

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

THESSALONICA (ACTS 17:1-4)

THANK GOD FOR THE SYNAGOGUE!

After leaving Philippi and travelling through northern Greece, Paul and his team eventually came across their first synagogue in a city called Thessalonica.

- Thessalonica was wealthy, diverse, and influential in politics, and because of its diversity, it had a significant Jewish population.

THESE GUYS WERE PROBABLY EXHAUSTED

Chapter 16 ended with a beating in the city of Philippi. Right after the beating and a night in jail, the team takes a 3 day walk through Amphipolis and Apollonia before arriving in Thessalonica.

- We don't know if the Gospel was spread in the cities between Philippi and Thessalonica.

A FAMILIAR SETTING

As Paul and the team roll into the synagogue on three Sabbath days, they did what their original plan had always intended; reach the Jews first, then move onto the Gentiles.

- **The objective was to reason, explain, and prove through scripture, and to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah.**

CAREFUL AND INTENTIONAL TEACHING

The missionary team was prepared to engage and answer as many questions as possible. They'd studied and prayed about **Christology**, what we call **hermeneutics**, so they could better reach people who didn't know Christ.

- **All Christians are to be able to explain their faith. The only way to do this is through study and prayer.**

THE RESPONSE WAS GOOD!

After explaining that "it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and rise from the dead," many Jews came to a saving knowledge of Jesus along with "a large number of God-fearing Greeks" and "leading women."

- **With preparation and diligence, the results of our witnessing can be numerous and diverse!**

RIOT (ACTS 17:5-9)

"SOME WICKED MEN FROM THE MARKETPLACE"

The Jews that were not receptive became jealous of the Christians and gathered some troublemakers from the retail areas of town. These "wicked men" hung around the markets because they had nothing else to do.

- **A huge reason many of us get into the trouble we do is because we have too much idle time.**

I'M BORED, LET'S START A RIOT

Since the "wicked men" had nothing better to do, they started a riot that drew the attention off of the Gospel being taught and made it appear the commotion was the Christians' fault.

- Like previous cities, the antagonists wanted to persuade the officials that the *Pax Romana* was in jeopardy.

ATTACKING JASON'S HOUSE

Apparently Jason (whose name is the Greek equivalent of Jesus or Joshua) was hiding the missionaries. So, the mob attacked his house and dragged him and several other Christians before the magistrates.

- In 50 A.D. the Edict of Claudius was passed. This law said Christians would be expelled from Rome if riots began.

"...TURNED THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN"

Though the words of the troublemakers were an exaggeration, it would become a statement that held some significant truth. Eventually this small "cult" would become the official religion of the Roman Empire.

- **This "exaggeration" is precisely what we're called to do: turn people's worlds upside down with the Gospel.**

THEY HAVE COME AND ARE BEING WELCOMED

The accusation against Jason was that he not only invited the Christians in, but that he was defying Caesar's decrees by claiming that Jesus is their King.

- Though the city officials were "upset," they goal wasn't to punish the missionaries or their host. Their made Jason promise the team would leave.

PAUL WAS UPSET AS WELL

Later in 1Thess. 2, Paul mentions that he thought this was Satan shutting doors for them to share the truth in Thessalonica. We also see in 1Thess. 3 that the church there grew and thrived despite the setbacks.

- **We must remember that we do fight a spiritual battle, and ultimately God wins.**

BEREA (ACTS 17:10-15)

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

"As soon as it was night, the brothers and sisters sent Paul and Silas to Berea" in order to keep them safe. Berea was about 50 miles west and would have made a good place to lay low until they could travel back to Thessalonica.

"THE PEOPLE WERE OF MORE NOBLE CHARACTER"

Luke's opinion of the Berean people has remained a Christian stereotype for the last 2000 years. V11 sets them apart as noble people because they approached the Gospel with eagerness and examination.

- **Answers come to the objective, open-minded individual. If one has a desire to know truth, they will find it.** (Luke 11:9)

TO BE LIKE THE BEREANS

We are called to "examine everything carefully" in order to "hold onto which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). This means that **we put political, social, economical, or any other prejudices aside in order to know the heart and mind of God.**

- **We must remember that God's ways trump all earthly ways of living.**

THESSALONIAN TROUBLES CAME TO BEREAS

Though "many of them believed...including a number of prominent Greek women and men," the Jews from Thessalonica heard where the missionaries were and came to "agitate the crowds."

- This commotion actually put the lives of the missionaries in danger, so they had to split up and left town.

SEE YOU IN ATHENS

Paul left town as Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea a little longer. After Athens the team will split up again for security reasons, but also to go separate ways and spread the Gospel to more people. They will gather again in the city of Corinth.

DO WE WANT THE TRUTH?

- The truth cannot be found subjectively, but must be pursued **objectively**.
- This means that when we pursue truth, we must ask ourselves **if we want it even if it contradicts our culture, political views, economic status, and even religious ideas.**

THE TRUTH CAN BE UNCOMFORTABLE

- Do we want the truth on human sexuality and sexual practice?
- Do political lines shape our thinking more than biblical teachings?
- Has the American Dream replaced the Great Commission?
- Do we understand that **truth is not relative to our preferences?**
- Can we handle the **exclusivity of Jesus?**
- With the pursuit of truth comes the responsibility of that knowledge. **Are we ready to be held responsible?**