

Listen to the Man of God!

‘A Muslim dies and finds himself before the Pearly Gates. He is very excited, as all his life he has longed to meet the Prophet Mohammed. Having arrived at the Gates of Heaven, he meets a man with a beard. “Are you Mohammed?” he asks. “No, my son. I am Peter. Mohammed is higher up”. And he points to a ladder that rises into the clouds. Delighted that Mohammed should be higher than Peter, he climbs the ladder in great strides, climbs through the clouds, coming to a room where he meets another bearded man. He asks again, “Are you Mohammed?” “No, I am Moses. Mohammed is higher still”. Exhausted, but with a heart full of joy he continues to climb the ladder and, yet again, he discovers an even larger room where he meets another Man with a beard. Full of hope, he asks again, “Are you Mohammed?” “No, I am Jesus. You will find Mohammed higher up”. Mohammed higher than Jesus! The poor man can hardly contain his delight and climbs and climbs, ever higher. Once again he reaches a larger room where he meets a Man with a beard and repeats his question. “Are you Mohammed?” he gasps, as he is, by now, totally out of breath from all his climbing. “No, My son. I am God. But you look exhausted. Would you like a coffee?” “Yes, please!” said the man. God looks behind Him, claps His hands

and calls out: “Hey Mohammed, two coffees!”

This joke is just wrong on so many levels! Heaven itself, is nothing like that pictured in the joke, as we should all know well from our knowledge of the Bible. And lest any might be misled, Mohammed will not be there. His “resting place” is and will always be in a much hotter locale. As will all Muslims, Jews, and anyone of any nation who rejects Christ Jesus. Their fate will all be the same. For most all will be guilty of having “listened to the wrong man, the wrong message, the devil’s lies published through the wiles of men and women who think they control the world.

Acts 27, actually all chapters from 21 on, is a rarely read passage. Indeed it’s not on the lectionary schedule at all. Which is unfortunate because it has much to teach. Here we pick up the account of Paul’s odyssey to Rome, to appear for his trial before Caesar, because he had exercised his rights as a Roman citizen to appeal his arrest to the emperor. Few people had Roman citizenship, and having those rights was envied by all less fortunate. Yes, it truly was an odyssey to get to Rome. In ideal conditions, the trip should have taken just over three weeks. But, as it turned out, as we here read, it was anything but an ideal voyage!

Paul was now a prisoner, and had to be kept in custody until his arrival in Rome and appearance before the emperor. He was not alone, as there were many other prisoners on this “prison transport”. But he was a Roman, and much more importantly, he was a man of God, full of Holy Spirit. Like any devout, devoted,

and disciplined follower of Lord Jesus, he was literally soaked with Holy Spirit. And it showed. Well, he didn't look any different, necessarily, but the anointing of God upon him could be easily discerned by anyone with any spiritual sensitivity at all. He was given to the charge of a Roman officer named Julius, a high ranking official being a member of the Imperial Guard itself, akin today to our president's secret service. In other words, he was no ordinary soldier. While this entire ordeal was nothing any of us, or even Paul, would have chosen to go through if circumstances were all as we chose, it is quite obvious that Christ Jesus was very much in control of everything. As He always is. (While we often do not, and, being creatures as we are, are incapable of understanding why the Lord does things the way He does, or doesn't do things we would otherwise think best.) We see here God's orchestration of these things as Julius was moved to favor Paul and allow him unusual privileges, namely to disembark the ship and meet with some friends at their first port of call, Sidon.

They sailed, but as the winds were against them, with difficulty were finally able to dock at Myra in what is now southwestern Turkey. Already delayed, the commanding officer located another ship in port, Egyptian from Alexandria, that was bound for Italy, so the prisoners were transferred to that vessel. After setting sail, again the winds were contrary, and they made little progress for many days, at last making it to a small port called Fair Havens on the southern coast of Crete, where they remained

ashore for weeks. They were progressing, but it was practically like going nowhere fast! The captain was anxious to get moving again, as so much time had been lost already not even counting all these days in Fair Havens, as the weather continued unstable and threatening. Paul, the man of God, receiving knowledge from Holy Spirit that they should wait yet longer in Fair Havens, so informed the sailors, scared of pushing off in such dangerous conditions. He told them, “Men, I can see that our voyage would be disastrous for us and bring great loss, not only to our ship and cargo but also to our own lives. We should remain here”.

The helmsman and captain didn't agree. So the commander and the majority decided to put out to sea regardless. A favorable wind arose, so that day they set out, but soon a hurricane force Nor'easter engulfed them, and, unable to control the ship, let it be driven by the storm. As the sea pummeled the ship, they came near a small island called Cauda. But the storm was too intense, so they undergird the whole ship with ropes and cables lest it be broken apart if it ran aground. As the storm continued to batter the ship, the sailors threw overboard the entire cargo, and after three days, even the tackle and rigging, all to lighten the ship and however slightly, increase their chances of survival.

The storm would not let up, and as all had given up hope of making it out alive, having had practically nothing left to eat, Paul once again spoke up: “Men, you should have obeyed me and avoided all of this pain and suffering by not leaving Crete. Now

listen to me. Don't be depressed, for no one will perish—only the ship will be lost. For God's angel visited me last night, the angel of my God, the God I passionately serve. He came and stood in front of me and said, 'Don't be afraid, Paul. You are destined to stand trial before Caesar. And because of God's favor on you, he has given you the lives of everyone who is sailing with you'. So men, keep up your courage! I know that God will protect you, just as He told me He would. But we must run aground on some island to be saved".

After two weeks of uncontrolled drifting, the mariners sensed land approaching and took soundings. To try to prevent smashing against a rocky coast, they dropped four anchors to slow the ship even further. A few of the sailors plotted to steal the lifeboat and make it to land by themselves. Somehow they were discovered, and Paul told the Roman officer: "Unless you all stay together onboard the ship, you have no chance of surviving". Because the presence and favor of God resting on Paul also blessed all those immediately around him. This time they had the better sense to listen to the man of God and they cut the lifeboat's holding ropes letting it float away. Early next morning, everyone listened as Paul, having found a bit of bread, said, "Today makes two full weeks that you've been in fearful peril and hunger, unable to eat a thing. Now eat and be nourished. For you'll all come through this ordeal without a scratch". Then Paul took the bread, and like Lord Jesus' feeding of the 5,000, gave thanks to God for it, broke it,

and passed it around to all 276 aboard, who all ate their fill!

And still this is not the end of the story! Nearing some land, they tried to run the ship aground on the sandy shore. Instead it struck some rocks and began to break apart. The soldiers wanted to kill all the prisoners to prevent their escape, but the Roman commander prevented them, perhaps remembering Paul's earlier words that all had to stay together to even survive. He ordered all to jump overboard and swim to shore. All did, and made it to land, uninjured. All to fulfill God's promises via the angel to Paul that all would survive. But it was only a partial fulfillment for their ordeal is still not finished as we'll pick it up again next week.

The "moral" of the story? Listen to the man of God. This goes for us even more than for those on that ship. The legacy media, under the control of "woke" elitists, reports everything with an agenda, not the truth! Absolutely everything they say must be dissected and analyzed to see if any single thing in it is true. And even more important is to ferret out what they don't report at all. Missouri media reports every pro-abortion protest in Jefferson City and around the state, but nary a peep about the pro-lifers like the three of us who marched there two weeks ago. Because in their eyes, we don't matter. Listen to the people of God who actually hear from God, always faithful to the Bible in every point, who are humble, committed to Him and His will, and then you'll stay safe and survive. Like those on the ship. Seek out the truth tellers. Ask questions. Believe only what jives with God's Word.

