

# Trials and Verdicts

Book of Acts – Week 6



# Week 6 – The End of the Story

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## Acts 17 - Thessalonica

The theme of suffering and then God's rescue is a repeating theme throughout the Old Testament.

What are some of the stories of the OT that show this theme?

This is of course the story of Jesus. It is this that shows him as Messiah.

Paul continues to have a special place of encouragement for the church in Thessalonica – read 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 3:1–5.

Acts 1-12 – Jesus is hailed as Messiah

Acts 12:22 – Herod accepts worship and dies

Acts 13 onwards – Jesus is 'another king' and 'lord of this world'

**saying there is another king other than Caesar** – This is a central statement in regards to the reason for persecution against Christians.

## Paul at the Areopagus

Epicureanism:

- What makes people happy?
- Moved the question from how to be good to how to be happy
- Happiness comes from;
  - Friendship
  - Working to make life better
  - A feeling of calm
- Developments from these ideas;
  - Monasticism
  - Communism

Stoicism:

- Looked at how to deal with Anxiety
  - Get rid of hope
  - Expect the bad things in life then you won't be angry about them
  - "what's the worst that can happen?"

- We will get through the tough life and if you do not wish to there is always killing yourself

Where in today's culture might you recognise the influence of the Epicureans or the Stoics?

## Acts 18 - Corinth

Paul spend a significant amount of time here because he is told in a vision to stay and continue to preach and his preaching saw several prominent Jewish leaders become Christians.

## Acts 19

### *Paul in Ephesus*

The main thing Luke is doing in this little story is to introduce Paul's work in Ephesus, and to show that, from the very beginning, he was concerned with the spirit's powerful work both in the lives of individuals and out into the wider community.

Power from God to bring the kingdom is part of the extension of the beginning of Acts and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

- Eph 1:19
- 3:16
- 6:10
- Col 1:11

## The Climax of the Story is a Shipwreck

In this story the idea of 'saved' or 'salvation' rushes in to be Luke's focus.

27:20	saved
27:31	saved
27:34	'salvation' here rendered 'strength'
27:43	save
27:44	completely saved
28:1	completely saved

However rather than end with this crashing salvation story Luke finishes by leaving us moving quietly into the future.

<sup>Acts 28:30</sup> For the next two years, Paul lived in Rome at his own expense. He welcomed all who visited him, <sup>31</sup> boldly

proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ. And no one tried to stop him.

But the real hero of the whole book is of course the Jesus who was enthroned as the world's Lord at the beginning, and is now proclaimed, at the end, 'openly and unhindered', that is, with all 'boldness' (a technical term, as elsewhere, not just for moral courage but for a readiness to speak out in public on matters of importance) and with nobody stopping him. And here, for once, Luke gives a full 'Pauline' title to Jesus: 'the Lord Jesus, the Messiah'. King of the Jews; Lord of the World: Jesus of Nazareth, continuing to do and to teach, continuing to announce the kingdom of God which has been decisively inaugurated on earth as in heaven. Jesus of Nazareth, Messiah and Lord: through his servants, through their journeys and their trials, through their pains and their puzzles and their sufferings and their shipwrecks, still reaching out into the future, out beyond Rome and the first century, out across the tracts of time and geography, still confronting men, women and children, rulers, disabled people, local authorities, artisans, governors of islands, wandering tentmakers, philosophers in the market-place, and young men nodding off on windowsills. Luke has brought them all before us, in a dazzling display both of writing and of theology, drawing us in, reminding us once more that this is a drama in which we ourselves have been called to belong to the cast. The journey is ours, the trials and vindications are ours, the sovereign presence of Jesus is ours, the story is ours to pick up and carry on. Luke's writing, like Paul's journey, has reached its end, **but in his end is our beginning.**<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Wright, *Acts for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 13-28* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 248-49.