

Lord of lords -- & lands & lakes

And they were fearful and amazed, saying to one another, "Who then is this that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?" Luke 8:25

Study 27a: PAUL SETS SAIL FOR ROME (27:1-12)

27:1-2 Who accompany Paul on the journey to Rome? (19:29; 20:4)

(1) We, including the historian, the first occurrence of this form of speech since the appearance of Paul and his companions before the presbytery at Jerusalem ... Paul's arrest no doubt separated these companions from him, at least until Felix ordered that his friends should have access to him. **J.A. Alexander** *The Acts of the Apostles* p.433

27:3-12 What is revealed about the author by the geographical and nautical detail of this account?

[right – St Paul's statue, St Paul's Bay, Malta]



27:9 The allusion to the 'fast' should not be overlooked

(2) *The Fast* was that of the great Day of Atonement. Its use by S. Luke as a mark of time is striking. It is hardly likely that Christians would have retained the Jewish system of fast and festival simply as marks of time without any other observance. Besides, we should rather have expected mention of the Feast of Tabernacles which occurred five days after the Day of Atonement and was reckoned by the Jews to close the sailing season. S. Luke's expression then may indicate a date which fell between the Fast and the Feast. But a very natural explanation would be that S. Paul's company did fast at Fair Havens and that S. Luke recollects the circumstance. If this was the case, we have another sign of S. Paul's normal observance of the Law, ... **R.B. Rackham** *The Acts of the Apostles* p.483

Study 27b: EURAQUILO – THE STORM (27:13-26)

27:13-20 What mistake has precipitated this impending catastrophe?

(3) It is not easy to imagine a more erroneous translation than that of our [AV]: 'Fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven' (ver.17). It is in fact equivalent to saying that, fearing a certain danger, they deprived themselves of the only means of avoiding it. It is not by striking mast or sail that such dangers are to be avoided. **James Smith** *The Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul* pp. 109f

27:21-26 Discern the pattern in Paul's references to his Divine Helper (14:15-17; 17:23-31)

(4) We found that the water having floated all our movables in the hold, all the casks of provisions had been beaten in pieces by the violent motion of the ship. On the other hand, our live stock, such as pigs, sheep, and poultry, had been washed overboard in the storm; in effect, all the provisions we saved ... would have subsisted us but a week, ... **John Newton** *Omicron's Letters* Letter VII

Study 27c: SHIPWRECK & SALVATION (27:27-44)

27:27-36 What accounts for Paul's sudden authority?

(5) Earlier, at Fair Havens, he had warned them that loss of life, as well as of the ship and cargo, would be the result of their setting sail from that port. But on that occasion he spoke simply as an experienced traveller of sound judgment. This was not the first time that he had known the destructive power of a storm at sea; he remembered another ship in which he had once sailed: it had come to grief, and he had spent twenty-four hours in the open sea, probably supported by a spar from the wreck, until he was picked up or washed ashore (2 Cor. 11:25). There had been considerable loss of life on that occasion, we may suppose, and he feared that the same thing might happen again. But now he is confident that, while the ship is doomed, no life will be lost. No amount of experience or shrewd calculation could have given him this assurance; he ascribes his new confidence to a supernatural revelation made to him during the past night by an angel of God. Not only would he himself survive to stand

before the emperor; the lives of his shipmates were also to be spared for his sake. The world has no idea how much it owes, in the mercy of God, to the presence in it of righteous men. **F.F. Bruce** *Acts* p.512

(6) Finally, the reason why the historian dwells at such length on the voyage lies mainly in vv.21-26 and 33-38. In the voyage he pictures Paul on a higher plane than common men, advising more skilfully than the skilled mariners, maintaining hope and courage when all were in despair, and breathing his hope and courage into others, playing the part of a true Roman in a Roman ship, looked up to even by the centurion, and in his single self the saviour of the lives of all. But the interpolation-theory would cut out the centre of the picture. There remains no reason to reject vv.21-26 which I can discover, except that it introduces the superhuman element. That is an argument to which I have no reply. It is quite a tenable position in the present stage of science and knowledge to maintain that every narrative which contains elements of the marvellous must be an unhistorical and untrustworthy narrative. But let us have the plain and

honest reasons; those who defend that perfectly fair position should not try to throw in front of it as outworks flimsy and uncritical reasons, which cannot satisfy for a moment any one that has not his mind made up beforehand on that fundamental premise. But the superhuman element is inextricably involved in this book: you cannot cut it out by any critical process that will bear scrutiny. You must accept all or leave all. **W.M. Ramsay** *St Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen* p.339

27:37-44 Why the stress on the entire salvation of the passengers?

(7) The supernatural promise made to Paul in their darkest hour had been fulfilled to the letter: the ship and cargo were lost, but every life on board was saved. **F.F. Bruce** *op. cit.*, p.519

(8) *salvation* ... and cognate words occur altogether 7 times: *hope to be saved, ye cannot be saved, to be completely-saved, (RV escape)*. While the contrary fate is no less richly depicted -- *injury, loss, throwing away* (22), *perish, kill, and to be cast away*. The history, then, is a parable of the great salvation, by which man is brought through death to life. **R.B. Rackham** *op. cit.*, p.478

(9) It is interesting to learn that seven years later (A.D. 64), the same sea was the scene of the shipwreck of Josephus the Jewish historian, likewise on his way to Rome. His ship did actually founder and, after a night in the deep, he with 80 others -- the sole survivors out of a total of 600 -- was picked up by a ship of Cyrene. **R.B. Rackham** *op. cit.*, p.487

More than meets the eye in voyage narrative?

(10) Human life has often been compared to a voyage across a stormy sea. It is not surprising, therefore, that many readers and expositors have found an allegory of the soul's experience in Acts 27. Some have even detected in it a figurative prediction of the course of church history! This particular allegorization becomes specially interesting at the end of the story, when the ship is broken up and the passengers and crew have to make their way ashore as best they can. Those who care for this sort of exposition may work the correspondences out for themselves, but let them beware of supposing that Luke had any such interpretation in mind when he penned his narrative. **F.F. Bruce** *op. cit.*, p.498

(11) Before Paul gets to Rome he is on three different ships. Nautical terms and phrases abound. The ocean's waves, the wind's power, the roar of the breakers, sound in our ears. Has this particular feature of the section any significance? It is in the book of the rejection of Jesus, the gospel according to Matthew, in the very opening of it, that we read the quotation from Esias: "The land of Zabulon and the land of Nephtalim by the way of the sea ... Galilee of the Gentiles. The people which sat in darkness saw great light." The way of the sea was the way in which the light came to Galilee of the Gentiles. It was a prophecy reaching much wider. The Jews were not sailors. The Gentiles inhabited the sea shores and the isles. Luke notices every one they touch. The light is going again "by the way of the sea." It has set out to kindle a beacon flame on every cape and headland, on every isle and continent. And that our story confines us so strictly to the sea is a token of all this. The gospel has at last reached that highway that leads out to all the world in all centuries. Christ is Lord of the sea. The story of his walking upon the water comes to mind here. It must have come the mind of Paul and Luke. They would remember its context (Mark vi. 30) ... And Jesus now, still dealing with them as missionaries, drives them to the sea and shows them by his coming to them in the storm how he will be with them to the ends of the earth. The miracle of walking on the water was more than an act of power and mercy. It was replete with prophecy. It is re-enacted in the section before us. ... The islands wait for God's law. They will receive it and shelter it, and the blast of spiritual opposition emanating from Satan cannot hinder it. **J.M. Stifler** *The Acts of the Apostles* pp.263-266

(12) In Babylonian mythology, before the earth was created there had existed chaos, a waste of waters, the realm of disorder and confusion. From this the earth or kingdom of order had been won, and the existing ocean was a remnant of the original waste, and therefore it was the symbol and the sphere of evil both physical and spiritual. These ideas we find reflected in the OT. There was the primeval chaos when 'darkness was upon the face of the deep and the wind of God was brooding upon the face of the waters.' In prophecy and apocalypse the raging waves were the symbol, as of confusion in general, so of the restless and tumultuous surging of the nations. The passage of the Red Sea made the sea the established type of the greatest peril through which man must pass on his way to the promised land, -- the peril of death. Lastly, as the home of evil, the ocean represented the pit: it was the abyss, and the swallowing up of shipwrecked men in its cruel billows was the fittest picture of man's going down into the deep. **R.B. Rackham** *op. cit.*, p.475

(13) Besides the personal element, there is the inner spiritual meaning. There is one scene in the OT of which this is the most obvious counterpart -- the shipwreck of Jonah. If S. Paul in some respects resembled Jeremiah, the parallel between the NT prophet and Jonah is still more striking, -- all the more so because of the equally obvious contrast in character. Jonah is the prophet in the OT who more than any other might, like S. Paul, be called 'the prophet of the Gentiles.' Jonah indeed received his mission in a very different way: he fled from the presence of the Lord and took ship for Tarshish. But in their voyages the experience of the prophets coincided. Both suffered shipwreck; and although Jonah, unlike S. Paul, brought the storm upon his vessel, yet in each case the prophet won the salvation of his company, Jonah by the sacrifice of himself. Finally both alike experienced deliverance, Jonah from the deep, Paul from the peril of death; and after this they fulfil their respective missions to the great cities of Nineveh and Rome. **R.B. Rackham** *op. cit.*, p.477

Next Study: (Acts 28) ***The Ends of the Earth***

