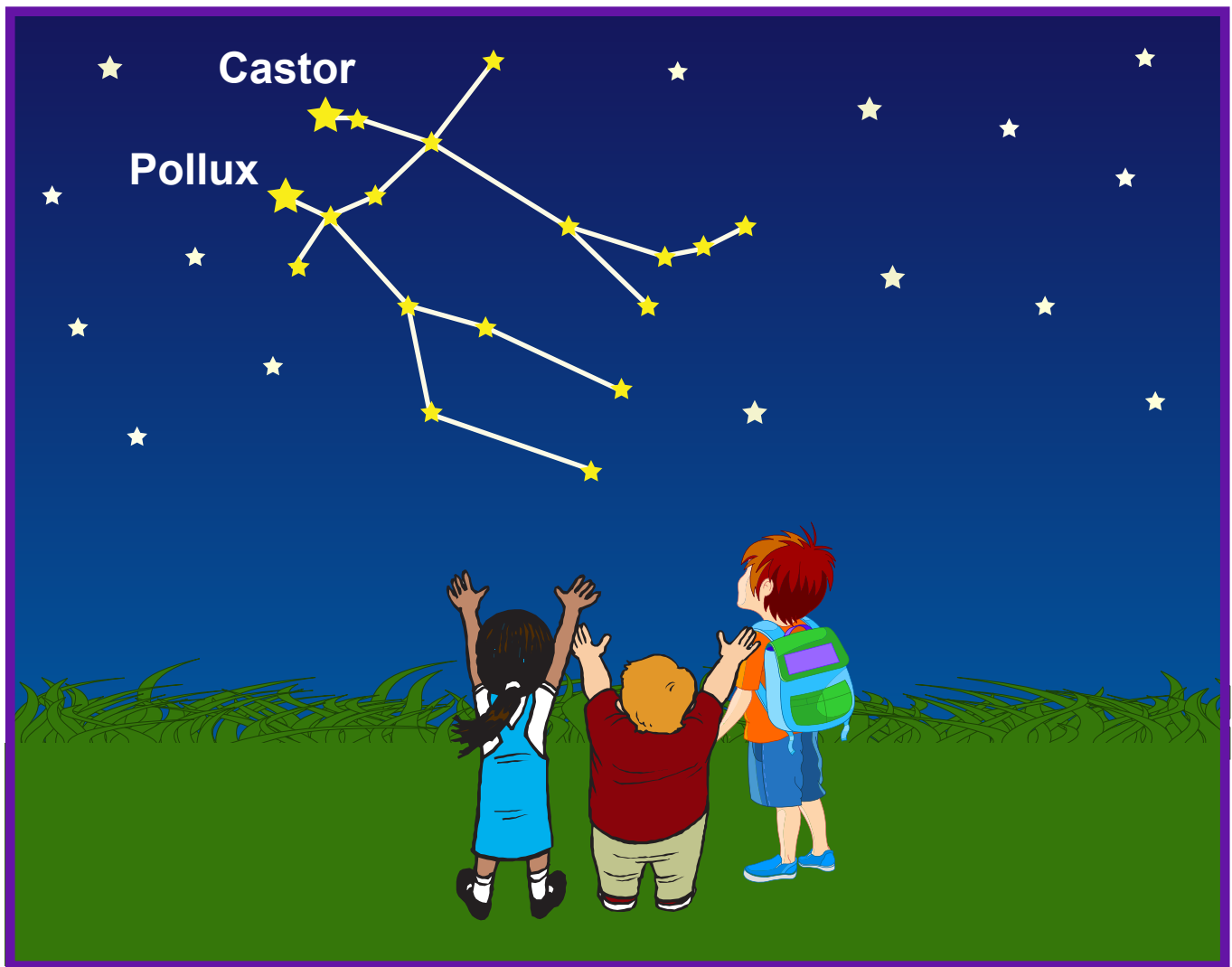


Tour of the Holy Lands - Rome



Imagine if we were sailing with Paul to Rome instead of taking a cruise ship! Remember, Paul is still a prisoner, so he is traveling with a guard—a Roman officer, named Julius. A few of Paul's friends are with him, too. One of them is Luke, and he's writing a book about Paul's travels. Some think it is the book of Acts in the New Testament. Thanks to Luke, we have a very helpful record of how Paul spread Christianity and started churches wherever he went.



But this trip to Rome is different for Paul. Do you remember why? He wants to meet Caesar! Paul must have been eager to reach Italy, but he was traveling on a cargo ship, a grain ship. It was big and strong...and heavy and s-l-o-w! The ship's name was the *Dioscuri*, which means Twin Gods—Castor and Pollux. They were the sons of Jupiter, the king of the Roman gods.

Neptune, the god of the sea, made the twins the saviors of ship-wrecked sailors, and Jupiter placed them in the sky where they would live forever. Today, we call two specific side-by-side stars Gemini, which means twins. (You can check the internet to find out what time of year and which part of the sky this constellation appears in your neighborhood.)



Ships often had huge wooden carvings on the prow, which is the first part of a ship to plow through the water. These carvings are called figureheads, and often they are symbols of protection and strength. Castor and Pollux were the figureheads on the *Dioscuri*.

Just because they were now sailing on a ship with Castor and Pollux as figureheads doesn't mean Paul would begin to depend on them for protection and strength. We can be sure that he is praying to God—the one and only God—who saves and guides us all.



On the way to Rome, Paul's ship stopped at Syracuse, a city on the island of Sicily. Can you find Sicily on your map? Paul stayed there for three days, but we're going to sail right on by and head toward Rhegium (Ree jee' um). It's on the toe of the boot. Do you see the boot? Look closely at the outline of Italy. There are three clear parts of the boot—the toe, the heel, and the leg of the boot, which reaches northward. Isn't that fun to see? Now it should be easy for you to find Rhegium. Again, we're going to pass by without stopping. We're so close to Italy now. Very soon we'll land in the Bay of Naples.

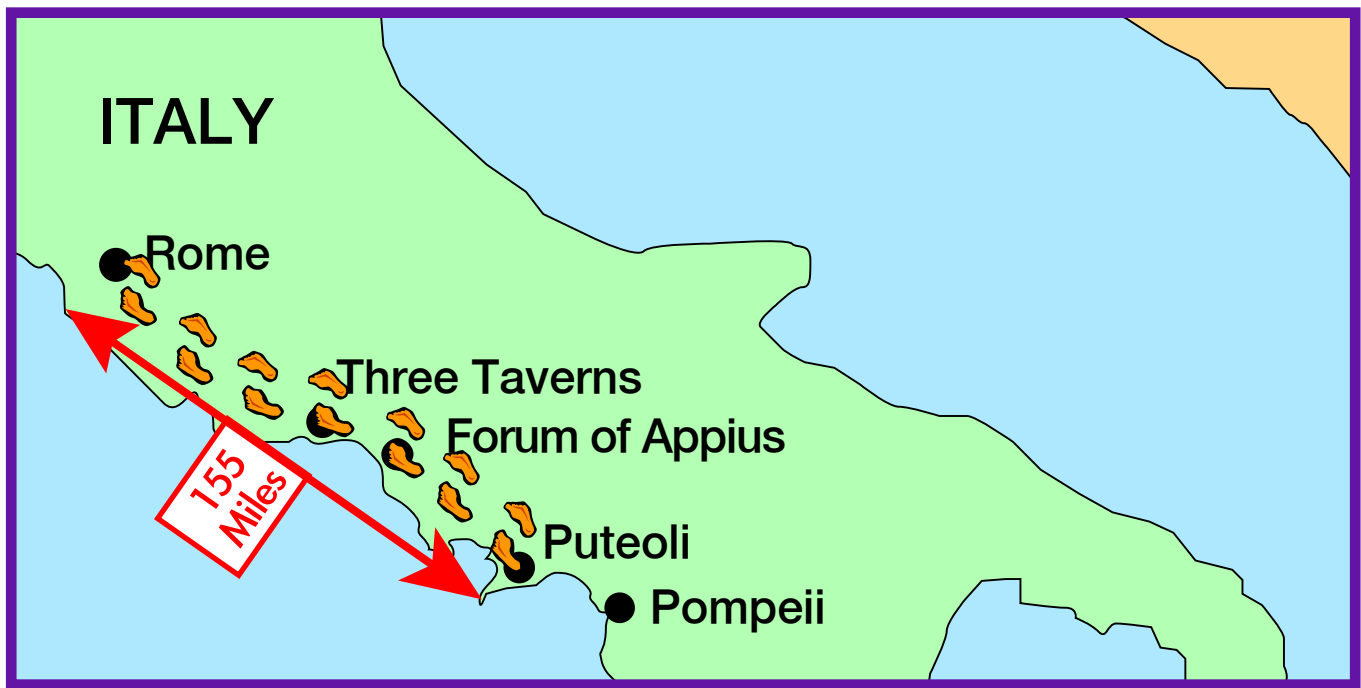


The *Dioscuri* finally reached its destination—Puteoli (poo tay oh' lee), the main port of Rome—and so have we! The first building Paul and his friends would have seen was the market hall. Do you see it across the way? Whenever a grain ship landed, people would rush out to watch the cargo get unloaded. Thousands of sailors traded in wine, olive oil, slaves, grain, and other supplies. After unloading, the *Dioscuri* would turn around and sail back to Egypt.



Let's see what we can find out about Paul's visit here. Luke tells us in Acts that Paul was well known in Puteoli. There was a group of Christians there, and they were very happy to see him. Paul's guard, Julius, allowed Paul and his friends to stay with the Christians for a week. After that, they headed toward Rome.

It was a beautiful time of year to be walking, and one of the first sights they saw was the Roman warships lined up along the water's edge. The Empire must have had a lot of power!



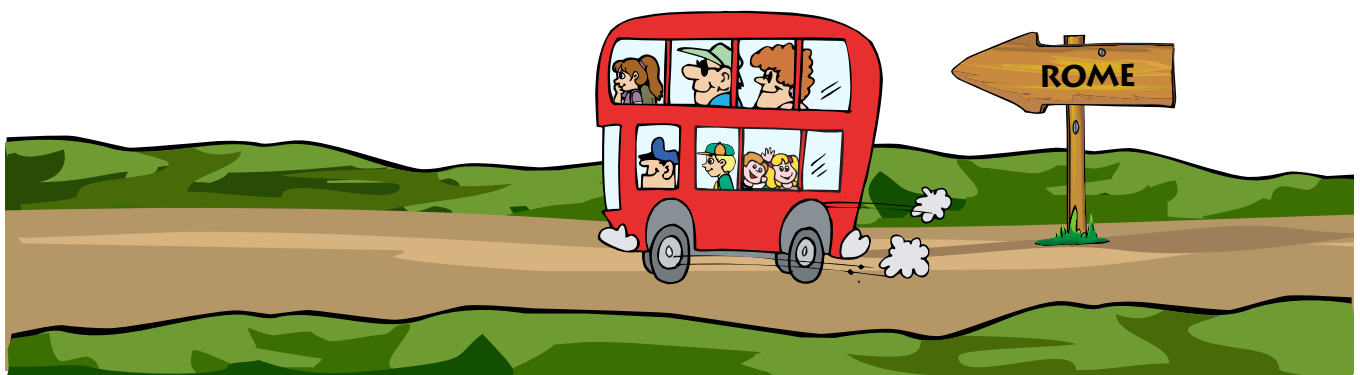
Paul, his friends, and Julius had to walk about 155 miles from Puteoli to Rome, the capital of Italy. Thank goodness we can ride in a bus instead of having to walk all that way. How many miles do you think you could walk in a day? What if you had to walk that many miles for many days, even weeks? We might have to walk more slowly. And that would make the journey even longer. Ugh!

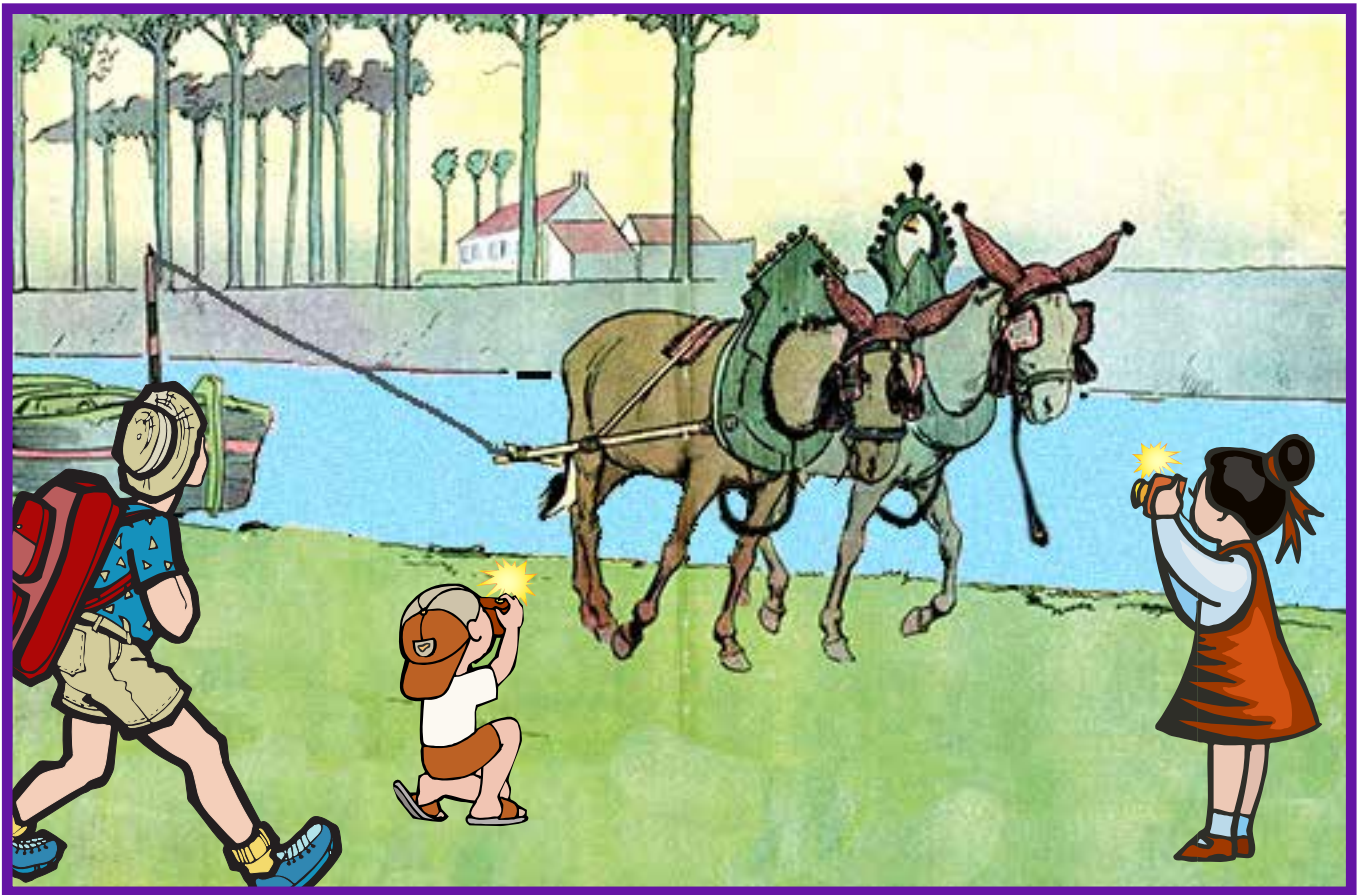
See if you can figure out how long it might have taken Paul's group to walk 155 miles if they walked 6 hours every day.



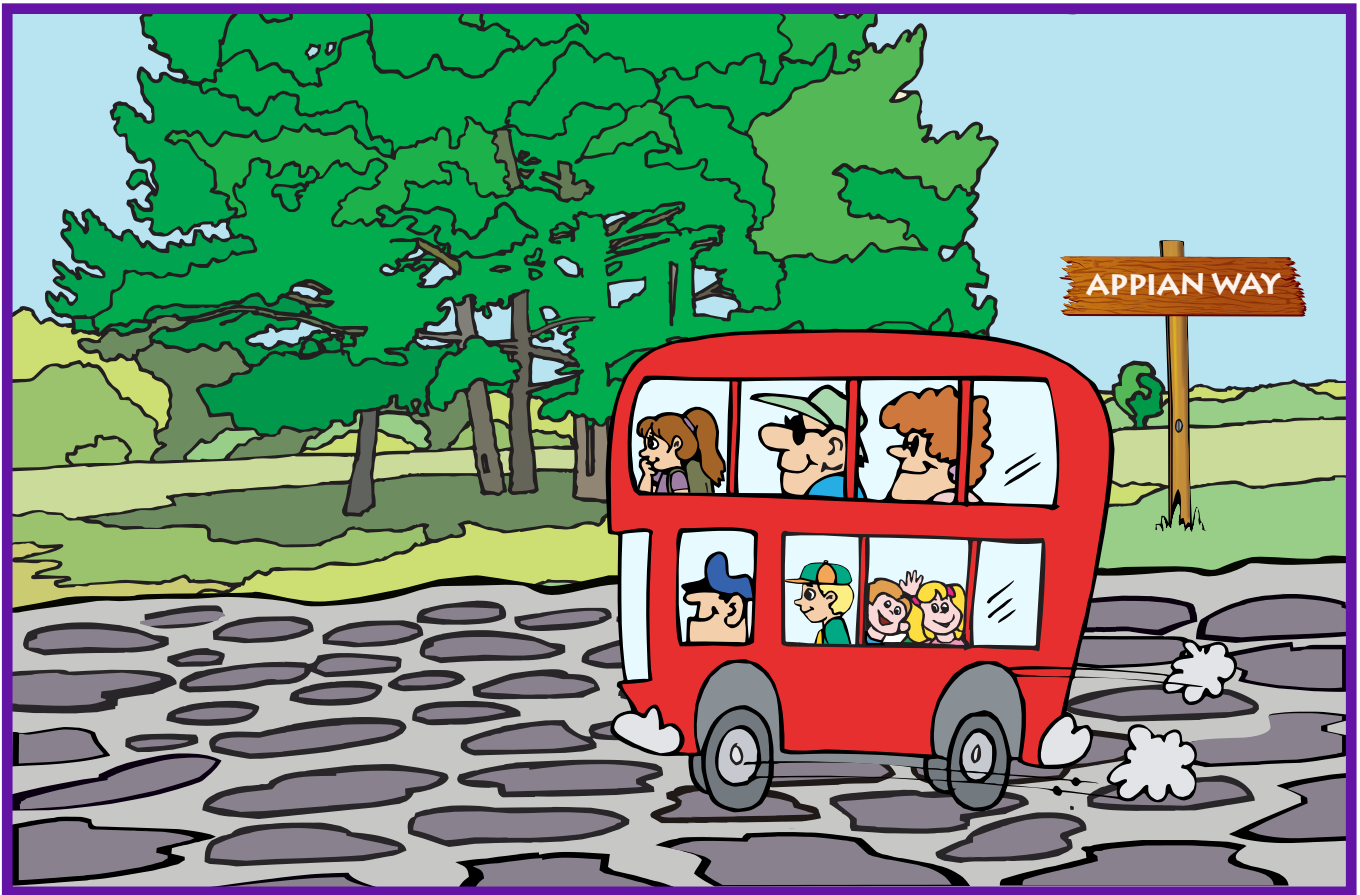


The road Paul took went first to Capua. That's where the gladiator schools were. As we drive by, imagine being a gladiator—a trained fighter who fought against another gladiator in a huge stadium called an arena. The Roman leaders and the citizens loved to watch the gladiators fight to the end—when one of them died. It was entertainment, like watching a boxing match today. We would not want to watch anyone die.





Do you see the mules pulling the heavy barge through a waterway? They did the same thing in Paul's day. They sure used the mules' sturdy strength!



Now we're driving on the Appian Way, following in Paul's footsteps. This road is the most important military highway in the Empire, and it leads straight to Rome. There is a well-known saying: "All roads lead to Rome." And it was true. Rome was the "center of the universe" at the time Paul was preaching and starting churches.



Imagine Paul and his companions dressed in long robes and leather sandals, walking the endless miles toward Rome on this stony road. After several days, they reach the 43rd milestone and see the Forum of Appius. It's just ahead of us.

Ten miles ahead is a place called Three Taverns. "Three Taverns" means "Three Shops"—the general store, the blacksmith's, and the refreshment-house. It will take us about 15 minutes to get there in our bus, but it would take us close to four hours to walk. Now that we're here, let's get out and look around. Wouldn't this have been a perfect place to meet up with someone coming from the other direction? Travelers in ancient times could stop here and rest or wait for someone to arrive.

ROMAN MILESTONE NEAR THREE TAVERNS



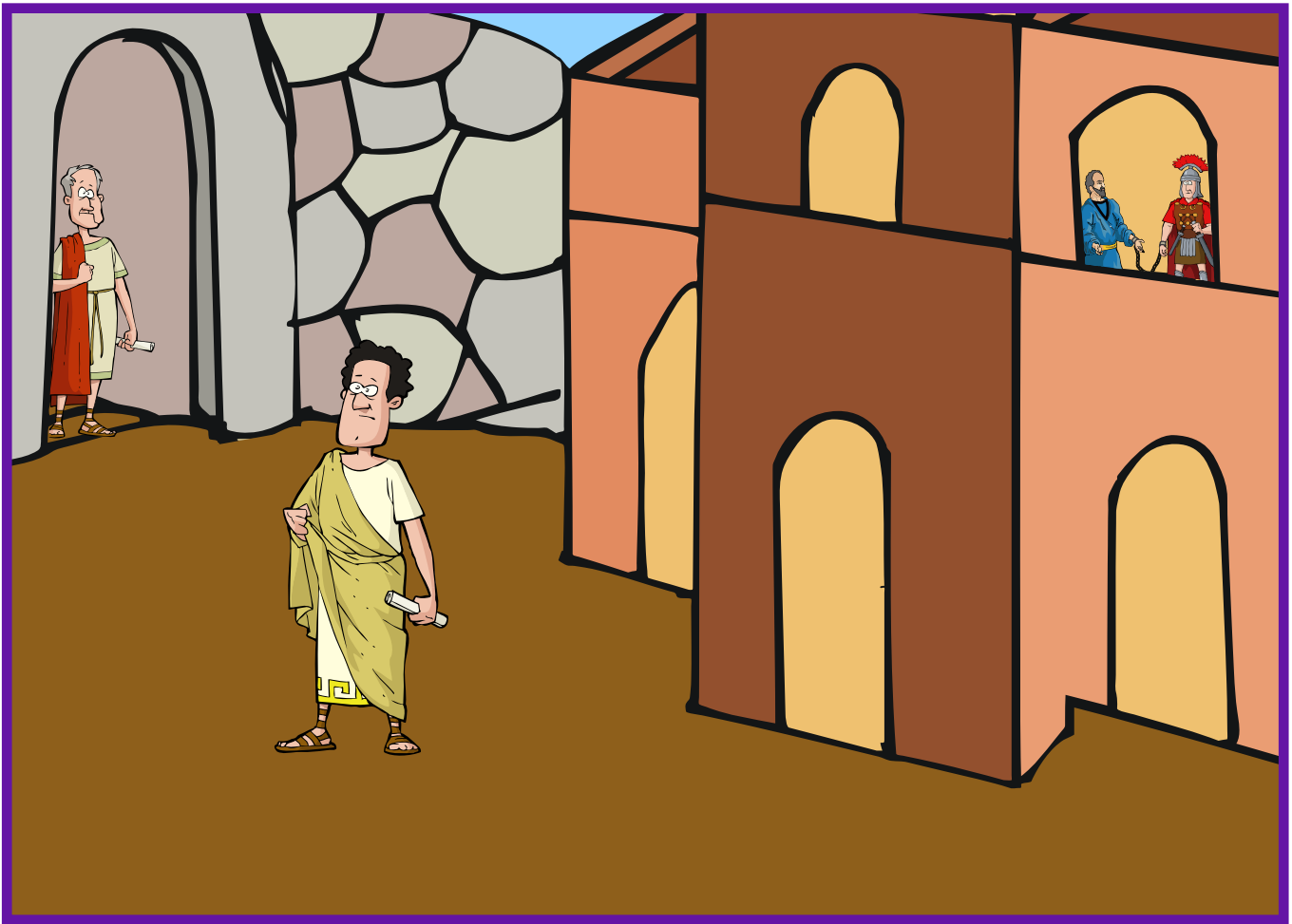
Milestone photo courtesy of
Todd Bolen, BiblePlaces.com



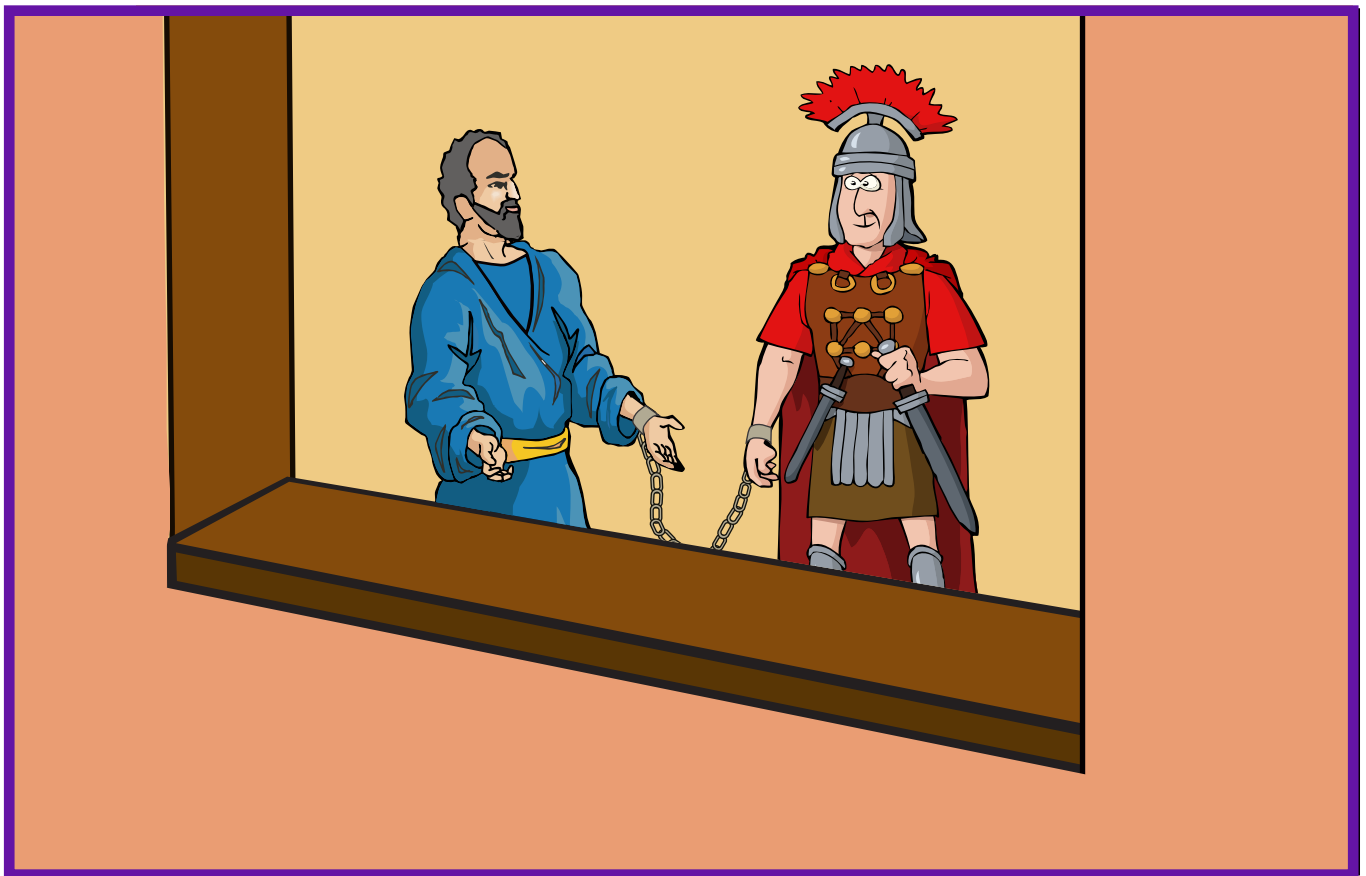
And that's exactly how several groups of Christians first met Paul—they walked. They had probably heard someone from the church in Rome read the letter Paul had written to the church members, so they knew Paul was one of the great men of their time—a true spiritual thinker and healer. When they heard he was coming to Rome, they couldn't wait for him to arrive, so they walked toward him for four hours from Rome to Three Taverns. How could they be sure he would come that way? Because the Appian Way was the only main road from the coastline to the city.



What a treat it must have been for Paul to see such eager, happy faces in Three Taverns! Suddenly, he didn't feel alone any more. He thanked God and took courage. He had asked to appear before Caesar, and he was getting closer to his goal.



When Paul reached Rome, he was still a prisoner. But he was not locked up in the common jail. Instead, he rented a tenement—a tiny and inexpensive apartment—and lived there in handcuffs under house arrest. In those days, the monthly rent for an upper floor apartment (less expensive than a first-floor apartment) was equal to two months' pay for a common man. Paul's friends in churches he started used to send him money so he didn't have to work in tent-makers shops anymore to pay his rent.



Any soldier who guarded Paul would lose his life if something bad happened. So at all times, Paul's right wrist was chained to the soldier's left wrist. The soldiers of the Guard changed places regularly, and that's one way that Paul spread the word of God to so many people. He talked to each of the guards individually, and he often spoke to groups of them. The only time he felt confined was at the beginning or ending of a sermon when he would raise his arms—and one of them was chained to a soldier!

Soon Paul became the talk of Rome, and many people came to see and hear him in person. We've seen how Paul preaches—wherever he goes, he looks for Jewish people. That's his first audience in every city, and Rome was no different. He preaches about Jesus being the Messiah expected by the Jews.



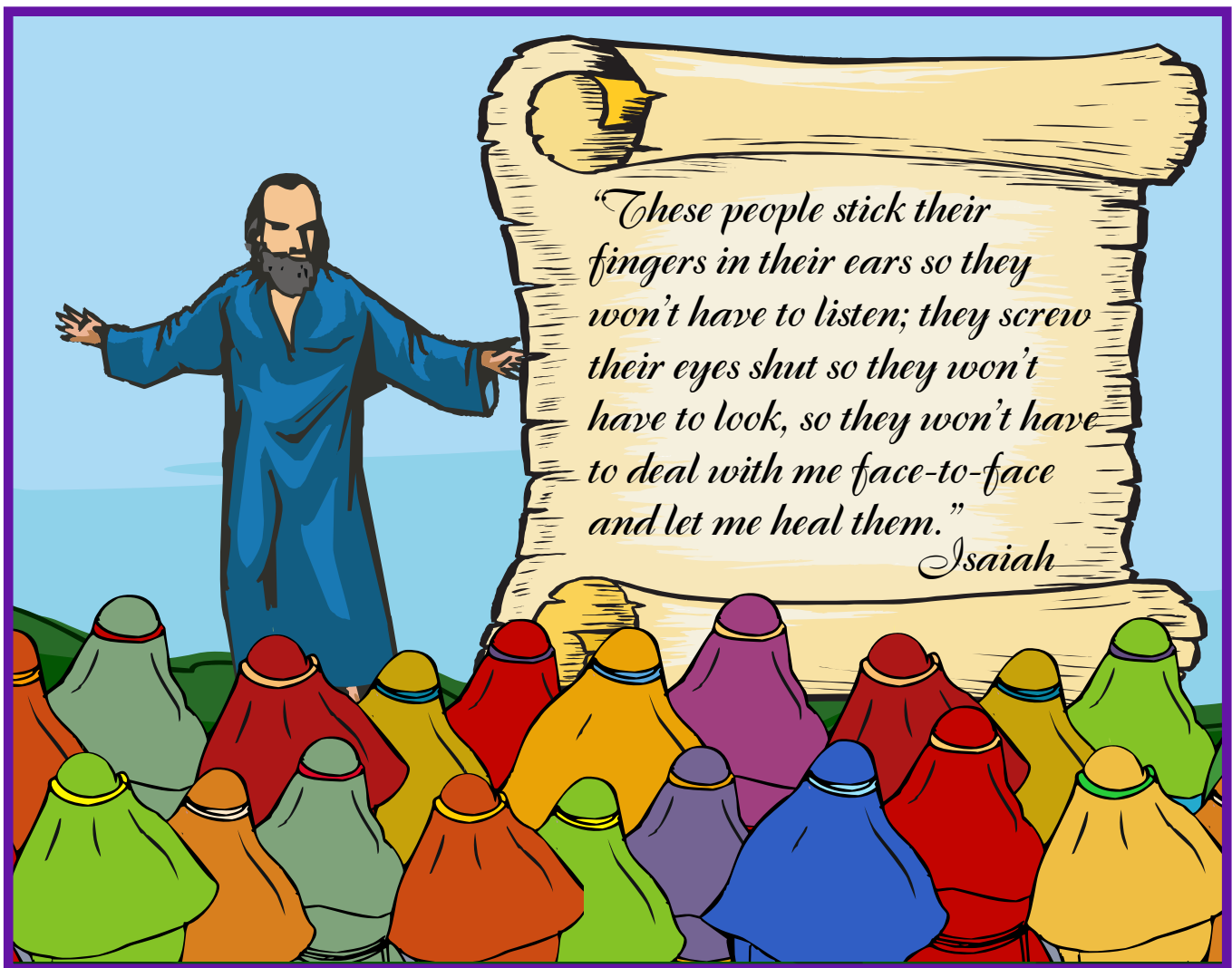
In Paul's day, there were about 20,000 Jews, and for 30 years, they tried very hard to stop Paul from preaching. Now that he was settled in Rome, Paul called the rulers of the synagogue and other Jewish leaders to his apartment to tell them why he had been arrested and imprisoned, and why he was insisting on seeing the Emperor, Caesar.

He explained that the Jews in Jerusalem arrested and imprisoned him for false reasons and that he was taken into custody by the Romans. Paul wanted to make it clear that he was on the side of Israel, not against her. He assured his guests that he had done absolutely nothing against Jewish laws or Jewish customs. In fact, the Roman court in Caesarea found Paul innocent; he was to be set free. But the Jews objected so fiercely that Paul was forced to appeal to Caesar for pardon.



The Jewish leaders in Rome paid little attention to Christians. But that didn't bother Paul or stop him from preaching. While the Jews kept their distance from the royal palace, Paul was unafraid to speak boldly.

Paul chose a day for the Jews to come for a visit, and he urged them to bring their friends. Then, he talked to the group all day long! He told them about Jesus and how Moses and the prophets had foretold the coming of a Messiah. Some believed. Others didn't believe a single word.



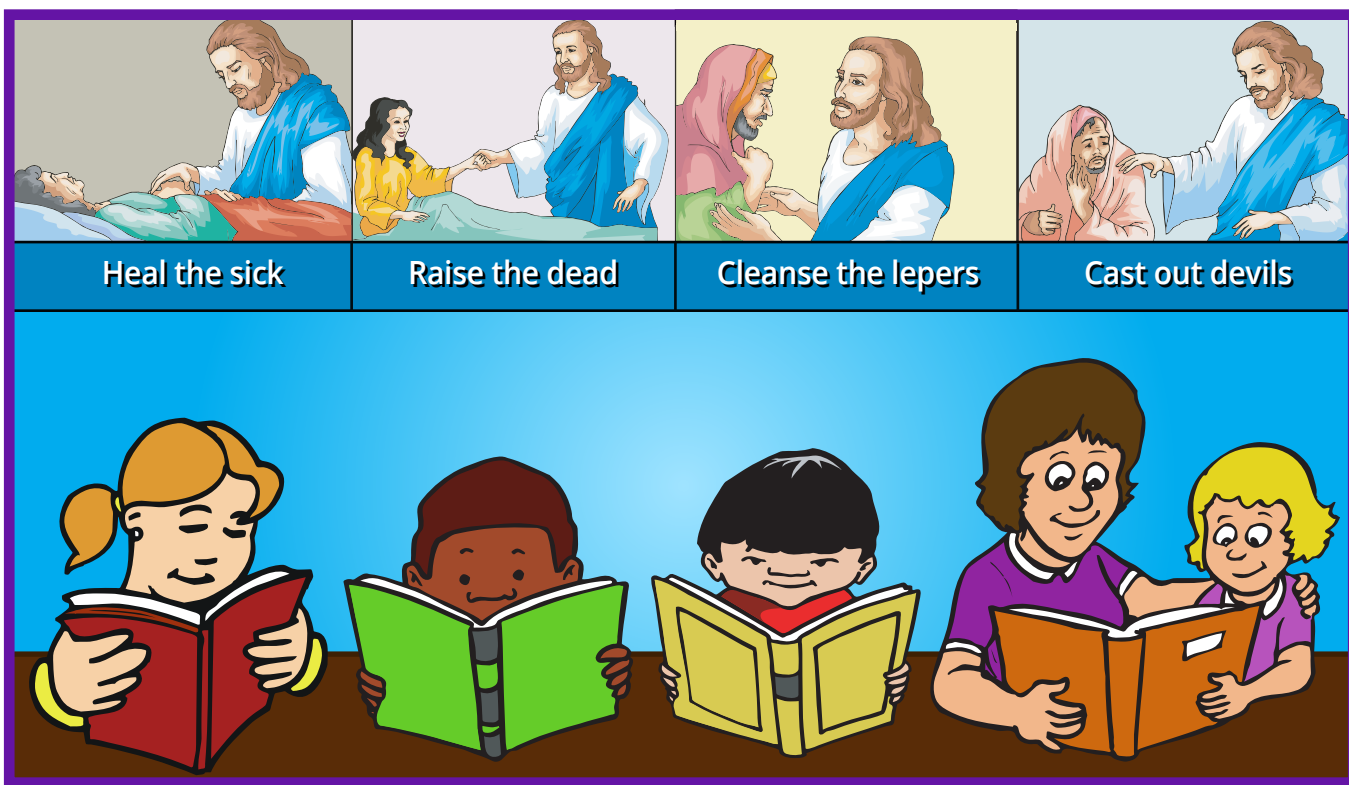
Paul then quoted Isaiah, a famous prophet they all knew: "These people stick their fingers in their ears so they won't have to listen; they screw their eyes shut so they won't have to look, so they won't have to deal with me face-to-face and let me heal them." In spite of these bold words, most of the Jews remained stubbornly against the Word. But Paul said that the non-Jewish, the Gentiles, the outsiders would receive it with open arms. And that's exactly what happened.



The Christian church marched from East to West, first among the Jews, whose center was in Jerusalem. Finally, its banner was seen waving over imperial Rome, the center of the world. There was even a hint of a Christian group in the royal palace: "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household" (Phil 4:22).

There is no record of Paul speaking before the Emperor. But he spoke to Gentiles throughout Asia, Greece, and Rome (Italy). And you and I have followed him as he spread the news about Christ Jesus.

No one is sure about the end of Paul's life. Scholars think he was in Rome for two years. It is rumored that he could have gone to Spain and then back to Rome, where he was likely executed, perhaps outside the city. Perhaps he was buried along the Ostian Way. (We will travel that ancient road today on our way to the airport.)



The letter, II Timothy, has Paul telling his friends, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (II Tim 4:7). Paul certainly fought a good fight and kept the faith!

Now, it's our job to keep up the good fight—to keep the faith. And one of the best ways to do that is to know our Bible. The Bible stories and characters are our role models. They teach us how to honor Jesus' instruction, "Go and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:37). Jesus also commands: "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8).



As we head home, we can think about the impact Paul has had on the world. And we can think about how we want to live a Christian life, which we can do at home, at school, or wherever we are.

It's been so much fun to travel with you these past five summers! You can go back over our journey any time you like by visiting the BibleWise website and clicking on any of the five summer tours. Invite your family and friends to join you!

We hope you enjoyed our travels through the Holy Lands!