

Monday 7:00pm, H 105 (1st floor, High School--foot of stairs, behind the gym, by the vending machine area), Tuesday 7:00am, Family, Room, CCCM – Phil Twente, cell #714 425 9221; email – ptwente@gmail.com For past studies, audio plus notes, go to: <http://www.missioncalvary.com/> Click on “Bible Studies” on the left column. References include commentaries by numerous pastor/teachers.

TEACHING CHRIST AT THESSALONICA– VS.1-4

Act 17:1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

Act 17:2 Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,

Act 17:3 explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ."

Act 17:4 And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.

ASSUALT ON JASON'S HOUSE – VS. 5-9

Act 17:5 But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

Act 17:6 But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too."

Act 17:7 Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king—Jesus."

Act 17:8 And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things.

Act 17:9 So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

v. 1 Leaving Philippi, Paul continues on his journey. Amphipolis was thirty-three miles from Phillipi. Apollonia was another thirty miles from Amphipolis. And another thirty-seven miles beyond that was another major city known as Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

vs. 2-3 According to his custom, he came to the synagogue of the Jews. It was just a routine with Paul. He went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures. He was "explaining and demonstrating", from the Old Testament Scriptures, "that Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead." **Mark 9:34; Acts 17:17;18:4, 9; - Explaining – “open” – Mark 7:34, 35; Luke 24:31-32, 45**

v. 4 Some of them believed. That always happens when you give out the Word of God. Some of them believe. Also some of them won't believe. The minority believe; the majority will not. "not a few of the leading women" Luke is using his usual understatement, meaning that a large number of prominent women came to the Lord. How wonderful!

v. 5 Unfortunately, we also have some "evil men from the marketplace" in our churches today. Here they gathered a mob and set the whole city in an uproar.

v. 6 When they said that these men were turning the world upside down, that is exactly what they meant. When Christianity penetrated that old Roman Empire it was a revolution. It had a tremendous effect.

v. 7 Because Jason had housed them, he was accused of acting against Caesar, saying there is another king. That King is Jesus!

vs. 8-9 Thessalonica was a Roman colony, which was operated according to Caesar's dictates. "They had taken security of Jason and the rest" means that he had to post a bond, in order to be released..



v. 3 “explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ." This was the standard Christian apologetic message toward the Jewish people, the precedent for which was set by Jesus, during His ministry. **Cf. Ps. 2:1-7; 16:8-11; 110:1; 118:22; Isaiah 52-53; Deut. 21:22-23**

v. 4 Those persuaded probably included Jews, Greeks, God-fearers and well-known women.

v. 5 The expected response to the successful sharing the gospel of the exclusivity of Jesus Christ is that of reproach and persecution. **Cf. Acts 4:1-4; 5:17-32; 6:11-15; 14:19-20; 16:16-34**

v. 13 Now the same thing is happening at Berea as happened at Thessalonica, that of reproach and persecution.

MINISTERING AT BEREA – VS. 10-15

Act 17:10 Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

Act 17:11 These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

Act 17:12 Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.

Act 17:13 But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds.

Act 17:14 Then immediately the brethren sent Paul away, to go to the sea; but both Silas and Timothy remained there.

Act 17:15 So those who conducted Paul brought him to Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed, they departed.

THE PHILOSOPHERS AT ATHENS – VS. 16-21

Act 17:16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols.

RESPOND WITH FAITH THAT HE WILL

Act 17:17 Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there.

Act 17:18 Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, "What does this babbler want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods," because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.

v. 10 You might think that again being expelled from another city would dampen the enthusiasm of Paul, that it would slow him down. It didn't slow him down one bit; he is still going. He goes to Berea, which is a town (55 miles) down closer to the coast.

v. 11 These people were reasonable. They searched the Scriptures, and there came into existence a church in Berea. We don't hear much about that church. It is interesting that the strongest churches arose where the persecution was the greatest.

v. 12 From the way in which they heard, received, and examined the word preached to them, it was not likely they could be deceived. And, as it was the truth that was proclaimed to them, it is no wonder that they apprehended, believed, and embraced it. Thus we find that the preaching of Paul at Berea was made the instrument of converting both Jews and Gentiles.

v. 13 The Jews of Thessalonica - stirred up the people - With what implacable malice did these men persecute the Gospel! And in the same spirit they continue to the present day, though it is evidently the sole cause of their wretchedness.

vs. 14-15 Paul goes to Athens alone. He will wait for Silas and Timotheus there. He probably had said to them, "You go back to check on the believers in Thessalonica and see how the church is progressing there, and check on the believers in Berea; then join me in Athens."

v. 16 Athens was the cultural center of the world. In fact, when one thinks of Athens, one thinks about culture. Yet it was a city filled with idolatry.

v. 17 He engaged in an argument with them. Those worshipping God after the manner of the Jews. They were Jewish proselytes, who had renounced idolatry, but who had not been fully admitted to the privileges of the Jews. In the forum--It was not only the place where provisions were sold, but was also a place of great public concourse. In this place the philosophers were not infrequently found engaged in public discussion.

thought he made these to be two divinities: the strange gods were *Jehovah* and *the Risen Savior*, ordained to judge the world.

v. 18 The Epicureans were a well-known school of *atheistic materialists*, who taught that pleasure was the chief end of human existence; a principle which the more rational interpreted in a refined sense, while the sensual explained it in its coarser meaning. The Stoics were a celebrated school of *severe and lofty pantheists*, whose principle was that the universe was under the law of an iron necessity, the spirit of which was what is called the Deity: and that a passionless conformity of the human will to this law, unmoved by all external circumstances and changes, is the perfection of virtue.

Note that Paul reasoned, explained, proved, proclaimed and persuaded—all the while **using the Scriptures as the basis** for his teaching.

At Berea, we see **the principle of investigating the Scriptures to see if the teaching was true and accurate.**

v. 16 Paul was given a safe escort to Athens. Observe that as he waited for Silas and timothy to join him, his reaction of a Christian who visits or lives in a city which is dominated by a non-Christian ideology or religion, a city which may be aesthetically magnificent and culturally sophisticated, but morally decadent and spiritually deceived or dead? Luke tells us: **What Paul saw;** **v. 16** His major reaction was *that the city was given over to idols!!*

What Paul felt: **v. 16** *"his spirit was provoked"!!*

What Paul did: **vs. 17-18a** "Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there. Act 17:18 Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. Epicureans – It was characteristic of them to emphasize chance, escape and the enjoyment of pleasure. Stoics – It was characteristic of them to emphasize fatalism, submissions and the endurance of pain.

Notice Paul's response to the idolatry that he saw was not to run away or be silent, but he actively discussed and reasoned with three groups--Jews and Gentile worshippers in the synagogue; common people daily in the marketplace; philosophers on Mars Hill.

What Paul said: **vs. 22-31** - In addressing the audience on Mars' Hill, Paul begins by relating his experience with the Unknown God.

Act 17:19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak?"
Act 17:20 For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean."
Act 17:21 For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.

ADDRESSING THE AREOPAGUS – VS. 22-34

Act 17:22 Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious;
Act 17:23 for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you:
Act 17:24 God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Act 17:25 Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.
Act 17:26 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,
Act 17:27 so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;

v. 19 They took him, and brought him to Areopagus, the hill where the most awful court of judgment had sat from time immemorial to pass sentence on the greatest criminals, and to decide on the most solemn questions connected with religion. No place in Athens was so suitable for a discourse on the mysteries of religion.
vs. 20- 21 They asked about Paul's doctrine, not because it was good, but because it was new. Great talkers are always busy-bodies. They spend their time in nothing else, and a very uncomfortable account they have to give of their time who thus spend it.
v. 22-27 Here we have a sermon to heathens, who worshipped false gods, and were without the true God in the world; and to them the scope of the discourse was different from what the apostle preached to the Jews. In the latter case, his business was to lead his hearers by prophecies and miracles to the knowledge of the Redeemer, and faith in him; in the former, it was to lead them, by the common works of providence, to know the Creator, and worship Him. The apostle spoke of an altar he had seen, with the inscription, "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD." This fact is stated by many writers. After multiplying their idols to the utmost, some at Athens thought there was another god of whom they had no knowledge. And are there not many now called Christians, who are zealous in their devotions, yet the great object of their worship is to them an unknown God? Observe what glorious things Paul here says of that God whom he served, and would have them to serve. The Lord had long borne with idolatry, but the times of this ignorance were now ending, and by his servants he now commanded all men everywhere to repent of their idolatry.

He then proceeds to bring them to the one true and living God in five ways, exposing the errors and horrors of idolatry.

1. God is the Creator of the universe. (v. 24)
2. God is the Sustainer of life. (v. 25)
3. God is the Ruler of all the nations (v.26-28a)
4. God is the Father of human beings. (vs. 28b-29)
5. God is the judge of the world. (vs. 29b-31)

He then mentions the resurrection (v. 32), which bring his message to an abrupt end. We can notice the order of Paul's reaction to the idolatry that he saw: He saw. He felt. He spoke. It all began with his eyes. As he walked around Athens, he didn't just notice the idols, he observed or considered them. He looked and looked, and thought and thought, until the fires of holy indignation were kindled within him. For he saw men and women, created by God in the image of God, giving to idols the homage which was due to Him alone.

We see here that idols are not limited to primitive societies. Any god-substitute is an idol. Any person or thing that occupies the place which God should occupy is an idol. Covetousness is idolatry. Ideologies can be idolatries. So can fame, wealth and power, sex, food, alcohol and other drugs, parent, spouse, children and friends, work recreation, television and possessions, even church, religion and Christian service. Paul was greatly pained by the idolatrous city of Athens. **Have you, have I ever been so provoked by the idolatrous cities of our world today?**

Act 17:28 for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'

Act 17:29 Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.

Act 17:30 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,

Act 17:31 because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

Act 17:32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, "We will hear you again on this matter."

Act 17:33 So Paul departed from among them.

Act 17:34 However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

v. 28-29 He does not call them sons of God but the offspring of God. He is referring to creation and the relationship to God through creation. By the way, this is not pantheism that he is stating here. He is not saying that everything is God. He says that in God we live and move and have our being but that God is beyond this created universe. Paul quotes to them from their own poets. One of the poets he quoted was Arastus who lived about 270 A.D. He was a Stoic from Cilicia. He began a poem with an invocation to Zeus in which he said that "we too are his offspring." Cleanthes was another poet who lived about 300 A.D. He also wrote a hymn to Zeus and speaks of the fact that "we are his offspring." Paul means, of course, that we are God's creatures.

v. 30-31 There was a time when God shut His eyes to paganism. Now light has come into the world. God asks men everywhere to turn to Him. Light creates responsibility. Now God is commanding all men everywhere to repent. He has presented God as the Creator in His past work. He shows God as the Redeemer in His present work. Now he shows God as the Judge in His future work. When God judges, it will be right. Judgment will be through a Judge who has nail-pierced hands, the One who has been raised from the dead.

v. 32 Do you know why they mocked? Because Platonism denied the resurrection of the dead. That was one of the marks of Platonism. It denied the physical resurrection. When you hear people today talking about a *spiritual* resurrection but denying the *physical* resurrection, you are hearing Platonic philosophy rather than scriptural teaching. Paul taught the physical resurrection from the dead. So when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked.

v. 33 Paul departs from them.

v. 34 There was quite an aggregation of converts in the city of Athens. When Paul went to a place and preached the gospel, he had converts. Wherever the Word of God is preached, there will be those who will listen and believe.

Questions:

- 1. How long do you think Paul was in Thessalonica?**
- 2. What three things did Paul always include in His message to Jewish & God-fearing unbelievers? (v. 3)**
- 3. The assault on Jason's house in verse five is a typical of what response to the gospel being successfully preached? What other cities in the Book of Acts, so far, did this occur?**
- 4. Did Paul use the scriptures as his basis in fact and truth as he reasoned with the people?**
- 5. In what city was the principle of searching the scriptures to see whether the teaching was true?**
- 6. In verses, Luke breaks down what Paul did, while in Athens, waiting for Silas and Timothy to join him. Luke breaks down Paul's reactions into four general areas – vs. 16-31. Can you name or describe them?**
- 7. In Paul's message (vs. 22-31) Paul brings the audience to the one true and living God in five ways, exposing the errors and horrors of idolatry. What were they?**
- 8. Paul was greatly pained by the idolatrous city of Athens. Have you ever been so provoked by the idolatrous cities of our world, of California today?**