where he was born. (Acts 9:11)
5. Where he was imprisoned for two years by the governor, Felix. (Acts 23:33, 24:27)
6. Where he and Silas were saved from prison by an earthquake. (Acts 16)
7. He was struck blind for three days on his way to this place. (Acts 9:6-9)

Jesus, the Saviour is Born

Key Verse:

“...you are to give Him the name JESUS, because He will save His people from their sins.”

Matthew 1:21

Extra: Find some prophecies in the Bible about Jesus coming to earth.

Level 4 lesson 43

Read Luke 1:36-38 and Luke 2:1-7

What great times birthdays are! There is one birthday that is observed by people of many nations, and we are going to celebrate it this month. Even our calendars are dated from the birth of this person. Yes, this month we remember the birthday of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every date in history is either B.C. or A.D. - most of you would know that, I'm sure. B.C. means 'Before Christ' and A.D. stands for 'Anno Domini', which is Latin for "in the year of our Lord."

Dates in the Old Testament are 'B.C.' because everything took place before Christ was born and our present year shows how many years have passed since His birth. A person who had this effect on history could never be an ordinary person - and Jesus certainly wasn't, because He was the Son of God! Let's consider again how it all happened...

You may remember how the angel Gabriel came to Mary and told her that she was to have a very special son. He would not be conceived in the normal way, but by a miracle of God's Holy Spirit. His name was to be JESUS, which means 'SAVIOUR.' Mary's heart filled with joy as she realised that she was to be the mother of the promised 'Messiah.' He was the One who would "save His people from their sins" and that's why we remember Jesus' birthday. So Mary sang, "My soul praises the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour."

Some months later, the Roman Emperor announced a national census. Everyone must return to the town or city where they were born to be numbered and taxed. So Mary and her husband Joseph set out for Bethlehem, with Mary riding a donkey. What a difficult trip this must have been for Mary, highly pregnant as she was!

At last they arrived in Bethlehem, but found there was no room for them - every inn and lodging place was full. Where were they to sleep? Finally, they found shelter where the animals stayed. While most of Bethlehem slept through the darkness of the night, JESUS, the "Light of the World" was born! Mary tenderly wrapped Him in His baby clothes, and for a bed, she laid Him gently in a feed manger. There lay the One who would change the course of history!

Jesus' unique birth meant that He could bring the gifts of eternal life and peace with God, and keep giving forgiveness of sins to millions and millions of people down through the centuries of time. Sadly, so many people today are ignorant of this event. They celebrate Christmas as simply a fun holiday and give no thought to its significance for them or the whole of mankind.

Just like Mary and Joseph found no room at the inn, for some people there is still "no room" for Jesus in their lives. They shut their minds and hearts to Him, and reject the wonderful gift of salvation He offers. But how much they miss!

What about you? Will you pray to Jesus this Christmas? Do you know that you need to be saved from the darkness of sin and the punishment of hell? How about praying something like this, "Lord Jesus, I believe that you were born into this world to die on the cross and rise from the grave to save sinners like me. Please forgive me and save me from my sin. Please change my heart, and come in and live as Lord of my life forever." Jesus is able and indeed mighty to save - even the worst sinners!

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. Whose birth do we remember this month? Why?

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2. What do the letters B.C. and A.D. mean?

.....

3(a) Who told Mary what to name her son? 3(b) What does the name JESUS mean?

(a)

.....

(b)

4. What was unique or special about Jesus birth?

.....

5. What can you pray so Jesus will live in your life today?

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Wonderful Night for the Shepherds

Key Verse:
“Today in the town of David, a Saviour has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord.”

Luke 2:11

Extra: Try writing a story as if you were one of the shepherds.

Level 4 lesson 44

Read Luke 2:8-20 and Isaiah 9:1-7

Finally, God’s amazing plan of salvation - to redeem lost, sinful mankind from sin by sending His own Son into the world - had begun. While Bethlehem lay still and quiet on that amazing night, the angels of Heaven were filled with joy and praise! Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world had been born!

Out in the nearby fields a most amazing scene took place. Some shepherds were the first to hear the fantastic news and see a glimpse of the Heavenly joy at this great moment. As they watched over their sheep, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and bright light shone all around them. Seeing their fearful looks, he said, “Don’t be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. Today in the town of David, a Saviour has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord!”

Speechless, the shepherds listened intently as he continued, “And this will be a sign to you. You will find the baby wrapped in clothes, lying in a manger.” At this, it seemed that the shutters of Heaven itself were thrown open - the sky was suddenly filled with a magnificent choir of angels singing praise to God, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, goodwill towards men!” Then all was quiet again as the angels returned to Heaven and the last magnificent note of praise died away.

Finally, one of the shepherds broke the awed silence, “Let’s go and see this thing the Lord has told us about!” Excitedly, they hurried off through the darkness, to Bethlehem. They knew where to look for the baby, because the angel had said He would be lying in a manger.

Soon they found Mary and Joseph watching over their little baby, who was lying in the manger, just as the angel had told them.

We don’t know for certain what was said, but I’m sure they told of the angels’ visit and the joyful, Heavenly singing! We do know that the Bible says they then humbly bowed and worshipped Jesus. What a privilege to be the first people to worship the Son of God! Eventually they returned to their flocks, praising and glorifying God for all they had seen and heard.

Today, people look around at all the sorrow, fear, and sin in the world, and find the Christmas message meaningless. “Where do we find peace on earth, and goodwill to men?” they ask. But they forget the first half of the angels’ song, “Glory to God in the highest,” and so the answer is that sinful people will not acknowledge their sin or glorify God. Boys and girls, it is only when we believe in God’s gift - His Saviour Son - that we can know such peace and goodness.

Many people have forgotten God! They do not praise and worship Him, or make Him King of their lives. They reject or ridicule the message of God’s love and keep on sinning. That’s why there’s so much evil, sorrow, and unrest in the world. Please don’t make this mistake yourself! Instead, believe in Jesus Christ to be your Saviour this Christmas and let Him be King of your life. Then you will know His peace and be able to serve and honour Him each day. Share with everyone the ‘Good News’ that the Saviour has been born - Jesus Christ the Lord!

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

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| 1. Who did the angel take the message of Jesus’ birth to? | _____ |
| 2. What did the angel say? (see Key Verse) | _____ |
| 3. What great song of praise did the angels sing? | _____ |
| 4. Why is there so much evil and sorrow in the world today? | _____ |
| 5. Have you repented of your sin and asked Jesus to save you and be King of your life? | _____ |