The first history of Early Christianity, the Book of Acts, written by the same author as the Gospel of Luke, does not always describe the real historical events as they occurred. Very often it is the literary element that prevails. Some new philological investigations made plausible that the Apostle Paul went to Rome rather on a different way than depicted in Acts, while the account about the sea storm is taken over (partly) from the “Vita” of Flavius Josephus, a Jewish contemporary of Luke. The depiction of a terrible storm lasting two weeks and of a salvation from it turns out as a symbolical reference to the Passion of Jesus Christ and in this sense has a very important function in the “double-work” of Luke (Luke-Acts). A short analysis of similarities between Acts 27 and Luke 23 should introduce into the method used afterwards in the paper. This introduction is at the same time obviously significant for the main theme of the conference: a description of a sea travel is clearly loaded with many religious connotations.

But is there any sense in the salvation of Paul, the main figure of the Book of Acts, precisely on the shore of the island Melita (Malta) and in spending three winter months before his arrival to Rome?

The main part of the paper which tries to give an answer to this question also deals with diverse literary parallels of the last two chapters of Acts. These parallels can make clearer the literary function(s) of Malta in the inter- and hypertextual composition of Luke. In the beginning the first part of “Aeneis” of Virgil should be discussed as a whole. Secondly, the first chapter of the Letter to the Romans written by Paul himself is of some significance for our question. Thirdly, similar scenes with not-Jewish but closely related Phoenician inhabitants in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew written earlier than the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts should be analyzed. Last point will be a comparison between Acts 27–28 and some other texts of Luke himself, his own Gospel and also Book of Acts (chapter 13, where also an island, Cyprus, plays a similar role).

“External” character of Malta, its pagan Phoenician population as well as its Roman administration – all these factors make Malta of the 1st century CE a very appropriate setting for the last chapter of Acts. All details of the short story told in Acts 28:1-11 - “barbarians” as the name of the local population, a snake dying in a fire, Paul as a “god”, healing of a Roman ruler, a ship with signs of Dioscuri – obtain their new sense if understood as elements of a literary strategy of the author of Luke-Acts.