

this period (P.Oxy. 3250, from 63 C.E.) and in earlier times (P.Hib. 2.198.5.111–22).⁵¹⁵ Then again, if the captain does not own the boat, he might be more likely to gamble its contents on beating the storm, provided he expects survival: those renting boats agreed in contracts to return them undamaged *except* for acts of God such as storms (or attacks by pirates).⁵¹⁶

Although everyone would be eager to sail if at all possible,⁵¹⁷ they would not risk their lives if they genuinely believed that they would soon face a deadly storm. How did such seamen, presumably experienced, fail to foresee the likelihood of the storm? For one thing, mountains more than a thousand meters high and only a kilometer or two from Fair Havens obstructed their vision to the north and east.⁵¹⁸ But “a low-index weather pattern” may have also led them to underestimate the danger. During such a period, storms move “west to east along a relatively fixed track,” in this case, across the northern Mediterranean Sea; thus a fairly constant “bubble” of good weather could lie directly south of the storm route.⁵¹⁹ The winds shifted every few days, and pleasant weather was sandwiched between storms.⁵²⁰ The gamble these shippers made would have succeeded on most occasions, but over the course of time some such gambles were bound to prove fatal.

e. Trying to Reach Phoenix (27:12–13)

The pilot and captain (Acts 27:11) are more concerned about keeping the ship in good condition or, alternatively, about keeping the sailors happy for the winter than about immediate safety, at least so long as safety appears to them significantly more probable than not.⁵²¹ (Fair Havens was perhaps not the best harbor, but at least the nearby islands offered some shelter whereas, if the ship faced a storm outside the harbor, they risked being driven out to sea.)⁵²² Ultimately this decision will cause them to lose the ship (27:41).⁵²³

I. HOPING TO REACH PHOENIX (27:12)

Presumably no one was arguing that the ship should try to reach Rome before winter; most would have agreed had Paul's objection been merely to this. But most thought that they could find a better harbor in Crete to spend the winter; they had ventured across the Aegean to Crete, and sailing a little farther if calmer winds arose seemed a fairly safe gamble. The ship itself would seem safer in a better harbor. Ancients could evaluate harbors according to wind conditions.⁵²⁴ One wind direction, *χῶρος*, means “northwest,” equivalent to the Latin *caurus/corus*.⁵²⁵ The term *λίψ* probably means

515. Horsley, *Documents*, 2:74, §25.

516. Llewelyn, *Documents*, 6:82–83, §12.

517. Including the centurion, who would rather not requisition homes in which to quarter his soldiers and prisoners for more of the winter than necessary. A larger city with a greater Roman presence and appreciation for Rome would be more useful in every respect.

518. White, “Meteorological Appraisal,” 405–6.

519. *Ibid.*, 406 (noting, “This allowed the heat from the Sahara Desert to slide northward and fuel the storms, while keeping them on track as they slid eastward”).

520. *Ibid.*

521. Concern for safety precautions appears both in sages (perhaps Prov 14:16; 22:3; 27:12) and in laws concerning negligence (e.g., Exod 21:29, 32–34, 36; Deut 22:8; Eshn. 5, 53–58; Hamm. 229–37, 244–52).

522. Bruce, *Commentary*, 507 (following Smith, *Voyage*, 85n), though also noting the site's weaknesses.

523. Cf. Luke 21:21, where it is better to abandon the city than to lose life (though the point is clearer in Mark and Matthew).

524. Conzelmann, *Acts*, 217, citing Arrian *Periplus* 4.

525. Conzelmann, *Acts*, 217 (noting Pliny E. *N.H.* 2.119 for west-northwest). Seamen hybridized Latin and Greek weather terms, including *corus* (IGRR 1.177 = IG 14.1308 in Hemer, *Acts in History*, 140–41; cf. also BDAG).

“west” or (conjoined with $\chi\acute{\omega}\rho\omicron\varsigma$ here) “southwest.” It usually meant “southwest” in classical Greek, “south”⁵²⁶ and very rarely “west”⁵²⁷ in the LXX, and (probably most important for a report perhaps overheard from Egyptian sailors) “west” in the papyri.⁵²⁸

Most of the southwest coast of Crete is extremely “steep and inhospitable,” but it has some “fertile coastal plains and at the western end, several very hospitable valleys leading up into the mountains.”⁵²⁹ Coastal cities included Lissos, with its Asclepius sanctuary, and, to its east, “ancient Phoenix, with its excellent harbour” in the vicinity of modern Loutro; Phoenix had two sister cities inland: Aradena, “above on a mountain plain,”⁵³⁰ and Anopolis, “600 meters above Loutro”⁵³¹ and across “a spectacular gorge” from Aradena.⁵³² Other inland sites less than ten kilometers from Phoenix reveal habitation in the Roman period. Thus Phoenix was a strategic destination, among fairly few.⁵³³

Strabo notes that Phoenix ($\Phi\omicron\iota\nu\iota\xi$) lay on the southern side of a Cretan isthmus and that Phoenix belonged to the Lampians (Strabo 10.4.3). Notwithstanding our uncertainty concerning its precise location, its general location is not in dispute. Commentators estimate that it was as much as 50 miles west of Fair Havens, about 34 to 36 miles west of Cape Matala,⁵³⁴ and probably (Ptolemy *Geog.* 3.15 [3.17.3]) about 34 miles from the west end of Crete.⁵³⁵ A straight line from Cape Matala to Phoenix would be shorter, but since the ship would hug to the coast rather than sail straight for Phoenix, it was more than 80 kilometers (ca. 50 mi.) past Cape Matala.⁵³⁶

The exact location of ancient Phoenix is disputed today; seismic activity has changed the topography, reducing certain correlations with ancient descriptions.⁵³⁷ Near Phoenix is the rocky peninsula Cape Mouros, extending almost a mile (1.6 km.) into the sea and surrounded by two bays.⁵³⁸ The best harbor is the eastern one, where the small, modern fishing village of Loutro⁵³⁹ lies, but this harbor looks southeast whereas the winds Luke mentions indicate a harbor that looked west.⁵⁴⁰ Some, including Smith, have argued for the eastern bay.⁵⁴¹ Most, however, argue that the right site is the west-facing harbor

526. Gen 13:14; 20:1; 24:62; 28:14; Exod 27:9; 37:7; 38:9; Num 2:10; 3:29; 10:6; 34:3–4; 35:5; Deut 1:7; 3:27; 33:23; Josh 15:1–4, 7–8, 10; 17:9–10; 18:5, 13–16, 19; 19:9; 2 Chr 28:18; Ps 77:26; Isa 43:6; Ezek 47:19; 48:28. 527. 2 Chr 32:30; 33:14.

528. Conzelmann, *Acts*, 217. Even unprotected, the winds would not push them seaward, and Crete itself still protected them from the worst northern winds.

529. Sanders, *Crete*, 29.

530. *Ibid.*

531. *Ibid.*, 165.

532. *Ibid.*, 29. Limited remains at Anopolis (Hellenistic) and Aradena (a later basilica, 165) leave some uncertainty about the level of habitation in this period.

533. There were coastal cities with Roman habitation before Phoenix in present-day Ayios Savvas, Ayios Photia, Cape Melissa, and Ayia Galini (Sanders, *Crete*, 164), though a wrecked ship not far from Ayia Galini (165) might testify to the difficulty of the harbor. Closer is probably Matala, though Roman evidence is incomplete and the harbor may have been difficult, as illustrated by a wreck north of the bay (161).

534. Bruce, *Commentary*, 508; Witherington, *Acts*, 765.

535. Barrett, *Acts*, 1192. Ramsay, “Roads and Travel,” 379, 381, surmises that Phoenix was probably a common winter harbor.

536. See Sanders, *Crete*, fig. 64.

537. For significant evidence supporting uplift in western Crete and the rise in water level around the island during the medieval and modern periods, see Sanders, *Crete*, “Appendix III: Sea Level Functions,” 181–82. For earthquake destruction levels from fourth-century Crete, see pp. 30, 172. On the city of Phoenix, see further Sonnabend, “Phoenix.”

538. The description of the location for Phoenix in Ptolemy *Geog.* 3.15.3 places it near Cape Mouros (Finegan, *Apostles*, 196).

539. Located with Phoenix in Sanders, *Crete*, fig. 64; not to be confused with Loutra on the interior (fig. 64).

540. Barrett, *Acts*, 1192. Because Ptolemy’s list moves from west to east, the Phoinikos Harbor (Phoenix Harbor) was west of Phoenix proper, on the western bay; further, sailors view Loutro as unsafe during winter (Finegan, *Apostles*, 197).

541. Smith, *Voyage*, 87–92.

across from Loutro, still called Phonika (or Phineka) Bay, which faces southwest and is open to westerly winds. Its anchorage is not good today, but this situation stems from geologic changes in Crete in the past two millennia, possibly with silting from the two streams flowing nearby. In antiquity it was likely safer.⁵⁴² This western bay is about 150 feet, or 25 fathoms (46 m.), deep and lacks reefs; although it is not used for a harbor today, it probably was in antiquity.⁵⁴³ This bay has two inlets: the one facing northwest has mostly filled in, but the other facing southwest remains 42 to 48 feet (7–8 fathoms; 13–15 m.) deep.⁵⁴⁴ This topography fits Luke's claim that the harbor faced both southwest and northwest, a claim that seems unlikely on the southern coast of Crete but is supported by archaeological evidence. The line of seashells shows that the northwest area was once fourteen feet lower—that is, at the sea.⁵⁴⁵

Some scholars suggest "that Luke confused the two bays," one facing east and the other facing west, since Ptolemy (*Geog.* 3.17.3) uses "Phoenix" for both the western bay (Φοινικοὺς λιμῆν) and the city to its east (Φοίνιξ πόλις).⁵⁴⁶ Although this assumption is hardly necessary, there is no reason to believe that Luke traveled there or knew much about the site apart from what he heard sailors discuss, since the ship never reaches there. For this same reason, in the final analysis, knowledge of the site has little bearing on Luke's narrative.⁵⁴⁷

Some ancients could relate the name "Phoenix" to the bird of that name, which was reborn every five centuries.⁵⁴⁸ Although the bird could be used to symbolize resurrection,⁵⁴⁹ there is probably no thought of such a symbolic connection here (well as it would work). Phoenix was, after all, a genuine city; the term refers even more to the date palm;⁵⁵⁰ and more important, one would expect a city to be named Phoenix because it was founded much earlier by the widely seafaring Phoenicians.⁵⁵¹ Luke does not normally avail himself of opportunities to exploit potential allegorical associations of place names.

II. THE DECEPTIVE FAVORABLE WIND (27:13)

Calm before storms often appears in narratives of sea voyages in various genres.⁵⁵² Sailors took advantage of favorable winds,⁵⁵³ and sometimes excessive optimism about

542. Bruce, *Commentary*, 508; Haenchen, *Acts*, 700n7; Arrington, *Acts*, 254; Hemer, *Acts in History*, 139; Witherington, *Acts*, 764; Barrett, *Acts*, 1192 (viewing this site as "virtually certain"). On the changes of topography due to earthquakes, Finegan, *Apostles*, 197.

543. Finegan, *Apostles*, 196 (noting also the bay's two inlets, one mostly filled up).

544. *Ibid.*

545. Kistemaker, *Acts*, 923, following Ogilvie, "Phoenix," and noting other results of seismic activity in southern Crete.

546. Conzelmann, *Acts*, 217.

547. With Johnson, *Acts*, 447.

548. E.g., Ovid *Metam.* 15.391–407 (claiming that this is its Assyrian name, 15.393); *Am.* 2.6.54 (on its longevity); *Sen. Y. Ep. Lucil.* 42.2; *Pliny E. N.H.* 10.2.4 (540 years); 13.9.42; *Philost. Vit. Apoll.* 3.49 (living in India but visiting Egypt every 500 years); *Ach. Tat.* 3.25 (without resurrection); cf. one view in *Tac. Ann.* 6.28; a speaker in *Lucian Peregr.* 27; see further Van den Broek, *Myth of Phoenix*; idem, "Phoenix"; Käppel, "Phoenix." On its rare appearance, see, e.g., *Ael. Arist. Def. Or.* 426, §144D; *Philost. Letters* 8 (46). The depiction of the Ethiopian and Indian phoenix in *Pliny E. N.H.* 10.2.3–5 resembles Asia's golden pheasants (trans. H. Rackham, *LCL*, 3:292 n. 4). In Jewish sources, see *3 Bar.* 6:9–10; 7:5; *Ezek. Trag. Exag.* 254–69 (on which H. Heath, "Visuality"); in the rabbis, see *Gen. Rab.* 19:5; Niehoff, "Phoenix." In *Tac. Ann.* 6.28, Tacitus doubts that it has appeared (see discussion in Keitel, "Non-appearance").

549. In early Christian literature, see *1 Clem.* 25.2; in art, Latourette, *First Five Centuries*, 324.

550. E.g., *John* 12:13; *Rev.* 7:9; *Herm.* 68.1; often in the *LXX* (e.g., *2 Macc* 10:7; 14:4; *Sir* 24:14; 50:12); *Josephus* (e.g., *Ant.* 3.9. 102, 113, 124, 154, 183, 245); and *Philo* (e.g., *Alleg. Interp.* 3.74; *Unchangeable* 137; *Agr.* 112; *Flight* 183, 186–87).

551. On the name, cf. Tsirkin, "Canaan."

552. Praeder, "Acts 27:1–28:16," 691 (citing *Ap. Rhod.* 4.1223–25; *Arrian Peripl.* 5; *Ps.-Chion Ep.* 4.1–2; *Heryllis* 17; *Quintus of Smyrna Posthomerica* 14.403–18; *Sen. Y. Ag.* 431–55; *Tac. Ann.* 2.23.2).

553. *Cic. At.* 16.4–5 (on the Etesian winds [etesiis]).