

From Acts 28: THE UNITIES OF MEANING  
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From Acts 28: THE UNITIES OF MEANING  
PART 1: THE STRUCTURE OF UNITIES

#1. This wonderful chapter is replete with the structure of unities of meaning. If this is so, then perhaps we should consider aligning our understanding with the fact of this structure.

#2. *A unity of meaning has 3 parts*

- There is a mind, (1) brimming with ideas, humanly conceived or divinely so.
- There is (3) something or someone else to be linked to or unified with that mind. And
- Then, there is the (2) link itself or the bridge between them, creating the complete unity of meaning. The link is composed of words, that are spoken, thought or written. The object of this structure is to arrive at some kind of meaning.

#3. The most important unity of meaning of all, is presented in this text: *(1)The eternal purpose of God --> (2)is linked by revelation --> (3)to the incidentals of life.* "...and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening" v.23.

#4. Paul and others had suffered greatly, in service to the eternal purpose of God: human salvation. The great storm at sea and consequent shipwreck is an example v.1-10.

#5. It is difficult for people in dangerous and arduous circumstances to see the events of their lives as *incidentals*. But they are.

#6. Believers take from this, that the events of their lives have final meaning only in a unity with the purpose of God.

#7. Therefore, the incidentals of life have a meaning, but they are not the meaning of life. That explains why we are willing to suffer.

#8. We cannot elevate the incidentals of our lives above the purpose of God.

From Acts 28: THE UNITIES OF MEANING  
PART 2: THE CLASH OF UNITIES OF MEANING v.3-6

#1. While on Malta, a venomous snake struck the apostle. Witnessing this apparent tragedy "the natives" deployed their cultural *unity of meaning*.

(1)Their minds --> (3)connected the following words --> (2)on to Paul's experience:  
"Undoubtedly this man is a murderer, and though he has been saved from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live" v.4. Undoubtedly.

#2. They expected the usual causal chain to claim the victim's life. "...they were expecting that he was about to swell up or suddenly fall down dead" v6.

#3. This was no meaningless "natural event" to them. But Paul "shook the creature off", without adverse effect v5.

#4. Observers "waited a long time" to be certain of its meaning. Nothing happened. So they brought out another unity of meaning: "he was a god".

#5. Not one of those man based unities captured the true meaning of that particular human situation. Understanding required a very different and revealed unity of meaning.

#6. The (1)purpose of the Almighty --> (3)was linked --> (2)to that man in that personal event. And so, he lived. This is our world, where *unities of meaning exist in a state of clash and contradiction*.

#7. This means that unities of meaning necessarily compete. Inherently divisive, the *eternal unity of meaning* must be proclaimed and defended.

#8. Believers defend *the biblical unity of meaning* for unborn children, human sexuality, marriage, human origins, creation, the environment, technology, religion and other things.

#9. A clash of "values" is an understatement.

#### From Acts 28: THE UNITIES OF MEANING PART 3: COHERENCE

#1. The issue is one of coherence; a very important factor to human beings. The question is this: In the vicissitudes of life can we trust that the *biblical unity of meaning* will generate the state of supernatural coherence between God --> and our present circumstances and conditions?

#2. The problem: If the revealed unity of meaning does not manifest such coherence, then, one cannot trust in it. Belief in such biblical coherence has always been trouble for many in the churches. It was almost ever present in ancient Israel. Lack of trust in supernatural coherence has gone by more than one name. Today, it is called *progressivism*.

#3. The text makes the case for faith in supernatural coherence.

- The storm at sea recorded in chapter 27 and 28 demonstrated a revealed unity of meaning. The Almighty came to bear upon meteorology and an ocean. A violent storm resulted. Supernatural coherence.
- The apostle, struck by a viper, shakes off "the creature" and continues on v.3-6. The Lord came to bear on human physiology and it responded. Supernatural coherence.
- Diseases had troubled many on Malta. God healed them all. Supernatural coherence v.7-9. •Heaven arranged Paul's movements toward Rome and the politics thereafter v.11-25, 28-31.

#4. This is not just ancient history. Here is the expression of the Lord's relation to time and men in it.

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PART 4: THE TRIALS OF SUPERNATURAL COHERENCE

#1. *The revealed unity of meaning* puts the case for *supernatural coherence* between all spiritual (invisible) force --> and the material order. Acts 27:14-28:10 unveils to the mind the anti-natural coherence between *the will of God* --> and *the Mediterranean Sea*.

#2. But then, one must live within and live through that supernatural coherence. This situation puts nontrivial stress on everything and everybody; believer and unbeliever.

#3. Many days of distress and concern unfolded at sea during that terrible storm. It had its effect on body, soul and mind.

#4. In the scope of supernatural coherence the apostle was struck by a venomous serpent v.3-5. One must be strong and resolute of faith. This coherence is not child's play.

#5. The Island of Malta was not just a happy coincidence; it was, rather, a chosen point of supernatural coherence. The sickness of the father of Publius should not be comprehended as a mere convenient moment for healing and its service to the gospel. From all over the island, the sick came to Paul to be healed and to hear its explanation v.8-10. Human physicality was overtaken by the force of coherence.

#6. Supernatural coherence arranged for the providential development of the preacher's arrival in Rome v.11-14.

#7. And now, today, we confront the same tidal wave of human experience. This text generalizes to a revealed and remarkable conception, which is this: The God of the day, the God of the night, the God of the Mediterranean Sea expresses His will to generate a *unity of meaning between His Word* --> and *our particular tidal wave of human experience*.

#8. How then, should we live? Our hearts, minds, our perception must catch up to revealed truth. This place, down here, where we stand up to our necks in trouble is not just the natural order. It is the weak half of a revealed unity of meaning! The Almighty speaks and things shall be so!

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PART 5: THE ETERNAL UNITY OF MEANING and THE "MODERN WORLD"

#1. The Bible, everywhere, stipulates that all men live within a supernatural field of meaning. That proposition has always been hotly disputed in general. It is, altogether unacceptable to human ambition.

#2. The unbelieving world contends that there is no God and therefore there can be no fixed meaning. The universe and all that goes with it, is meaningless. Or, in lesser terms, if there is any sense of meaning it is *socially constructed*. (The net effect is identical.)

#3. Children in the present era are formally taught that meaning is a social construct. There is no knowable, absolute meaning that determines the thought, speech and behavior of human beings in time. Morality, personal responsibility, right and wrong are social constructs. *Absolutes are displaced by "values"*.

#4. This is an ancient problem: First, the cognitive totality of the word of God is discredited v.26. There is a reason for this. "For the heart of this people has become dull, and with their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes" v.27. Meaning is socially constructed. Those people did not come to believe that; they chose to believe that.

#5. All this redirects the human future; "Otherwise they might see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and return, and I would heal them" v.27.

#6. The revealed universe of meaning is the way back for errant men, societies and cultures. Some, even among believers, have subscribed to the heresy that meaning is socially constructed. If believers do not represent the revealed unity of meaning, they represent nothing at all.