

By Land or by Sea: Paul's Preferred Mode of Travel in the Acts of the Apostles

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Abstract

By my calculations, the apostle Paul travelled over 12,000 kilometres by land and over 8,000 kilometres by sea just on the journeys that he made in the latter half of his life that happen to be recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. The modern reader cannot help but be astonished by these long distances. But what would have astonished an ancient Greek or Roman reader was not the sum total of the distances of Paul's journeys but rather the ratio of land to sea travel. Most ancients who lived, like Paul, along the coast of the Eastern Mediterranean, 'like frogs around a pond' as Plato quips (*Phaed.* 109b), preferred to take the much easier, faster, and more efficient routes by sea, and the ratio of their land to sea travel would have been the reverse of Paul's. Paul is depicted in the Acts of the Apostles as someone who shunned sea travel whenever possible and preferred to travel by foot rather than by ship in almost every instance in which this option was open to him.

1. Introduction

Ancient travellers throughout the Mediterranean world had an ambivalent attitude toward the sea. On the one hand, the sea provided an avenue for swift travel and efficient commerce throughout the Mediterranean: ships conveyed essential foods and commodities, desirable imports, and vital communications, and they offered a quick and generally safe return home for travellers abroad. In his famous 'Ode to Man' (*Ant.* 334–375), the fifth-century BCE tragedian Sophocles celebrates among the many wondrous inventions of humankind the ability to forge a path through the sea. The fourth-century BCE historian Xenophon touchingly narrates the story of 10,000 Greek mercenaries, landlocked for months as they marched through vast swathes of Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, and Armenia, being overwhelmed with joy upon finally catching a glimpse of the sea. They immediately raised the cry θάλαττα, θάλαττα ('the

sea, the sea') at the prospect of a return to their homeland that even the far-off Euxine sea offered (*Anab.* 4.7.19-27). The first-century CE novelist Chariton tells the story of the young bride Callirhoe, taken by pirates from her home in Syracuse in Sicily to Miletus in Ionia. There, she takes some consolation in living by the sea, where she can see the harbours of Miletus, separated by a mere ship's voyage from Syracuse (*Chaer.* 4.7.8), but when she is later taken far inland to Persia, she loses all hope and laments 'I, an islander, have been brought beyond the Euphrates and enclosed in the barbarian hinterlands where no sea exists. What ship sailing from Sicily can I now expect?' (*Chaer.* 5.1.6).¹

On the other hand, the sea posed frightful prospects to ancient travellers: wind and wave, storm, shipwreck, drowning, and, worst of all, being devoured by fish and ending up without a proper burial on land. The eighth-century BCE epic poet Homer relates that Odysseus, in the midst of a frightful storm, thinking that he is about to drown, laments that he will not even receive proper funeral rites (*Od.* 5.306-312). The seventh-century BCE lyric poet Archilochus, himself an islander, composed several elegies about the dangers of the sea, which rouses great panic among sailors (frag. 105) and inspires them to pray fervently to the gods for a safe homecoming (frags. 8, 106) but inevitably drowns his kinsmen and friends (frags. 9, 24) and prevents their bodies from being buried properly (frags. 9, 13). The sixth-century BCE iambic poet Hipponax uttered the following curse against a former friend who had broken an oath:

Let him drift about in the waves ... naked ... stiff from cold. And as he comes out of the brine may he be covered with much seaweed. And may he gnash his teeth like a dog while he lies helplessly on his face at the edge of the surf. (Hipponax, Frag. 115)

These sentiments about the dangers of the sea are poignantly recorded on many later epigrams inscribed on tombs, and especially on cenotaphs. The seventh book of the *Anthologia Palatina* offers several representative examples:

'Sailors, why did you bury me near the sea? This wretched tomb of a shipwrecked man should have been built far away from it. I shudder hearing the crash of the waves that destroyed me.' (*Anth. Pal.* 7.267)

'Oh that swift ships had never been built, for then we would not be mourning Sopolis, son of Dioclidēs. Now his corpse is floating somewhere on the sea, and what we pass by here is not Sopolis himself but just a name and an empty monument.' (*Anth. Pal.* 7.271)

1. All translations of Greek and Latin texts are my own.

'I announce the name of Timocles, as I look in every direction over the bitter sea, wondering where his corpse is. Alas! The fish have already eaten him. And I, this superfluous stone, bear this useless writing carved on me.'
(Anth. Pal. 7.274)

The Romans too regularly expressed this fear, along with a general disdain, of the sea. Cato the Elder was said to have expressed that one of his three regrets about his life was that he had sometimes sailed by ship where it was possible to travel by foot (Plutarch, *Cat. Maj.* 9.9). Many Roman poets speak of the sea in negative terms, not just because of the potential for shipwreck and death, but also because the sea opened up the formerly isolated and agrarian Italy to the pollution of commerce with the East: Vergil laments that even in the imminent golden age that he envisions the ancient stains of sin will still cause men to tempt the sea with ships (*Ecl.* 4); Horace composes an ode to a ship upon which his friend Vergil is about to embark, expressing his fears of disaster at sea and noting the fearlessness and audaciousness, but also the impiety and sacrilege, of those who first ventured by ship out to sea (*Carm.* 1.3); Propertius offers a prayer during a storm at sea, cursing those who first journeyed by ship out to sea, and lamenting that his corpse will be covered by a strip of sand rather than a proper gravestone (*Eleg.* 1.17).

The apostle Paul surely shared this ambivalence toward the sea. On the one hand, he sometimes used the sea as an efficient avenue for the spread of the gospel throughout the Eastern Mediterranean on his journeys abroad, and he especially used the sea to achieve quick and safe returns from these journeys. When Paul wished to make a speedy journey to Jerusalem in order to arrive there by the festival of Pentecost, he was able to sail from Miletus in Asia Minor to Tyre in Phoenicia in fairly short order (Acts 21:1-8). This journey during the late spring, even on a slow merchant ship, would have covered the 1,200 kilometres in about nine days of actual travel time. The same journey by foot, even on a fairly good system of Roman roads and even at a fairly fast pace of 30 kilometres a day, would have covered the 1,500 kilometres in about fifty days of actual travel time. By choosing to travel by ship Paul saved forty-one days of travel time and was presumably able to arrive in Jerusalem before Pentecost. In fact, his leisurely stays in port cities as he neared the end of his journey – seven days in Tyre, several days in Caesarea Maritima – appear to have been calculated to deliver him to Jerusalem precisely at Pentecost.

The disparity between the time required for sea and land travel was even greater on other routes commonly traversed throughout antiquity that would have been familiar to Paul. A sea voyage from Corinth to Ephesus took about two and half days, and the return voyage about three days; it would have taken

forty-nine days to make the journey by land. A sea voyage from Myra, on the southern coast of Asia Minor, to Caesarea Maritima took about three and a half days, and the return voyage, against the prevailing winds, about seven days; it would have taken fifty-three days to make the journey by land. A sea voyage from Rome to Alexandria took about fourteen days, and the return voyage, against the prevailing winds, about twenty-three days; it would have taken almost one hundred and fifty days to make the journey by land. In sum, even with the extra time required for loading and unloading, embarking and disembarking, stops in ports of call, and possible adverse wind conditions or bad weather, voyaging by ship was not uncommonly ten or more times faster than journeying by land.

Nonetheless, it appears that Paul preferred to travel by land whenever that option was open to him. He was wary, and perhaps even fearful, of the sea. In his letters he never speaks in positive terms about anything having to do with the sea. He rarely includes nautical terms or themes: even when he describes journeys that would have been made by sea, he uses generic terms that are more suitable for describing travel by land. In his letter to the Romans, for example, while envisioning the travels he has planned from Corinth to Jerusalem, from Jerusalem to Rome, and from Rome to Spain, all of which would have been made by ship, Paul does not mention anything having to do with sea travel (Rom 15:22-29). When Paul does use nautical terms or themes, they occur in a negative context. In a letter to the Corinthians he mentions, among the many travails he has endured throughout his life, the dangers he has endured at sea, highlighting three shipwrecks that he has suffered, as well as a night and day spent adrift on the open sea (2 Cor 11:23-27). In the narrative of Paul's voyages in the Acts of the Apostles, too, Paul's aversion to the sea is a fairly constant, albeit more subtle, leitmotif: Paul is on several occasions described inexplicably choosing to travel by land when a voyage by sea would have been the easier, faster, and more efficient mode of travel.²

2. I use the terms 'by land' and 'by foot' interchangeably to mean 'walking'. Some may suppose that Paul used various other modes of transport by land, but on only one occasion, when under the constraint of Roman officials, is Paul recorded to have travelled by mount (Acts 23:23-24,31-32). Horseback riding was not a normal means of long-distance travel, except by members of the official postal service and by military personnel in the Roman cavalry. Travelling on a cart drawn by oxen or a wagon drawn by mules would have been slower than walking, and the cost of borrowing the animals and equipment, as well as of maintaining them along the route, would have been substantial. Travelling by a more rapid horse-drawn carriage would have been very expensive indeed, especially if it required several carriages for Paul's companions and baggage. For a description of various modes of travel by road during the Roman period,

2. Paul's attitude toward the sea in his letters

In spite of the fact that Paul lived his entire life near the sea and regularly travelled long distances by ship – almost 9,000 kilometres just in the voyages narrated in Acts – he very rarely uses nautical terms in his own letters. In contrast to Luke's accounts of Paul's voyages in Acts, which seem to relish using all manner of nautical terms when describing Paul's many voyages, Paul himself, in his own letters, never uses the common verb πλέω ('sail') or any of its many compounds found in Acts to describe his voyages: ἀποπλέω, ἐκπλέω, παραπλέω, διαπλέω, ὑποπλέω, βραδυπλοέω. Nor does Paul use any of the following nautical terms that are found elsewhere throughout the New Testament: πλοῦς ('sea voyage'), πλοῖον ('ship'), πλοιάριον ('small ship'), ναῦς ('ship'), σκάφη ('boat'), ναύτης ('sailor'), ναύκληρος ('captain'), πέλαγος ('sea'), νῆσος ('island'), νησίον ('little island'), λιμὴν ('harbour'), κολυμβάω ('swim'), χειμῶν ('storm'), χειμάζομαι ('be storm-tossed'), εὐθυδρομέω ('sail a straight course'), κλύδων ('rough water'), ἀνάγω and κατάγω in the middle or passive voice meaning 'embark' and 'disembark'. Even when Paul describes travel that would have required voyages by sea – Troas to Macedonia, Ephesus to Corinth, Corinth to Ephesus, Corinth to Rome, Corinth to Jerusalem, Jerusalem to Rome, Rome to Philippi, Rome to Colossae, Rome to Spain – he uses generic words for transportation that are more appropriate of travel by land: (ἀπ/ἐξ)ἔρχομαι ('go/come'), (δια)πορεύομαι ('proceed'), and (προ/ἀνα)πέμπω/πέμπομαι ('send/be sent') (e.g. Rom 1:10,13; 15:22-25,28-29,32; 1 Cor 4:19; 16:10-12; 2 Cor 1:15-16; 2:13; Phil 1:27; 2:19,23,24,25,28; Phlm 12). Also, it is notable that when Paul uses words metaphorically that describe the activity of travel on a road or pathway, it is always in a positive context. He refers to his own life in Christ as a ὁδός ('path') (1 Cor 4:17). He declares that he is showing to the Corinthians a more excellent ὁδός (1 Cor 12:31). He uses the verb form εὐοδοῦμαι ('be led along a good path/road') metaphorically to mean 'fare well, prosper, succeed' (Rom 1:10; 1 Cor 16:2).

On the rare occasion that Paul does use nautical terms, he uses them in a very negative context. Most notoriously, among the many travails that Paul boasts to have suffered in the service of Christ (2 Cor 11:23-27) – floggings,

see C. A. J. Skeel, *Travel in the First Century after Christ: With Special Reference to Asia Minor* (Cambridge University Press, 1901), 56–66, L. Casson, *Travel in the Ancient World* (Hakkert, 1974), 176–196, and C. Reynier, *Saint Paul sur les routes du monde romain: Infrastructures, logistique, itinéraires* (Cerf-Médiaspaul, 2009), 47–51, 59–69. On the unlikelihood of Paul travelling by mount on his journeys, see B. M. Rapske, 'Acts, Travel and Shipwreck', in *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting: Graeco-Roman Setting*, ed. D. W. J. Gill and C. Gempf (Eerdmans, 1994), 6–14.

lashings, beatings, stoning, imprisonment, sleeplessness, hunger, thirst, cold, nakedness – he includes the dangers that he has endured by sea (κινδύνους ἐν θαλάσση),³ highlighting specifically three shipwrecks and a night and day that he spent adrift on the open sea (τρὶς ἐναυάγησα, νυχθήμερον ἐν τῷ βυθῷ πεποίηκα).⁴ Presumably Paul's ship in the latter case had met the fate most dreaded by sailors: for some reason its hold filled with water, and it sank well out to sea, leaving those who could manage to swim, or cling to some flotsam or jetsam, to their own devices in the open sea. This appears to be the basis of the fear of the sailors who 'lost all hope of salvation' during the storm on their voyage to Rome (Acts 27:20), for the fact that they have undergirded the ship with ropes (Acts 27:17) suggests that they are taking on water. It is also notable that two later letters continue the practice of having Paul use nautical imagery negatively: a letter to the Ephesians includes a warning not to let one's doctrine be 'tossed about by the waves and blown about by the wind' (κλυδωνιζόμενοι καὶ περιφερόμενοι παντὶ ἀνέμῳ τῆς διδασκαλίας, Eph 4:14), and a letter to Timothy includes a warning not to be like those who have been 'shipwrecked with respect to their faith' (περὶ τὴν πίστιν ἐναυάγησαν, 1 Tim 1:19).

3. Paul's attitude toward the sea in the Acts of the Apostles

3.1 How travel by land and by sea are depicted in Acts

We begin by observing the following pattern in Acts. On the one hand, in circumstances in which we know, or can reasonably assume, that someone travelled by land – for example, when someone is travelling from one inland site to another – Luke generally uses fairly common, generic expressions to describe the action. To describe a traveller setting out on a journey, Luke uses forms of ἐξέρχομαι ('go out'), προέρχομαι ('go forth'), ἐκπέμπομαι ('be sent out'), προπέμπομαι ('be sent forth'), and ἀπολύομαι ('be dismissed'). To describe the actual process of travelling, Luke uses forms of ἔρχομαι ('go'), διέρχομαι ('pass through'), παρέρχομαι ('pass by'), πορεύομαι ('proceed'), and διαπορεύομαι ('proceed through'). To describe the arrival of a traveller at a destination, Luke uses forms of ἔρχομαι plus εἰς ('go to'), εἰσέρχομαι plus εἰς ('arrive at'), κατέρχομαι plus εἰς ('go down to'), καταβαίνω plus εἰς ('go down to'), ἀναβαίνω plus εἰς ('go up to'), ἐπιβαίνω plus εἰς ('go to'), καταντάω plus

3. This is the only instance in which Paul uses the very common word θάλασσα ('sea') in his letters, except when quoting or referring to passages in the Old Testament that use the term.

4. Paul's shipwreck narrated in Acts 27 occurred after his writing of 2 Corinthians, so we may add a fourth shipwreck to Paul's catalogue.

εἰς ('arrive at'), and παραγίνομαι plus εἰς ('arrive at'). To describe the return of a traveller to a place of origin, Luke uses forms of ὑποστρέφω plus εἰς ('return to') and ὑποστρέφω plus διὰ ('return through'). Sometimes someone is said to lead or escort a traveller to a destination: the verbs used when such travel is by land are ἄγω ('lead'), εἰσάγω ('lead to'), and κατάγω ('lead down'). On only three occasions does Luke use a more colourful and descriptive term explicitly denoting land travel: Acts 9:7 συνοδεύω ('travel the road with' – of Paul's travelling companions on the way to Damascus); Acts 17:1 διοδεύω ('take the road through' – of Paul and his companions travelling through Macedonia on the Via Egnatia); Acts 20:13 πεζεύω ('travel by foot' – of Paul walking from Troas to Assos while his companions travel by ship).

On the other hand, in circumstances in which we know, or can reasonably assume, that someone travelled by sea – for example, when someone is travelling to or from an island – Luke generally uses descriptive, specific, and even technical expressions: πλέω ('sail'), ἀποπλέω ('sail away'), ἐκπλέω ('sail away'), παραπλέω ('sail past'), διαπλέω ('sail through'), ὑποπλέω ('sail on the leeward side'), βραδυπλοέω ('sail slowly'), εὐθυδρομέω ('sail a straight course'), ὑποτρέχω ('sail under the shelter of'), παραβάλλω ('approach by ship'), διαπεράω ('cross over'), παραλέγομαι ('coast along'), and πλοῦν διανύω ('complete a voyage'). The verb ἐπιβαίνω is used to mean 'board a ship, and ἐμβιβάζω is used to mean 'put on board a ship'. The verbs ἀνάγω and κατάγω in the middle or passive voice are used to mean 'embark' and 'disembark'. The verb περιαιρέω is used to mean 'weigh anchor'. Luke never simply uses either simplex or compound forms of the very common verbs ἔρχομαι ('go'), πορεύομαι ('proceed'), or βαίνω ('go') by themselves to describe travel by sea, as he regularly does to describe travel by land. Whenever he does use these common verbs to describe travel by sea, he always complements them with one of the more descriptive and technical nautical expressions listed above, thus making clear that the travel is by sea.⁵ In sum, whenever Luke describes someone travelling by ship in Acts he always makes this clear by using descriptive, specific, technical nautical expressions. In fact Luke seems to take great delight in his use of proper nautical terminology. He also appears to take pleasure in including various other nautical details: a description of the ship, the direction of the wind, the weather, the itinerary of the ship, the speed of sailing, the duration of the voyage, the islands encountered along the route, the anchorages, and the names of the ports of embarkation and

5. So Acts 13:13; 18:22; 20:6,14,15; 21:3; 27:5,8; 28:13 (likewise καταντάω ('arrive') in Acts 18:19; 20:15; 21:7; 27:12).

disembarkation (even when they are insignificant ports that play no further part in the narrative). Such details are especially expansive in the so-called ‘we passages’ of Acts – those passages in which the author shifts from third- to first-person narration (Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16).

Hence, in those circumstances in which we do not know how Paul travelled, and when both walking and sailing would have been available to him as reasonable options, we should take our cues from Luke’s practice in those circumstances in which we do know Paul’s mode of travel. That is to say, if Luke simply uses the common, generic terminology that he regularly uses of land travel, we can assume that Paul is understood by Luke to have made the journey by land. If he had travelled by ship, Luke would have used his more descriptive nautical terminology.

A good illustration of these assumptions can be found in the account of Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark’s journey between Antioch in Syria and Perga in Pamphylia. Luke describes the journey from the inland city of Antioch to its port in Seleucia with the generic expression ἐκπεμφθέντες ... κατήλθον εἰς Σελεύκειαν (‘having been sent out ... they came down to Seleucia’, Acts 13:4). We can assume here that they travelled the twenty-three kilometres by foot along the well-established road between Antioch and Seleucia. An easier option of taking a river boat down the Orontes river would have been available to them, but it would not have saved much time, as they would have had to walk the final eight kilometres from the river to the port in any case. If they had nonetheless chosen this option, we can assume that Luke would have described it with his usual descriptive nautical expressions. Next, the three travellers obviously made the 236-kilometre, two-and-a-third day voyage from the port at Seleucia to the port at Salamis on Cyprus by ship. Luke makes this clear in his description (Acts 13:4): ἐκεῖθεν τε ἀπέπλευσαν εἰς Κύπρον (‘and from there they sailed away to Cyprus’). After spending some time in Salamis, on the east coast of Cyprus, they next make their way over to Paphos, on the west coast. Luke describes this journey with the phrase διελθόντες δὲ ὅλην τὴν νῆσον ἄχρι Πάφου (‘and passing through the entire island as far as Paphos’, Acts 13:6). We can assume here that they made the 180-kilometre, six-day journey across Cyprus by foot. An easier and faster option was available by ship: a 287-kilometre, two-and-a-third day voyage along the southern coast of Cyprus. While some commentators have suggested for various reasons that they sailed rather than walked from one end of the island to the other, we can assume from Luke’s choice of vocabulary in his description of the journey that they did not

choose this option.⁶ Finally, they obviously made the 336-kilometre, three-and-a-half day voyage from the port at Paphos to Perga in Pamphylia by ship. And, again, Luke makes this clear in his description (Acts 13:13): ἀναχθέντες δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς Πάφου ... ἤλθον εἰς Πέργην ‘having embarked from Paphos ... they came to Perga’.⁷

Another illustration of these assumptions can be found in Luke’s description of Paul, Silas, Barnabas, and John Mark’s departure from Antioch in Syria. Because of a disagreement, Paul and Barnabas part ways: Barnabas and John Mark are said ‘to sail to Cyprus’ (ἐκπλεῦσαι εἰς Κύπρον), a 236-kilometre, two-and-a-third day voyage by ship in good weather conditions, as we have observed, while Paul and Silas are said to ‘go out’ and ‘go through’ Syria and Cilicia (ἐξῆλθεν ... διήρχετο τὴν Συρίαν καὶ Κιλικίαν in Acts 15:39-40). Paul and Silas would have had the option of starting their journey by ship, making a quick and easy 217-kilometre, two-day voyage to Tarsus before picking up a land route from there, but given the expressions used by Luke, we can assume that Paul and Silas walked the entire route from Syrian Antioch to Tarsus, then over the Taurus Mountains to Derbe, from where Paul retraced the steps of his first journey: visiting ‘every city’ (κατὰ πόλιν πᾶσαν) where they had earlier preached (i.e. Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Pisidian Antioch) (Acts 15:36; 16:1,4).⁸

6. Three main reasons are cited for assuming that they travelled the length of the island by ship: Codex Bezae records the verb περιέρχομαι (‘go around’) instead of διέρχομαι (‘go through’); Luke does not name any of the towns that they visited between Salamis and Paphos; the geography of Cyprus does not lend itself to land travel. The first two reasons are invoked, for example, by E. Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Westminster Press, 1971), 397, the third by A. Wikenhauser, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, 5th ed. (F. Pustet, 1961), 149. None of these reasons is convincing. The reading in Codex Bezae is probably an attempt to explain Luke’s silence about the towns visited on Cyprus between Salamis and Paphos, but Luke’s silence here is not out of character; we may compare his silence about Paul’s itinerary in inland Asia Minor on the second and third journeys. Also, there was, in fact, a network of roads that ran along the southern coast of Cyprus, avoiding the central mountainous regions; D. W. J. Gill, ‘Paul’s Travels through Cyprus (Acts 13:4-12)’, *TynBul* 46 (1995): 219-228, <https://doi.org/10.53751/001c.30410>, notes the recent discovery of a milestone along this route, eleven Roman miles southeast of Paphos, with an inscription of the emperor Augustus as *pontifex maximus*.

7. Perga is not right on the coast, but from the coast they may have proceeded by ship, or transferred to a smaller boat, up the Kestros river 11 km to Perga. Strabo (*Geogr.* 14.4.2) mentions this practice. Alternatively, they may have disembarked at the nearby port city of Attalea and walked the 16 km to Perga, as they did, in reverse, on their journey home (Acts 14:24-26). But there is no indication of this in Luke’s narrative.

8. Acts 13:14 refers to the city as Ἀντιόχεια ἢ Πισιδία (‘Pisidian Antioch’) but Strabo (*Geogr.* 12.6.4, etc.) refers to it as Ἀντιόχεια ἢ πρὸς Πισιδίᾳ (‘Antioch near Pisidia’). Strabo

This leg of the journey – Syrian Antioch to Pisidian Antioch – would have entailed twenty-five days of travel by foot over a 710-kilometre route.

A third illustration of these assumptions can be found in an incident during Paul's return from his third journey abroad (Acts 20:13-14). Luke records that Paul bids his companions to sail by ship from Troas to Assos, where they are to pick him up, but he himself is determined to travel this short leg of the journey by foot. His companions are then said to 'embark on a ship to Assos' (προελθόντες ἐπὶ τὸ πλοῖον ἀνήχθημεν ἐπὶ τὴν Ἄσσον), while Paul is said, very explicitly in this case, to 'go by foot' (πεζεύειν). The voyage by ship, around Cape Lekton, would have taken half a day, while the 50-kilometre journey by foot would have taken the better part of two days. The reason for Paul's decision to walk is left unexplained in the text of Acts. Perhaps Paul had some unfinished business in Troas and wished to remain there a bit longer.⁹ Perhaps he intended to visit some acquaintances along the way: Paul would possibly have travelled on this road in the reverse direction twice earlier, first on his second journey around Mysia to Troas, and again earlier on his third journey on his way from Ephesus to Troas.¹⁰ But perhaps Paul simply preferred to walk, and this leg of the journey provided him an opportunity to walk without losing too much time.¹¹ It would have been a pleasant walk, with little elevation gain or

is technically correct, as the city was in Phrygia at this time. I will nevertheless use Luke's nomenclature.

9. So W. M. Ramsay, *St. Paul: The Traveller and the Roman Citizen* (London, 1895), 291; J. B. Polhill, *Acts: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (Broadman & Holman, 1992), 420; J. Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Clarendon, 1996), 346–347; B. Witherington III, *Acts of the Apostles* (Eerdmans, 1998), 608; J. McRay, *Paul: His Life and Teaching* (Baker Academic, 2003), 198.

10. So D. L. Burdick, 'With Paul in the Troad', *Near East Archaeological Society Bulletin* 12 (1978): 42; E. Schnabel, *Acts*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Zondervan, 2012), 837; M. Fairchild, *Christian Origins in Ephesus and Asia Minor* (Arkeoloji ve Sanat, 2015), 110.

11. A range of other explanations, some arising from rather narrowly focused eisegesis, have been offered for Paul's decision to walk to Assos: Paul was a physical fitness buff; Paul was a penny-pincher who was eager to save even one person's fare on the ship; Paul was yearning for some personal space and desired some time for solitude and meditation, neither of which was available on a crowded ship; Paul was so fearful of rounding the dangerous Cape Lekton by ship that he decided to pawn this responsibility off on his companions; Paul was creating a diversion to fool his Jewish adversaries who were after the contributions of money that he was carrying to the church in Jerusalem. Many of these explanations are catalogued in G. L. Thompson and M. Wilson, 'Paul's Walk to Assos: A Hodological Inquiry into its Geography, History, and Purpose', in *Stones, Bones and the Sacred: Essays on Material Culture and Ancient Religion in Honor of Dennis E. Smith*, ed. A. H. Cadwallader (SBL Press, 2016), 269–312, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1j2n8nc.17>.

loss, with beautiful scenery along the craggy coast to the town of Smintheion, where Paul perhaps spent the night, then an eastward route through a valley along the Satnioeis river the next day to Assos, with the peaks of Mount Ida, normally still snow-capped at this time of year, in full view ahead.¹²

3.2 A simulation of Paul's travel by land and sea in Acts

3.2.1 Some prior considerations

With these assumptions in place, I offer here a comparison of the distances and durations of travel that Paul is said to have made by land and by sea in the accounts of his journeys in the Acts of the Apostles. These are, of course, just a few of what must have been many more journeys that the historical Paul took over the course of the last thirty years or so of his life. For example, in his letters Paul mentions an additional journey to Corinth that is not included in Acts, as well as journeys to Arabia and Illyricum, and he proposes a journey even to Spain. Also, in his catalogue of hardships included in a letter to the Corinthians, Paul mentions three shipwrecks that are not recorded in Acts (2 Cor 11:25-26). I am limiting the following comparison to the journeys included in the narrative of Acts, however, as my primary focus is not to reconstruct the life of the historical Paul but rather to explore how Luke is depicting the main character of his narrative.

Most simulations of Paul's travel in Acts have distorted the distances and durations of his journeys by simply mapping his routes 'as the crow flies'. This may be a meaningful method when mapping modern air traffic, but it is notoriously misleading when mapping ancient travel, both by land and, especially, by sea. The following simulation takes into account the topographical contours of the lands and the courses of the actual roads that Paul most likely used in his land travels. My primary resource here has been the *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World*, which offers a clear and up-to-date presentation of the geographical terrain, its ancient toponyms, and its significant cultural features based on all available literary, epigraphical, and archaeological data.¹³ Most importantly for our purposes, this atlas draws the coastlines as they existed in the period under consideration, and it reconstructs the networks of major and minor Roman roads that crisscrossed the areas under consideration. With regard to the Roman road system of Asia Minor, which is particularly complicated, I have also drawn from the reconstructions

12. It was late April, as Paul had a few days earlier observed the Days of Unleavened Bread in Philippi (Acts 20:6).

13. R. J. A. Talbert, ed., *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World* (Princeton University Press, 2000).

in the many volumes of David French.¹⁴ In considering the routes of some of the Roman roads in Judaea, I have drawn details from the works of Israel Roll.¹⁵ Finally, I have found of some use a computer-generated simulation tool called ‘ORBIS: The Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World’, a product of collaboration among several historians, archaeologists, and information technology specialists at Stanford University.¹⁶ In its simulations of ancient land travel ORBIS takes into account not just the distance between two points but also the mode of travel: a private person travelling by foot, oxcart, horse, or carriage; a government official who is part of a horse relay; soldiers on the march. Travel is assumed to be along established roads. Seasonal differences are not considered in the calculations, as they rarely affected land travel. Elevation gain and loss are considered marginally in the calculations (e.g. the pace of a walker slows by three kilometres per day over the steepest portion of the Alps). I have calculated the duration of Paul’s land travel based generally on a thirty-kilometre-per-day pace, which appears to have been the norm in antiquity for private persons travelling by foot, with only slight (less than ten percent) decreases owing to elevation changes (while walking through the mountain passes of Cilicia, for example). This pace of about thirty kilometres per day is based primarily on the testimony of ancient authors, and it has become the consensus among modern scholars as well.¹⁷

14. D. H. French, *Roman Roads & Milestones of Asia Minor*, Vols. 1–4 (British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, 1981–2016).

15. Particularly pertinent for Paul’s journeys is M. Fischer, B. Isaac, and I. Roll, *Roman Roads in Judaea II: The Jaffa-Jerusalem Roads* (Tempus Reparatum, 1996), <https://doi.org/10.30861/9780860548096>.

16. W. Scheidel and E. Meeks, ‘ORBIS: The Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World’, Version 2.0 at <http://orbis.stanford.edu>.

17. E.g. Herodotus (*Hist.* 4.101; 5.53–54): 27–36 km per day; Xenophon (*Hell.* 3.2.11): 32 km per day; Strabo (*Geogr.* 12.2.9): 32 km per day; Livy (24.13.9; 45.33.7–8): 31–35 km per day; Justinian (*Dig.* 2.11.1; 38.15.2.3; 50.16.3): 30 km per day. Modern scholars, most basing their calculations on ancient literary testimony, some on archaeological evidence (e.g. the average distances between lodging facilities and staging posts on Roman roads), and some on personal experience (including on site), have estimated that private travellers in antiquity, walking along flat terrain, without access to governmental facilities, could normally be expected to walk about 30 km per day along Roman roads throughout the empire. So W. M. Ramsay, ‘Roads and Travel (in NT)’, in *A Dictionary of the Bible*, Extra Vol., ed. J. Hastings (T&T Clark, 1904), 386: 24–30 km per day; É. Delaye, ‘Routes et courriers aux temps de Saint Paul’, *Études religieuses, philosophiques, historiques et littéraires* 131 (1912): 456: 24–30 km per day; M. P. Charlesworth, *Trade-Routes and Commerce of the Roman Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 1924), 43, 86–87: 32 km per day; Casson, *Travel*, 189: 24–32 km per day; R. Jewett, *Dating Paul’s Life* (SCM Press, 1979), 58, 138–139: 30 km per day; J. Murphy-O’Connor, ‘Traveling Conditions

The following simulation also takes into account the many factors that would have affected the distances and durations of travel by sea. This part of the simulation is much more complicated, of course, than the calculations for travel by land, as it must take into account the navigational ability of the type of ship used, whether the ship would have kept close to the coast or ventured out to the open sea, and the effects of seasonal weather patterns, wind directions and speeds, currents, and so forth. As in the case of land travel, the distance a ship travelled between two ports was not simply the length of a straight line connecting the ports. Roman ships plying the Mediterranean took advantage of networks of ports spaced closely together along the coasts and along island chains complemented by a limited number of longer open sea crossings. They regularly followed established shipping lanes – documented in ancient sources – that were systematised over time by observing normal wind and current conditions. They generally meandered around islands and avoided sailing too close to shore near shallow points. Hence, the distances of voyages by ship recorded in the following simulation will be longer than the lengths of straight lines between ports. On the other hand, the simulation will not take into account the sometimes considerable extra distances travelled by ships when tacking or wearing against the wind. Against a strong headwind, for example, an ancient ship might actually travel up to forty kilometres through the water while tacking and wearing in order to progress only ten kilometres toward its destination. Without more details about wind and sea conditions than those provided in Acts, this extra distance would be impossible to calculate, and it would not add anything meaningful to the discussion, as our goal is simply to calculate how long it took a ship to progress from its port of origin to its port of destination. Or, to put it in modern nautical terms, the following calculations use the concept of ‘velocity made good’ (VMG), which measures not the speed and distance the ship travels through the water but rather the speed and distance achieved toward its destination.

Here I have found ORBIS to be a more valuable tool. In calculating the length of sea voyages, ORBIS takes into account not only the distance between two points but also the normal monthly wind conditions, particularly strong

in the First Century: On the Road and On the Sea With St. Paul’, *BRev* 1.2 (1985): 40: 32 km per day; R. Riesner, *Paul’s Early Period: Chronology, Mission, Strategy* (Eerdmans, 1998), 311: 20–30 km per day; M. B. Thompson, ‘The Holy Internet: Communication between Churches in the First Christian Generation’, in *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences*, ed. R. Bauckham (T&T Clark, 1998), 61–62: 32 km per day; Reynier, *Saint Paul*, 47–48: 20 km per day.

currents, and extremely high wave height.¹⁸ It also differentiates between ships that take to the open sea and those that follow coastal routes: a large Roman grain ship sailing as straight a route as possible between Rome and Alexandria under favourable wind conditions could travel two to three times faster (190 or more kilometres per day) than a small merchant ship facing unfavourable wind conditions that required frequent tacking and/or wearing as it practised cabotage along the coast of Asia Minor (70 to 100 kilometres per day). Simulations in ORBIS have been checked against ninety-two historically documented sailing times between ports in the Roman Mediterranean – e.g. in descriptions of durations of voyages by the geographer Strabo, the novelist Achilles Tatius, and the orator Aelius Aristides – with fairly positive results, especially on longer voyages (ones that last more than a full day).¹⁹ The testimony of ancient authors indicates that a ship sailing in the open sea under poor wind conditions travelled about 70 kilometres per day, average wind conditions about 130 kilometres per day, good wind conditions about 190 kilometres per day, and excellent wind conditions about 250 kilometres per day.²⁰ Modern scholars have calculated similar speeds, largely based on ancient testimony, but also on the performance of replicas of ancient ships: Lionel Casson, for example, calculates that ships travelling under favourable

18. The strong currents in the Bosphorus, Dardanelles, and Strait of Gibraltar, for example, had a significant effect on travel by ship. But the strong currents between Sicily and mainland Italy are the only ones that might have affected Paul's voyages. Extremely high wave height, defined here as 12-foot waves at least 10% of the time in a given month, which is a common proxy for weather too stormy to navigate in, is limited by ORBIS to the Atlantic and to some parts of the far north-western Mediterranean in the winter, so this is not a factor in our consideration of Paul's voyages.

19. An excellent description of the factors that were considered by ORBIS in calculating the speed and duration of sea voyages in Roman antiquity can be found in S. L. Arcenas, 'Mare ORBIS: A Network Model for Maritime Transportation in the Roman World', *Mediterranean Historical Review* 36.2 (2021): 169–198, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518967.2021.1964015>.

20. E.g. Herodotus (*Hist.* 4.85–86): 126 km during the day and 108 km during the night; Thucydides (*P. W.* 6.1): 113 km per day; Strabo (*Geogr.* 6.2.1): 144 km per day; Strabo (*Geogr.* 2.5.24) and Diodorus Siculus (*Bib. hist.* 3.34): 180 km per day in favourable conditions; Caesar (*Bell. civ.* 2.23): 70 km per day with very heavy loads; Pliny the Elder (*Nat.* 19.3–4): 234–288 km per day in exceptionally favourable conditions; Lucan (*Bellum Civile* 9.1000–1005): 176 km per day in very favourable conditions; Lucian (*Nav.* 7): 67–70 km per day in very poor weather conditions; Achilles Tatius (*Leuc. Clit.* 5.15.1–3; 5.17.1): 195 km per day in very favourable wind and sea conditions; Aelius Aristides (*Aegyptios* pp. 483–484 in the edition of G. Dindorf, *Aristides*, Vol. 2 (G. Reimer, 1829)): 216 km per day with a constant wind at the stern; Philostratus (*Vit. Apoll.* 7.10): 243 km per day under very favourable wind and current conditions.

wind conditions would average 177–266 kilometres per day in the open sea and 133–177 kilometres per day along a coast or through a network of islands; he calculates that ships travelling under unfavourable wind conditions would average 88–111 kilometres per day.²¹

In the following simulation of Paul's voyages by sea, I have usually set the parameters of ORBIS to take into account a 'slow' ship (as opposed to a 'fast' ship, on the one hand, or one that sailed only in 'daylight', on the other), taking the 'fastest' route (as opposed to the 'cheapest' or 'shortest'), while sailing in a 'coastal sea' (as opposed to an 'open sea'), during the 'summer' (as opposed to another season or a particular month of the year). For Paul must have usually paid the passenger fare on cabotaging merchant ships: there were no ships intended exclusively for passengers in antiquity. However, sometimes I have set the parameters of ORBIS differently to accommodate what must have been a faster ship sailing on the open sea: Paul's voyage from Seleucia to Salamis on Cyprus, and from Paphos on Cyprus to Perga in Cilicia, during his first journey; the voyages from Asia Minor to the Levant at the end of his second (Ephesus to Caesarea) and third (Patara to Tyre) journeys; the voyage from Caesarea to Rome, about which the text of Acts explicitly states that Paul was on large Roman grain ships. In those instances where ORBIS does not include in its programming a sea route that was taken by Paul (e.g. to Tarsus or to Perga), I have estimated by simulating comparable voyages on the program, with help from the maps in the Barrington Atlas. I have considered all information provided in the narrative of Acts, explicit and implicit, that sheds any light on the distance and duration of Paul's sea voyages: references to the types of ships

21. L. Casson, 'Speed under Sail of Ancient Ships', *TAPA* 82 (1951): 136–148, <https://doi.org/10.2307/283426>; L. Casson, *Ships and Seamanship in the Ancient World* (Princeton University Press, 1971), 281–291. Cf. P. Arnaud, 'De la durée à la distance: l'évaluation des distances maritimes dans le monde gréco-romain', *Histoire et Mesure* 8 (1993): 225–247, <https://doi.org/10.3406/hism.1993.1594>, and *Les routes de la navigation antique. Itinéraires en Méditerranée* (Errance, 2005), 98–107, 128–131; Reynier, *Saint Paul*, 37–39; J. Leidwanger, 'Maritime Archaeology as Economic History: Long-Term Trends of Roman Commerce in the Northeast Mediterranean' (PhD dissertation: University of Pennsylvania, 2011), esp. 95–105; J. Whitwright, 'The Potential Performance of Ancient Mediterranean Sailing Rigs', *IJNA* 40 (2011): 2–17, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1095-9270.2010.00276.x>. A full-size replica of a fourth-century BCE Greek ship that had wrecked off the coast Kyrenia on Cyprus managed 116–168 km per 24-hour period, on which see M. L. Katzev, 'An Analysis of the Experimental Voyages of Kyrenia II', in *Tropis II: Proceedings of the 2nd International Symposium on Ship Construction in Antiquity*, ed. H. E. Tzalas (Hellenic Institute for the Preservation of Nautical Tradition, 1990), 245–256.

used, references to the duration of travel, geographical details of the routes, and, where applicable, the season of the year (hence wind conditions).

Regarding the seasons of Paul's voyages by ship, I have set the simulation in ORBIS on 'summer' as a default, since summer was the preferred season for sea travel in antiquity. However, when the season of the year is indicated in Acts, or where we can identify the season based on information from parallel passages in Paul's letters, I have adjusted the season or month of travel in ORBIS accordingly.²² For example, Paul's sea voyage from Cenchreae to Ephesus, and then from Ephesus to Caesarea, on the return from his second journey, appears to have been made in late March or early April, since Paul was apparently trying to reach Jerusalem by Passover (4 April in the year 52 CE) (Acts 18:18-22).²³ Paul's land and sea journey from Ephesus to Macedonia to Corinth on his third journey appears to have been made in late May and early June, since he announces in his first letter to the Corinthians that he plans to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost (25 May in the year 55 CE) (Acts 20:1-3; 1 Cor 16:5-9). Paul's sea voyage from Neapolis, southward along the coast of Asia Minor, and then across the open sea to Caesarea on his return from his third journey appears to have been made between mid-April and late May, as he has observed the Days of Unleavened Bread (the first day of which is Passover – 7 April in the year 57 CE) while in Philippi and is said to be eager to get to Jerusalem by Pentecost (27 May in the year 57 CE) (Acts 20:6,16). Paul's tumultuous sea voyage from Crete to Malta appears to have occurred in mid-October, as it is already after the Day of Atonement (5 October in the year 59 CE) when the ship harbours at Fair Havens on Crete, after which the crew and passengers experience a storm of at least fourteen days before suffering a shipwreck off the coast of Malta (Acts 27:9,27,33; 28:1). The continuation of the voyage, on a different ship, to

22. For a sober estimate of date ranges and time spans based on the internal evidence of Acts (and Paul's letters), see Jewett, *Dating*, esp. 47–62. The annual dates are a matter of some controversy: for example, G. Lüdemann, *Paul, Apostle to the Gentiles: Studies in Chronology* (Fortress, 1984), who places much more weight on the evidence of Paul's letters than on Acts, and Riesner, *Paul's Early Period*, who treats Paul's letters and Acts of equal value for dating the life of Paul, come up with quite different annual dates. The controversy over annual dates is not a critical one for my purposes, as I am concerned in the following instances about the seasons of the year, not the annual dates. Yet, it must be acknowledged that the Jewish festivals, which are the primary indication of the season of the year in Acts, fell on somewhat different dates in different years.

23. Codex Bezae as well as the Byzantine manuscript tradition record in Acts 18:21 that Paul wanted to reach Jerusalem by 'the Feast' (ἡ ἑορτή).

Syracuse, Rhegium, and Puteoli must have begun in very early February, after a three-month stay on Malta (Acts 28:11-13).²⁴

It goes without saying, of course, that when the narrative of Acts is explicit about the details of the speed and duration of a particular leg of Paul's journeys (e.g. Acts 16:11; 20:6,15; 21:1; 27:3,7,27; 28:13) that we must privilege this over any abstract simulation. Usually such details in Acts line up remarkably well with the simulation: the two-day sea voyage between Troas and Neapolis via Samothrace (Acts 16:11); the seven-day, island hopping voyage along the coast of Asia Minor from Assos to Patara (Acts 20:13-16 and 21:1). But sometimes there are remarkable differences between the accounts in Acts and the simulation. The five-day voyage from Neapolis to Troas (Acts 20:6) must have encountered strong opposing winds, as it takes about twice as long as the simulation (and twice as long as the reverse journey described in Acts 16:11). On the other hand, the two-day voyage from Rhegium to Puteoli (Acts 28:13) takes less than half as long as the simulation. This is extraordinarily good time, especially for this time of year (probably February), as the passage through the strait between Italy and Sicily usually required much tacking and/or wearing against a northwest wind. The text of Acts itself provides a clue to the speed of this voyage, noting that a south wind had arisen.

It must be confessed that the following simulation of Paul's journeys offers only a limited view of a much larger picture. Paul's voyages by ship, in particular, must have been affected by a number of factors that are entirely outside our ability to include in the simulation: the availability and schedules of ships; challenges in leaving or entering ports owing to wind directions, local weather conditions, or the availability of a towing craft; whether the ship sailed continuously or stopped for the night to anchor or dock at a port; the frequency of stops to load and unload cargo and to reprovision during longer voyages. Paul's journeys by foot too may have been affected by a number of factors: the grade of a particular stretch of road, temporary damage to a road, and inaccessibility of a road owing to flooding, snow, or ice; weather challenges such as storms, summer heat, and winter cold; the amount of baggage that he and his companions carried; the availability of water, food, and suitable lodging; the physical abilities and limitations of Paul and his companions. Paul's own catalogue of the challenges that he has endured include several that he encountered while journeying either by sea or by land (2 Cor 11:23-29):

24. W. P. Workman, 'A New Date-Indication in Acts', *ExpTim* 11 (1900): 316-319, <https://doi.org/10.1177/001452460001100708>, was the first to propose that the apparent lateness of the Day of Atonement (after the autumn equinox) indicates that it is the year 59 CE; many commentators have concurred with this proposal.

danger at sea, shipwrecks, being cast adrift on the open sea, danger from rivers, danger from bandits, hunger, thirst, nakedness, etc. In the absence of specific information, it is, of course, impossible to include these factors in a simulation of Paul's average pace and duration of travel on his various journeys.

Finally, it should be noted that this simulation is intended to calculate only actual travel time. The calculations do not take into account some of Paul's rather long stops in various locations: a week in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:42-44) and a 'considerable time' in Iconium (Acts 14:3) during his first journey; 'some days' in Philippi (Acts 16:12), at least two weeks in Thessalonica (Acts 17:2), and eighteen months in Corinth (Acts 18:11) during his second journey; two years and three months in Ephesus (Acts 19:8-10), three months in Corinth (Acts 20:3), seven days in Troas (Acts 20:6), seven days in Tyre (Acts 21:4), and several days in Caesarea (Acts 21:10) during his third journey; three months in Malta (Acts 28:11), three days in Syracuse (Acts 28:12), one day in Rhegium (Acts 28:13), and seven days in Puteoli (Acts 28:14) during his journey to Rome. These are just the stops mentioned in the narrative of Acts: there must have been many other stops and delays along his routes that are not mentioned in Acts, some of them no doubt considerable.

3.2.2 Simulation

Journey	Acts text(s)	Foot travel (km)	Ship travel (km)	Time (days)
Jerusalem to Damascus and back	9:1-26	514	-	17.2
Jerusalem to Tarsus ²⁵	9:30	692	-	23.1

25. Some commentators assume that Paul travelled by ship to Tarsus, since the disciples in Jerusalem are said to have led him down to Caesarea, a port city, and/or simply because sea travel would have been an easier and swifter option: so, F. J. Foakes Jackson and K. Lake, ed., *The Beginnings of Christianity: The Acts of the Apostles*, Vol. 4 (MacMillan, 1933), 106; F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Tyndale Press, 1951), 244; C. S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, Vol. 2 (Baker Academic, 2013), 1693. Tarsus had a viable port: Strabo (*Geogr.* 14.5.10) and Plutarch (*Ant.* 26) indicate that a boat could reach Tarsus by sailing up the Cydnus river, as Cleopatra famously did on a barge in 41 BCE. S. Arici and İ. Göçmen, 'Kydnos Nehri ve Tarsus', *Arkhaia Anatolika* 5 (2022): 288-304, <https://doi.org/10.32949/Arkhaia.2022.52>, stress the importance of the Cydnus river to the economic development of Tarsus throughout antiquity, including its provision of access to a Mediterranean port. However, it is more likely that Paul travelled the entire route from Jerusalem to Tarsus by foot. Luke makes no mention of a sea voyage and instead simply uses the expression ἐξαπέστειλαν ('they sent him away'), a verb that is never used of sea travel in the New Testament. The disciples led Paul to Caesarea because there he could connect to the main road running north - along the coast. The parallel passage in Galatians 1:21, where Paul says that he came to the

Journey	Acts text(s)	Foot travel (km)	Ship travel (km)	Time (days)
Tarsus to Antioch ²⁶	11:25-26	200	-	6.7
Antioch to Jerusalem and back ²⁷	11:27-12:25	1,196	-	39.9
FIRST JOURNEY	13:3-14:26	1,371 (45.9 days)	1,202 (9 days)	54.9
- Antioch to Seleucia ²⁸	13:3-4	23	-	0.8
- Seleucia to Salamis, Cyprus	13:4-5	-	236	2.3
- Salamis to Paphos, Cyprus ²⁹	13:6	180	-	6
- Paphos to Perga ³⁰	13:13	5	336	3.5

κλίματα ('geographical regions') of Syria and Cilicia, also suggests a land rather than a sea journey.

26. A sea route would have been easier and faster, but the vocabulary that Luke uses suggests a land route: Barnabas 'led' (ἤγαγεν) Paul to Antioch.

27. A sea route would have been much easier and faster, but the nondescript and generic expressions that Luke uses suggest a land route: 'having sent away' (ἀποστείλαντες in Acts 11:30); 'they returned' (ὑπέστρεψαν in Acts 12:25). Also, we may use as an indication of the mode of travel here the more detailed description of a similar journey in Acts 15:1-35, where on their way to Jerusalem Paul and Barnabas are said to 'go through' (διήρχοντο in Acts 15:3) Phoenicia and Samaria meeting with 'all the brothers' (πᾶσιν τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς in Acts 15:3).

28. As we have observed, the option of taking a boat down the Orontes river was available, but it would not have saved much time, as it would have required a walk of 8 km from the river to the port.

29. As mentioned earlier, the reading of Codex Bezae (περιελθόντων ('going around') rather than διελθόντες ('going through')), a reading that is apparently followed by early Latin versions and the Vulgate (*cum perambulassent*), indicates that some scribes in antiquity understood that Saul, Barnabas, and John Mark sailed around the southern coast of Cyprus. Some modern commentators have followed suit for a variety of (unpersuasive) reasons. Luke's vocabulary quite clearly indicates a land route through the island.

30. 325 km by ship to the mouth of the Kestros river + 11 km by ship upriver to the harbour at Perga + 5 km by foot to the city of Perga. Because Perga is not right on the coast, some have suggested that Paul and his company disembarked at the nearby port city of Attalea and walked the 16 km to Perga, as they did, in reverse, on their journey home: so, D. H. French, 'Acts and the Roman Roads of Asia Minor', in *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting: Graeco-Roman Setting*, ed. D. W. J. Gill and C. Gempf (Eerdmans, 1994), 52. But why would Luke include these details in his description of their return journey but fail to mention them here? Strabo (*Geogr.* 14.4.2) claimed that one could sail from the Mediterranean 60 stades (11 km) up the Kestros river to get to Perga. If the Kestros was not navigable by a larger ship at this time of year, they may have transferred to a smaller boat. On the likelihood that Luke is correct that they went straight from Paphos to Perga, i.e. that they went straight up the river to Perga rather than harbouring at Attalea and walking from there, see D. A. Campbell,

Journey	Acts text(s)	Foot travel (km)	Ship travel (km)	Time (days)
- Perga to Pisidian Antioch ³¹	13:14	248	-	8.3
- Pisidian Antioch to Iconium	13:50-51	144	-	4.8
- Iconium to Lystra	14:6	35	-	1.2
- Lystra to Derbe	14:20	135	-	4.5
- Derbe to Lystra to Iconium to Pisidian Antioch to Perga to Attalea	14:21-25	578	-	19.3
- Attalea to Seleucia	14:26	-	630	3.4
- Seleucia to Antioch ³²	14:26	23	-	0.8
Antioch to Jerusalem and back ³³	15:1-35	1,196	-	39.9
SECOND JOURNEY	15:36-18:22	3,178 (107.1 days)	1,797 (10.8 days)	117.9
- Syrian Antioch to Pisidian Antioch via Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium ³⁴	15:36-16:5	710	-	24.9

'Paul in Pamphylia (Acts 13.13-14a; 14.24b-26): A Critical Note', *NTS* 46 (2000): 595-602, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688500000369>.

31. There were at least four possible routes between Perga and Pisidian Antioch, all involving some travel through the mountains, and all, of course, eventually resulting in a 3,600-foot overall elevation gain. I am assuming that Paul and Barnabas took the route furthest west, the Via Sebaste, the newest, widest, flattest, best-constructed, and safest route, even though it was probably the longest: so, S. Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor*, Vol. 1 (Clarendon, 1993), 70-71, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198140801.003.0001>; French, 'Acts and the Roman Roads', 50-53, 55-56. For an informative description of the four options, see M. Wilson, 'The Route of Paul's First Journey to Pisidian Antioch', *NTS* 55 (2009): 471-483, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002868850999004X>.

32. The option of taking a smaller river boat up the Orontes river to Antioch was available, but this would have taken much longer than walking, as it would first have required a walk of 8 km from the port to the river and then very slow progress by boat upstream.

33. Again, a sea route would have been much easier and faster for this journey, but the language that Luke uses indicates a land route (Acts 15:2-3): Paul and Barnabas are urged to 'go up' (ἀναβαίνειν) to Jerusalem; they are said to have been 'sent forth' (προπεμφθέντες) by the church in Antioch; on their way to Jerusalem they are said to have 'gone through' (διήρχοντο) Phoenicia and Samaria, meeting with believers along the way.

34. Paul and Silas most likely took the main road from Syrian Antioch to Tarsus ('he went through Syria and Cilicia' (διήρχετο δὲ τὴν Συρίαν καὶ [τὴν] Κιλικίαν) in Acts 15:41), then over the Taurus Mountains to Derbe, from where they retraced the steps of Paul's first journey to Pisidian Antioch. I have calculated a slower pace - 20 km per day - over the Taurus Mountains.

Journey	Acts text(s)	Foot travel (km)	Ship travel (km)	Time (days)
- Pisidian Antioch to Dorylaion ³⁵	16:6-7	272	-	9.1
- Dorylaion to Troas via Sardis, Pergamum, and Adramyttium ³⁶	16:8	668	-	22.3
- Troas to Neapolis via Samothrace ³⁷	16:11	-	285	2
- Neapolis to Philippi to Amphipolis to Apollonia to Thessalonica to Berea ³⁸	16:12,40; 17:1,10	252	-	8.4
- Berea to Athens ³⁹	17:14-15	478	-	15.9

35. From here the route is unclear (Acts 16:6-8). The text simply states that they went through Phrygian and Galatian land. The text does make clear that they are prevented, at least initially, from travelling through Asia to the east, and, later, through Bithynia to the north. Some have assumed that they travelled all the way to Ancyra in Galatia; I have them go as far as Dorylaion.

36. At the time there were no proper roads leading straight westward through the rough and mountainous land of Mysia, so Paul and Silas either took undeveloped paths between Dorylaion and Troas or the more circuitous southern road leading toward Sardis, and then northwest through Pergamum and Adramyttium to Troas. Luke's choice of vocabulary – *παρελθόντες δὲ τὴν Μυσίαν* 'passing by Mysia' (Acts 16:8) – supports the latter option. The reading *διελθόντες* 'passing through' in Codex Bezae appears to arise from an assumption of a shorter route right through Mysia. For a thorough summary of the vast commentary on this issue, with a preference for the former option, see G. L. Thompson and M. Wilson, 'The Route of Paul's Second Journey in Asia Minor: in the Steps of Robert Jewett and Beyond', *TynBul* 67 (2016): 217–246, <https://doi.org/10.53751/001c.29417>.

37. The nautical terminology becomes more expressive here, as in the 'we passages' generally. It appears that the ship sailed only during the daylight hours and that a favourable wind from the south enabled them to make the voyage from Troas to Neapolis, with a stop overnight in Samothrace, in only two days (*εὐθύδρομήσαμεν* 'we sailed a straight course'). The reverse journey (Acts 20:6), presumably with less favourable winds, took five days.

38. All of these cities and towns except Berea were on the Via Egnatia, the major east-west Roman highway of the area.

39. Many assume that Paul travelled to Athens by ship, since his entourage first 'proceeds to the sea' (*πορεύσθαι ἕως ἐπὶ τὴν θάλασσαν*), and, indeed it would have been possible to board a ship in the coastal towns of Methone or Pydna and make an easy and safe three-day voyage along the eastern coast of Thessaly, around Attica, and into Piraeus or Phaleron, the harbours of Athens, which were about 8 km from the city. However, Luke does not mention a ship here, and he uses language that he normally uses to describe land travel: *ἐξαπέστειλαν* ('they sent away'), *πορεύσθαι* ('to proceed'), *ἡγαγον* ('they led'). Moreover, a land route too would have required that they proceed first 'to the sea': i.e. by foot from Berea east to the coast (there were major mountain ranges to the south), where they would meet the coastal route leading south, through the Vale of Tempe, to Larissa, from which there were a number of possible routes to

Journey	Acts text(s)	Foot travel (km)	Ship travel (km)	Time (days)
- Athens to Corinth	18:1	85	-	2.8
- Corinth to Cenchreae	18:18	10	-	0.3
- Cenchreae to Ephesus ⁴⁰	18:18-19	-	430	2.6
- Ephesus to Caesarea ⁴¹	18:21-22	-	1,082	6.2
- Caesarea to Jerusalem	18:22	105	-	3.5
- Jerusalem to Antioch	18:22	598	-	19.9
THIRD JOURNEY	18:23-21:17	3,279 (126.3 days)	1,724 (16.9 days)	143.2
- Syrian Antioch to Pisidian Antioch ⁴²	18:23	710	-	24.9
- Pisidian Antioch to Ephesus ⁴³	19:1	402	-	13.4
- Ephesus to Troas	20:1	349	-	11.7

Athens on well-established Greek roads (e.g. over the plain to Lamia, through the mountain passes to Delphi, over to Thebes, and then down to Eleusis and Athens).

40. I have simulated this voyage with the prevailing winds of spring, as Paul appears to be hastening to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover (so Codex Bezae as well as the Byzantine manuscript tradition of Acts 18:21), just as later at the end of his third journey he is hastening to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost (Acts 20:16).

41. Again, I have simulated this voyage with the prevailing winds of spring. Also, at this point Paul likely transferred to a larger ship for the long voyage to the Levant. I have simulated the voyage with a fast ship, like the one later described in Luke's account of Paul's return from his third journey (Acts 21:2-3), that would venture out to the open sea south of Cyprus rather than hug the coasts of Asia Minor and the Levant.

42. The entire journey from Syrian Antioch to Pisidian Antioch is summarised very briefly and rather obscurely in Acts 18:23: 'He went out, systematically passing through the Galatian region and [the] Phrygia[n], strengthening all the disciples.' This description suggests that Paul is revisiting areas from his earlier journeys, and I assume here that he is retracing the route of the first leg of his second journey: over the Taurus Mountains to Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch. However, there is no indication here – as there is in the description of Paul's second journey – of any travels further north than the major Roman road, the Via Sebaste, with which Paul was by now quite familiar.

43. This route was along a well-established Roman road through Apamea and Laodicea and then through the Maeander Valley to Ephesus. Commentators have from time to time proposed more northerly routes between Pisidian Antioch and Ephesus, well off the main Roman highway, based on their translation of τὰ ἄνωτερικὰ μέρη as 'upper regions'. These proposals are well refuted by M. Wilson, 'The "Upper Regions" and the Route of Paul's Third Journey from Apamea to Ephesus', *Scriptura* 117 (2018): 1-21, <https://doi.org/10.7833/117-1-1368>. I take τὰ ἄνωτερικὰ μέρη simply to mean the inland regions (in contrast to the coastal region of Ephesus).

Journey	Acts text(s)	Foot travel (km)	Ship travel (km)	Time (days)
- Troas to Philippi ⁴⁴	19:21; 20:1	444	-	15.6
- Philippi to Amphipolis to Apollonia to Thessalonica to Berea to Athens to Corinth ⁴⁵	19:21; 20:1-2	796	-	26.5
- Corinth to Neapolis ⁴⁶	20:3-5	815	-	27.1
- Neapolis to Troas ⁴⁷	20:6	-	265	5
- Troas to Assos ⁴⁸	20:13	50	-	1.7
- Assos to Patara ⁴⁹	20:14-16; 21:1	-	664	7

44. Luke's account of Paul's journey from Ephesus to Macedonia lacks detail, so I have had to reconstruct the itinerary. One might expect that Paul would follow the same route as on his second journey and go by ship from Troas to Neapolis, but there is no mention of a ship here. Luke uses only language associated with land travel: διελθὼν τὴν Μακεδονίαν καὶ Ἀχαΐαν ('going through Macedonia and Achaëa'); ἐξῆλθεν πορεύεσθαι εἰς Μακεδονίαν ('he went out to proceed to Macedonia'). I have reconstructed a route whereby Paul crosses the Hellespont and then walks along the Via Egnatia through southern Thrace to Philippi and onward.

45. As it was apparently Paul's purpose to visit all the areas in Macedonia and Achaëa that he had ministered to on his second journey, I have had him follow the same routes and use the same modes of travel. Some have supposed – based on Paul's assertion in Romans 15:19 that he had proclaimed the gospel as far as Illyricum – that at this point in his journey Paul may have travelled further westward on the Via Egnatia, but there is no mention of this in Acts.

46. As Paul was on the verge of embarking by ship from Cenchreae to Syria, an efficient and much-travelled route that normally enjoyed very favourable winds and currents and that would probably have required less than eight days of sailing, he discovered a plot against him by the Jews (Acts 20:3). This forced him to change his route, and, presumably, his mode of travel: he must have retraced his steps back to Philippi, where he celebrated Passover, and then set sail from Neapolis to Troas.

47. It is mid-April, as Paul has just observed the Days of Unleavened Bread in Philippi (Acts 20:6), and with the prevailing winds of spring this voyage should have taken half this time. The winds must have been unseasonable. The narrative of the journey from Neapolis to Jerusalem is part of the 'we passages' in Acts, and, as in the other 'we passages', the nautical terminology is very expressive.

48. I have offered above some possible explanations for Paul's puzzling decision to travel to Assos by foot (a two-day journey) while his companions travel by ship (a half-day voyage).

49. The itinerary here is very realistic: all seven legs of the journey between Assos and Patara can be accomplished in less than a full day, i.e. within the fourteen hours of daylight that this area enjoyed in late April and early May. It appears that between Assos and Patara Paul and his companions were on a smaller cabotaging merchant ship, which they may have chartered, that was sailing only during the day and harbouring, or anchoring, at a convenient spot toward the end of each day.

Journey	Acts text(s)	Foot travel (km)	Ship travel (km)	Time (days)
- Patara to Tyre ⁵⁰	21:2-3	-	740	4.5
- Tyre to Ptolemais	21:6-7	-	55	0.4
- Ptolemais to Caesarea ⁵¹	21:8	58	-	1.9
- Caesarea to Jerusalem ⁵²	21:15-16	105	-	3.5

For our present purposes, we need to acknowledge that in all the journeys described in Acts from this point to the end of the narrative, from Jerusalem to Rome, Paul travels under constraint, as a prisoner of the Roman authorities, and therefore has little or no choice in his itinerary or mode of travel. Even his prudent advice that they should spend the winter in Fair Havens on Crete is ignored (Acts 27:9-12). Hence, while the narrative is intensely interesting for anyone curious about ancient sea travel, it does not pertain, except by analogy, to our main considerations here. I have therefore treated it only summarily. The journey from Jerusalem to Rome is made by ship, save for a 105-kilometre ride on mounts from Jerusalem to Caesarea at the beginning and a 206-kilometre walk from Puteoli to Rome at the end. The Roman centurion requisitions three different ships for the voyage: the first, an Adramyttian ship, probably a cabotaging merchant ship, that is making its way along the coast of the Levant and Asia Minor, transports them from Caesarea to Myra; the second, an Alexandrian ship delivering Egyptian grain to Italy, transports them from Myra to Fair Havens on Crete, but then it gets caught in a storm and wrecks fourteen days later in a bay on the island of Malta; the third, also an

50. I have simulated the voyage with the prevailing winds of late Spring, as Paul is travelling between Passover and Pentecost (April–May in the year 57 CE), and on a larger, faster ship that would head out to the open sea south of Cyprus, as described in the text of Acts, rather than hug the coasts of Asia Minor and the Levant.

51. It would have been easy and efficient to continue on the same ship to Caesarea, if the ship had been continuing its voyage there, or by a different ship, if one had been available, but Paul and his companions presumably decided to continue by foot for the rest of their journey, for, uniquely in this section of Acts, there is no mention from this point of any ship (or of embarking, disembarking, sailing, etc.), and the nondescript and generic expressions that Luke uses suggest a land route: ‘having gone away we came to Caesarea’ (ἐξελθόντες ἤλθομεν εἰς Καισάρειαν in Acts 21:8).

52. The compound verb ἐπισκευάζομαι (Acts 21:15), which occurs only here in the New Testament, sometimes refers to preparing a horse or mule for travel in Classical Greek (e.g. Xenophon, *Hell.* 5.3.1; 7.2.18). It is possible that Paul and his company, owing to the quantity of their baggage or to the uphill nature of the road ahead of them, proceeded to Jerusalem by mount. If so, depending on what type of mounts were available, their pace may have been a little faster than a normal walking pace.

Alexandrian ship, which has been wintering on Malta, also probably delivering Egyptian grain to Italy, transports them from Malta to Puteoli (it may have planned to unload its cargo in Puteoli or make its way further north to the harbours at Ostia or Portus). The entire journey, as described by Luke, is very realistic with respect to its speed and duration, the effects of the seasons and the wind directions, and the overall geography. The narrative of the journey from Caesarea to Rome is part of the ‘we passages’ in Acts, and, as in the other ‘we passages’, the nautical terminology is very expressive.

Journey	Acts text	Land travel (km)	Ship travel (km)	Time (days)
Jerusalem to Caesarea (mounted)	23:23-35	105	-	1 (perhaps a bit less than 24 hours)
Caesarea to Rome	27:1-28:16	206 (6.9 days)	3,882 (37.9 days)	44.8
- Caesarea to Sidon	27:1-3	-	140	1.6
- Sidon to Myra	27:4-5	-	c. 1,000	c. 10
- Myra to Fair Havens	27:6-8	-	c. 600	c. 8
- Fair Havens to Malta	27:12-44	-	c. 1,400	c. 14
- Malta to Syracuse	28:11-12	-	204	1.3
- Syracuse to Rhegium	28:13	-	153	1
- Rhegium to Puteoli	28:13	-	385	2
- Puteoli to Rome	28:14-16	206	-	6.9

3.2.3 Summary of simulation (including the final voyage from Jerusalem to Rome)

Total travel by mount: 105 km = 1 day.

Total travel by foot: 12,282 km = 414 days.

Total travel by ship: 8,605 km = 74.6 days.

Total travel distance: 20,992 km.

Total days of travel: 488.6.

3.2.4 Summary of simulation (excluding the final voyage from Jerusalem to Rome)

Total travel by foot: 12,076 km = 406.1 days.

Total travel by ship: 4,723 km = 36.7 days.

Total travel distance: 16,799 km.

Total days of travel: 442.8.

3.3 A hypothetical itinerary

By way of contrast, in what follows I have created a hypothetical itinerary for Paul’s journeys, assuming that whenever possible he would choose an easier, faster, more efficient mode of travel by sea rather than a harder, slower, less efficient mode of travel by land, unless, of course, he had reasons, whether explicitly stated or assumable in the text of Acts, for travelling by land:

e.g. a wish to visit, or to revisit, certain inland cities, churches, or individuals. I exclude his final journey from Jerusalem to Rome in this itinerary, since I am concerned here with trying to understand Paul's choices, at least as Luke portrays them, and as a prisoner he had no choice about the mode of travel.

Journey	Acts text	Foot travel		Ship travel	
		Distance (km)	Time (days)	Distance (km)	Time (days)
Jerusalem to Damascus and back ⁵³	9:1-26	514	17.2	-	-
Jerusalem to Tarsus ⁵⁴	9:30	105	3.5	674	5
Tarsus to Antioch ⁵⁵	11:25-26	23	0.8	217	1.2
Antioch to Jerusalem and back ⁵⁶	11:27-12:25	256	8.6	1,050	7.4
First journey ⁵⁷	13:3-14:26	1,191	39.7	1,489	11.3
Antioch to Jerusalem and back ⁵⁸	15:1-35	256	8.6	1,050	7.4
Second journey ⁵⁹	15:36-18:22	2,039	69.3	3,138	20.3
Third journey ⁶⁰	18:23-21:17	1,720	58.6	3,775	31.4

53. No resimulation by ship is possible on this exclusively land route.

54. I have resimulated to travel by ship wherever possible.

55. I have resimulated to travel by ship wherever possible.

56. I have resimulated to travel by ship wherever possible.

57. I have resimulated the journey from Salamis to Paphos, on opposite ends of the island of Cyprus, by having Paul sail by ship along the southern coast (287 km by ship = 2.3 days) rather than walk across the island (180 km by foot = 6 days).

58. I have resimulated to travel by ship wherever possible.

59. I have resimulated the journey from Syrian Antioch to Pisidian Antioch via Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium by having Paul go by ship to Tarsus and then pick up the land route from there (217 km by ship = 2.1 days; 533 km by foot = 19 days) rather than make the entire journey by foot (710 km by foot = 24.9 days). I have resimulated the journey from Berea to Athens by having Paul walk to Pydna, go by ship to Piraeus or Phaleron, and then walk to Athens (53 km by foot = 1.8 days; 505 km by ship = 3 days) rather than make the entire journey by foot (478 km by foot = 15.9 days). I have resimulated the journey from Athens to Corinth by having Paul walk from Athens to Piraeus or Phaleron, go by ship to Cenchreae, and then walk to Corinth (18 km by foot = 0.6 days; 94 km by ship = 0.5 days) rather than make the entire journey by foot (85 km by foot = 2.8 days). I have resimulated the journey from Jerusalem to Antioch by having Paul walk to Caesarea, go by ship to Seleucia, and then walk to Antioch (128 km by foot = 4.3 days; 525 km by ship = 3.9 days) rather than make the entire journey by foot (598 km by foot = 19.9 days).

60. I have resimulated the journey from Syrian Antioch to Pisidian Antioch via Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium by having Paul go by ship to Tarsus and then pick up the land route from there (217 km by ship = 2.1 days; 533 km by foot = 19 days) rather than make the entire journey by foot (710 km by foot = 24.9 days). I have resimulated the journey from Ephesus to Troas by having Paul go by ship (310 km by ship = 2.1 days)

As in the case of the simulation above of Paul's journeys as described in Acts, I have set ORBIS on 'summer', as a default, unless the season is mentioned or implied in the text of Acts. Priority is given to the fastest route, as opposed to the cheapest or shortest. Travel by road is set for thirty kilometres per day, and that is usually the case unless there are quite severe gradients (e.g. over the Taurus Mountains). Travel by sea is set on 'slow', with preference for coastal routes, unless the route involves an extraordinarily long voyage, and particularly one that would have drawn the ship away from the coast.

3.3.1 *Summary of hypothetical itinerary*

Total travel by foot: 6,104 km = 206.3 days.

Total travel by ship: 11,393 km = 84 days.

Total travel distance: 17,497 km.

Total days of travel: 290.3.

3.4 Comparison of simulation and hypothetical itinerary

The hypothetical itinerary reduces travel by foot by 5,972 km or by 49.5%.

The hypothetical itinerary increases travel by ship by 6,670 km or by 141%.

The hypothetical itinerary increases total travel by 698 km or by 4.2%.

The hypothetical itinerary increases average distance of travel per day by 22.3 km or by 58.9%.

The hypothetical itinerary reduces total days of travel by 152.5 days or by 34.4%.

rather than make the journey by foot (349 km by foot = 11.7 days). I have resimulated the journey from Troas to Philippi by having Paul go by ship to Neapolis (273 km by ship = 2.2 days) and then travel by foot to Philippi (19 km by foot = 0.6 days) rather than make the entire journey by foot, save for a short sail across the Hellespont (444 km by foot = 15.6 days). I have resimulated the journey from Berea to Athens by having Paul walk to Pydna, go by ship to Piraeus or Phaleron, and then walk to Athens (53 km by foot = 1.8 days; 505 km by ship = 3 days) rather than make the entire journey by foot (478 km by foot = 15.9 days). I have resimulated the journey from Athens to Corinth by having Paul walk from Athens to Piraeus or Phaleron, go by ship to Cenchreae, and then walk to Corinth (18 km by foot = 0.6 days; 94 km by ship = 0.5 days) rather than make the entire journey by foot (85 km by foot = 2.8 days). I have resimulated the journey from Corinth to Neapolis by having Paul walk from Corinth to Cenchreae, sail from there to Pydna, walk from there to Berea, walk from there to Thessalonica, Apollonia, Amphipolis and Philippi, and then walk from there to Neapolis (307 km by foot = 10.2 days; 587 km by ship = 3.7 days) rather than make the entire journey by foot (815 km by foot = 27.1 days). I have resimulated the journey from Ptolemais to Caesarea by having Paul sail to Caesarea (65 km by ship = 0.4 days) rather than make the journey by foot (58 km by foot = 1.9 days).

4. Conclusion

This is the primary observation I wish to make here: if Paul had travelled by ship rather than by foot whenever the opportunity arose, he would have increased the average distance of his travel each day by well over half (58.9%), and he would have saved himself a total of more than 152 days of travel, more than one-third (34.4%) of the days spent on travel in these episodes in Acts. This is the primary question that follows: why did Paul not take advantage of these opportunities more often in order to reduce his travel time? Let us attempt an answer by considering both sides of this issue: 1) on what occasions, and for what reasons, did Paul choose to travel by ship when a land route was possible? 2) on what occasions, and for what reasons, did Paul choose to travel by foot when a sea route was possible?

Readers of Acts may be forgiven if, upon completing the detailed and memorable narrative of Paul's sea voyage from Caesarea to Puteoli in the last two chapters of the work, including the fourteen-day storm and eventual shipwreck, they are left with the general impression that Paul has experienced his share of sea travel in the narrative of Acts. This may especially be true if Paul's own words in his letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor 11:23-27) are ringing in their ears: that among the many travails he has suffered are dangers on the sea, including three shipwrecks and a night and day spent adrift on the open sea. However, the narrative of Acts describes Paul choosing to travel by ship, when a land route was possible, on only three occasions: during his returns to Syrian Antioch or to Jerusalem from his three journeys abroad in Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Achaea.⁶¹ Here are the details.

- On Paul's return from his first journey: Attalea to Seleucia – 630 km by ship = 3.4 days (a 935-km land journey would have required a 32.4-day walk, and it would have entailed a lot of back-tracking through areas that he had recently visited twice).
- On Paul's return from his second journey: Cenchreae to Ephesus – 430 km by ship = 2.6 days (a 1,472-km land journey would have required a 49.8-day walk, plus a short sail across the Hellespont); Ephesus to Caesarea – 1,082 km by ship = 6.2 days (a 1,671-kilometre land journey would have required a 56.9-day walk).

61. As we have noted, Paul was under constraint as a prisoner during his voyage by sea to Rome. And, obviously, there was no alternative to sailing on his travel to and from the island of Cyprus, or on his crossings between Asia Minor and Macedonia (even if he had chosen to walk the Via Egnatia through southern Thrace, he would still have had to sail across the Hellespont), so there was no room for choice in these instances either.

- On Paul's return from his third journey: Assos to Patara – 664 km by ship = 7 days (a 700-km land journey would have required a 24-day walk); Patara to Tyre – 740 km by ship = 4.5 days (a 1,511-km land journey would have required a 51.6-day walk); Tyre to Ptolemais – 55 km by ship = 0.4 days (a 45-km land journey would have required only a 1.5-day walk, but Paul nonetheless continued his voyage on the same ship on which he had come from Patara to Tyre).

Are there any common patterns here that would shed light on the reasons for Paul's choice to travel by ship, even when a land route was possible? Perhaps in these three instances Paul felt that a land route would have required too great a distance and too long a time: 935 kilometres and 32.4 days on the return from his first journey; 3,143 kilometres and 106.7 days on the return from his second journey; 2,256 kilometres and 77.1 days on the return from his third journey. In each case, Paul no doubt felt that his work was accomplished, at least for the time being, and there was no reason to backtrack through lands that he had already visited. Moreover, he was probably anxious to make a quick return in order to deliver a report, to visit supporters, and to rest and recuperate. Speed of travel may especially have been the motivation for his choice to voyage by ship rather than travel by land on the return from his third journey, when he found himself celebrating Passover in Philippi (7 April in the year 57 CE) and was anxious to reach Jerusalem by Pentecost (27 May in the year 57 CE).⁶² A journey of well over two months by land would not have allowed him to accomplish his purpose. Moreover, Paul probably felt some urgency to deliver the financial contributions of the Gentile churches that he was carrying to the church in Jerusalem as quickly and securely as possible.

Perhaps, having spent some years in Tarsus (Acts 9:11,30; 11:25; 21:39; 22:3), and having witnessed the snow-capped peaks of the Taurus Mountains to the north, Paul was wary about travelling a land route that would have required traversing the high passes over the mountains, especially in the cold, icy, and snowy winter months.⁶³ This may especially have been the case on the return from his second journey, when, if, as was apparently the case, he was anxious

62. The Days of Unleavened Bread, which Paul observed in Philippi (Acts 20:6), fell on 7–14 April in the year 57 CE, the most probable year for Paul's return from his third journey: first suggested by W. M. Ramsay, 'A Fixed Date in the Life of St. Paul', *Expositor* 5 (1896): 336–345; more recently advocated by Jewett, *Dating*, 49–50, 101; C. J. Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* (Eisenbrauns, 1990), 169; Riesner, *Paul's Early Period*, 218–219.

63. Cicero (*Att.* 114.14) advises Atticus 'The Taurus Mountains cannot be crossed before the month of June on account of the snow.'

to get to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover (late March/early April), a journey by land would have had him traversing these passes in late February or early March.⁶⁴

Finally, perhaps Paul was willing to travel by ship when advantageous, but only when travelling, as on the returns from all three of his journeys, from west to east, with the prevailing winds astern providing a swift and easy voyage, not when travelling from east to west, against the prevailing winds, when the progress of the ship was much slower and would usually have required much tiresome tacking and/or wearing. In short, perhaps Paul was a selective sailor: he tolerated a voyage by ship only when the wind was at his back.

Now let us consider the other side of this issue: on what occasions, and for what reasons, did Paul choose to travel by foot when a sea route was possible? Apparently, when Paul had a choice in the matter, he chose to travel by foot, even when an easier, faster, and more efficient sea route was available to him, on all but the three occasions just mentioned: during his returns to the Levant from his three journeys. As we have seen in the simulation, he chose to travel well over twice as far by foot than by ship in the narrative of Acts that we are considering (12,076 km by foot and 4,723 km by ship), whereas, as we have seen in the hypothetical itinerary, most ancient travellers would have chosen precisely the opposite (6,104 km by foot and 11,393 km by ship). What was his rationale for these choices?

At a time in our own history, and at a place in our own society, in which walking has become a voluntary recreational activity rather than a necessary mode of travel, it is tempting to imagine that Paul simply liked to walk: he preferred to spend time outside, he enjoyed the physical activity, and he relished seeing the sights and meeting the people along the way. All this is possible, of course, but we need to remind ourselves that travel along most roads in antiquity was often either hot, dry, and dusty or cold, wet, and muddy. Flooded roads and landslides were common obstacles, and ice and snow could render a road impassable. For the common traveller, water was barely potable, food choices were sparse, and accommodations were poor. Insects, rodents, and even larger wild animals were ubiquitous. Gangs of bandits lay in ambush, and even the Roman authorities were not above harassing travellers. Paul himself mentions having suffered several of these hardships (2 Cor 11:26-27).

In some cases the narrative of Acts makes clear that Paul travelled by foot in order to minister to individuals and groups of people who would have been

64. As noted earlier, Codex Bezae as well as the Byzantine manuscript tradition record that Paul wanted to reach Jerusalem by 'the Feast' (ἡ ἑορτή in Acts 18:21).

accessible only on a land route: the inland areas of Asia Minor, for example. Perhaps this was the case also on some of the occasions when Paul's motivation remains unknown to us: throughout inland Macedonia, for example. Conversely, Paul was himself ministered to by a multitude of individuals and groups of people. He had apparently developed a network of Jewish and Christian hosts upon whom he could rely for hospitality as he travelled along the major routes; he could spend nights in the safety and relative comfort of these hosts' homes rather than in the often dangerous and squalid conditions of the roadside inns (*cauponae*). Some of these hosts are mentioned by name in Acts and occasionally in Paul's own letters: Lydia in Philippi (Acts 16:15), Jason in Thessalonica (Acts 17:7), Aquila and Priscilla, and, later, Gaius, in Corinth (Acts 18:2-3; Rom 16:23), Phoebe in Cenchreae (Rom 16:1-2), Philemon in Colossae (Phlm 22), Philip in Caesarea (Acts 21:8), and Mnason in, or near, Jerusalem (Acts 21:16). Unnamed Christians serve as his hosts elsewhere: Tyre (Acts 21:4), Ptolemais (Acts 21:7), Puteoli (Acts 28:14), and, possibly, Rome (Rom 15:24). While most of these cities are accessible by sea as well as by land, there were no doubt some locales where Paul could enjoy the hospitality of fellow Christians only if he travelled by land.

The lack of availability of ships going precisely to where Paul was headed may have been a determining factor. By foot, on the other hand, Paul could come and go whenever he wished. The cost of the fare on a ship may also have been a consideration. But passenger fares appear to have been quite reasonable at this time (Lucian, *Nav.* 15), as the ship owner's profit was derived largely from the cargo; moreover, Paul would likely have accrued higher costs while travelling by foot (food and drink, lodging, baths, tolls, taxes, duties, and other fees). The unpredictability of voyages on ships may have been a factor: inability to get in or out of a harbour, adverse wind conditions, bad weather, etc. Travel by ship was more at the mercy of the weather than travel by land, and one could never be certain about when exactly a ship would arrive at its destination. The season of the year may have played a part: travel by land was possible throughout the year on most of the roads that Paul travelled, while travel by ship could be especially dangerous from late Fall to early Spring. Indeed, perhaps Paul was haunted by his experience of three shipwrecks (2 Cor 11:25-26). He may have had less serious concerns as well: a proneness to seasickness; a wariness of other contagious illnesses that so readily arise among a crowd of strangers living at close quarters; an aversion to the general uncleanliness of a merchant ship (the smells of garum, rotting foods, and animal and human waste accompanied by the sounds of rodents and insects scurrying

about the deck). Such conditions may have been particularly repulsive to Paul's Pharisaic sensibilities pertaining to ritual purity.

Finally, we should remind ourselves that while some of Paul's reasons for choosing to walk were determined, no doubt, by his actual historical circumstances (lack of availability of a ship, inclement weather, adverse wind conditions, etc.) – even though we cannot say with any certainty whether these circumstances were known to Luke from first-hand knowledge or from his source materials – some may have had more to do with Luke's particular portrayal of Paul in Acts. For Luke appears to be presenting his hero in the light of the paradigm of the itinerant teacher (cf. Acts 14:21-23; 15:2-3,36,41; 16:4-5; 18:23; 19:1-7,21; 20:1-2). Both the Judeo-Christian and the Greco-Roman worlds possessed traditions of teachers who regularly instructed disciples whom they encountered while walking along a road. For Luke the most likely paradigms were Jesus, on the one hand, and Socrates, on the other. As many have observed, some of Paul's travels in Acts appear to be modelled on the itinerant ministry of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke, where Jesus is depicted teaching and gathering disciples, in the rabbinic tradition, while walking along the roads of Galilee and Judaea.⁶⁵ The parallels between Jesus and Paul are especially poignant in Luke's descriptions of their respective final journeys to Jerusalem (cf. Luke 13:31-35; 18:31-34 and Acts 20:22-24; 21:4,10-14). Luke's portrayal of Paul's travelling and teaching practices can also be seen through the light of the well-known philosophical practices of Socrates, as well as of Aristotle and the later peripatetic philosophers generally.⁶⁶ Socrates was the paradigmatic itinerant teacher of antiquity. In fact, his practice of teaching disciples whom he meets while walking along a road provides the setting for several of Plato's dialogues (e.g., *Lysis*, *Phaedrus*, *Republic*).

Admittedly, in attempting to analyse Paul's motivations for his choices of modes of travel in Acts – or Luke's motivations for his portrayal of Paul's choices – we have sunk deeply into the realm of speculation. But even though the text of Acts offers little explicit evidence that pertains specifically to Paul's motivation for his choices, our speculation on the matter has been firmly based on our technical knowledge of the nature of land and sea travel in antiquity. In sum, we can state with confidence that Luke has depicted Paul, the main character in his narrative in Acts, as an extraordinary walker – as someone,

65. So, recently, J. R. Edwards, 'Parallels and Patterns between Luke and Acts', *BBR* 27.4 (2017): 485–501, <https://doi.org/10.5325/bullbiblrese.27.4.0485>.

66. So, recently, S. Reece, 'Echoes of Plato's *Apology of Socrates* in Luke-Acts', *NovT* 63 (2021): 177–197, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15685365-12341681>.

in fact, who preferred to travel by foot rather than by ship in almost every instance in which this option was available to him.

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