

**Text:** Acts 21.1-9

**Proposition:** As with all Scripture, Luke's travelogues have the value of strengthening your faith in the true Gospel.

Today we will take a giant leap forward by covering 9 verses! (I plan to come back and hit a couple of highlights, so we will get back to our snail's pace soon.)

Our passage today is a very curious one. It is mostly "travelogue." Luke takes us stop by stop along Paul's journey from Miletus to Caesarea Maritima, on the coast of Palestine.

The question is... why? Why does he carefully note all these travel details? Why doesn't he tell us more about the stops along the way?

Even more importantly, why did God see fit to include this bit in the inspired Scriptures?

As we answer these questions, we will gain some insight into what God is doing with the whole book of Acts, establishing the truth and reliability of the gospel we believe.

Read Ac 21.1-9

**Proposition:** As with all Scripture, Luke's travelogues have the value of strengthening your faith in the true Gospel.

## I. Plotting the course of Paul's travels

A. To begin, we have Paul taking leave of the elders of Ephesus in Miletus (1)

1. Verse 1 gives us three days of sailing: first Miletus to Cos

a. About a 40 mile trip

b. Cos was the location of a medical school founded by Hypocrates

c. Also had a large Jewish community, mentioned by Josephus in his *Antiquities*

2. Then Cos to Rhodes

a. Journey of 90 miles

b. Rhodes, in ancient times, was home to one of the seven wonders of the world: a giant statue of Apollo

"The Colossus of Rhodes"

- c. Rhodes had a trading port and an education center
  - d. Apollonius Molon, “The mentor of Cicero and Caesar”<sup>1</sup> taught there
3. Then Rhodes to Patara
- a. Just over 60 miles from Rhodes
  - b. “site of a famous oracle of Apollo”<sup>2</sup>
  - c. Formerly capital of Lycia, now seat of Roman governor<sup>3</sup>
- B. In Patara, Paul sought and found a sea-faring ship that would take a more direct route (2)
1. The earlier ship was smaller, a coastal vessel, making short hops each day
  2. A larger ship could venture further out to sea with fewer stops
  3. Phoenicia is just above Israel on the coast (modern Lebanon)
- C. From Patara, the new vessel took them all the way to Tyre (3)
- “This v. features a number of nautical terms that are difficult to tr.”<sup>4</sup>
1. This leg of the journey took about five days, more than 400 miles
  2. They sighted Cyprus, but did not stop there
  3. Tyre 100 miles north of Jerus, “a center for crafts, purple production, and trade”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 636.

<sup>2</sup> Bock, 636.

<sup>3</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of the Acts*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 397–98.

<sup>4</sup> L. Scott Kellum, *Acts*, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger and Robert W. Yarbrough, Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2020), 241.

<sup>5</sup> Bock, *Acts*, 636.

- D. They stay in Tyre for one week, spending some time with the disciples there (4-6)
1. We will look at this passage this afternoon, but a few comments here
  2. Church likely founded following the dispersal after Paul's persecution program

Ac 11.19 ¶ So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone.

3. No record of Paul having ever been here before, but clearly, he is loved and appreciated (more this afternoon)
- E. They sail on to Ptolemais (as then known)
1. In ancient times, this was called Acco, in Crusader times Acre, and now again is Acco
  2. Eighty miles north of Jerus, 32 miles north of Caesarea
  3. Named Ptolemais after one of the Gk Pharaohs, rulers of Egypt after collapse of Gk empire
  4. Paul may have travelled by foot from here to Caesarea, not clear
- F. Caesarea Maritima
1. Named in honor of Augustus, an artificial harbour built by Herod the Great
  2. The home of Philip the evangelist, last seen in Acts 8, of him more in a later message

This gives us the step-by-step account of Paul's travels.

Let me raise our opening questions again:

- Why does Luke carefully note all these travel details? Why doesn't he tell us more about the stops along the way?
- Even more importantly, why did God see fit to include this bit in the inspired Scriptures?

Next, we will look at some *proposed* answers...

## II. Proposing the meaning of Paul's travels

### A. Giving the stamp of authenticity

1. The travelogues are extremely accurate to the situation of the Roman Empire
2. As such, they bolster Luke's credibility as a reporter: he isn't making things up
3. They give a "real world" feel to the rest of the book of Acts

This tends to give support to the related doctrines of inspiration and inerrancy. (not proof!)

### B. Communicate gospel progress

1. There is a "domino effect" as Paul progresses from place to place
2. In this particular record, Paul is "retracing" his steps to Jerusalem
3. He finds Christians in every place

There is a quote in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, where C. S. Lewis has Mr. Beaver say, "They say Aslan is on the move..."

This is meant to say that Aslan (who represents Christ) is at work, bringing about a redemption of the imaginary world Lewis created.

What we see in the book of Acts, though Jesus has gone from the world, our Lord Christ *is* on the move, gathering a people for his name.

### C. Create a missionary vision

1. Some of the places Luke mentions don't have a mention of a Christian community
2. This represents potential ... are there no Christians in Rhodes yet?  
Let's go...

The record of real places in the book of Acts conjures up real people with real spiritual need. They are lost and need a Saviour.

Who will go?

#### D. Unify the narrative of Acts (combining “we” and “they”)

1. We’ve discussed the “we” sections of Acts before
2. These are the passages where Luke appears to be a part of the company, an eyewitness
3. Luke isn’t a disinterested observer, and his knowledge of the “they” sections imply his involvement with the whole story

Example: he calls Philip, “the evangelist”

He identifies Philip as “one of the seven” (*i.e.* of Acts 6)

“Now, after a lapse of some twenty years, we find him [Philip] at Caesarea still. It is noteworthy that we left him there in the regular third-person narrative of Acts, whereas we find him now in the same city in the course of a ‘we’ section. This is an incidental confirmation of the integrity of the ‘we’ sections with the main narrative of Acts, as is also the reference to ‘the seven.’”<sup>6</sup>

#### E. Parallel the evangelistic record with the record of the evangel (Paul compared to Jesus)

1. “Both stories involve a plot by the Jews and handing over to the Gentiles.
2. “There were triple predictions along the way of suffering in Jerusalem in both cases.
3. “Both Jesus and Paul steadfastly resolved to go there despite opposition, and both resigned themselves to God’s will.

“Luke probably told his story as he did to help the reader appreciate the similarities between Jesus and Paul to authenticate Paul’s ministry.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Bruce, *Acts*, 400.

<sup>7</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Ac 20.37.

In a sense, we are at the end of the “evangelistic” section of Acts. We have no more record of Paul’s itinerant ministry preaching the gospels.

The book climaxes in the final struggle for dominance between unbelieving Judaism and the New Testament in Jesus Christ.

It ends with the gospel ascendant and the unbelieving Jews drifting away.

### III. Proving the faith of Paul’s “fellow-travelers” (which we are)

A. As with all curious Bible records, these records attract critics

1. Already mentioned the critics of “we” vs. “they”
2. Others criticize Luke for trying to make his miraculous stories “seem real” with “real-world travelogues”

It seems that any odd bit that seems “out of place” becomes ground for attack. If these sections weren’t in Acts, unbelievers would say Acts has no authenticity, it is just made up.

B. Reasonable explanations bring the faith of believers through the test

1. One principle of interpretation I’ve taught over the last few years:
  - a. We don’t have to provide a *definitive* solution to make a passage stand up against charges of inauthenticity.
  - b. All we need is a *reasonable* interpretation that *could* be true...
  - c. A reasonable interpretation removes the possibility that the passage is impossible on its face
  - d. Critics will have to find some other way to deny the record
2. When the Bible is under assault, our faith is under fire as well
  - a. Do you believe a lie?
  - b. Are we part of some ancient conspiracy?

No, what we find is a record that speaks highly of itself, and of the power of the gospel to change the world.

It changed the ancient world, it can change (and is changing) our world, too.

## Conclusion:

**Proposition:** As with all Scripture, Luke's travelogues have the value of strengthening your faith in the true Gospel.