



MIDWEEK FILLUP | THE STUDY OF ACTS

ACTS 17

OBJECTIVES IN STUDYING THIS CHAPTER

1. To explore how Paul preached in Thessalonica and Berea, and how his preaching was received in each.
2. To recognize how the enemies of the gospel can be relentless in their efforts to stop the spread of the Truth
3. To examine how Paul preached in Athens and how he found common ground from which to teach the Gospel of Christ in an idolatrous city.

SUMMARY

Paul, Silas and Timothy continued on the second missionary journey. As they departed Philippi, they traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, arriving at Thessalonica (1). Paul found the Jewish synagogue and for three Sabbaths "reasoned with them from the Scriptures" (2). He taught them that Jesus had suffered and died, and then was raised from the dead. He proclaimed to them that Jesus was the Christ. Some Jews and a great multitude of Greeks believed and joined them. (3-4)

The Jews, who did not believe, became envious of the success of the gospel of Christ. They set out to create a mob, and enraged them against Paul and Silas, but they could not find them. Thus, they took Jason and some of the brethren before the rulers of the city, claiming they had harbored these men who were "acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king - Jesus." This incited the crowd and the city rulers. They tried to depict Paul and Silas as revolutionaries against Caesar. The rulers then took security from Jason and the others, and released them. (5-9)

The brethren sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea (about 50 miles away). They went to the Jewish synagogue there and found the people to be receptive to the gospel. They were willing to study the Scriptures to determine the Truth. Many believed. When word got back to Thessalonica, Jews traveled there to stir up the city against them. The brethren sent Paul away to Athens. Silas and Timothy remained there. Paul requested that they quickly join him in Athens. (10-15)

Upon arrival in Athens, Paul's "spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols." Again, he went to the synagogue to reason with the Jew and Gentile worshipers, daily. He also reasoned with others in the marketplace each day. This created an

opportunity to speak with the philosophers (i.e., Epicureans, Stoics, and others). Some derided him, calling him a "babblers." Others thought he spoke of foreign gods. They invited him to speak in the Areopagus (also called Mar's Hill). This was the place of the supposed experts of philosophy and religion in Athens. (16-19)

Paul spoke to them by finding common ground from which to launch into his gospel message. He keyed into the inscription: "*TO THE UNKNOWN GOD*". This is the One he proclaimed to them. Paul also referenced a saying of their own poets, "For we are also His offspring." He pointed out that since we were the offspring of God, He could not be made of gold or silver or stone by human artists. Paul then taught them of repentance and judgment. He indicated that Christ would be the judge and that He was raised from the dead. Some mocked Paul at this saying. Others wanted to hear more about this later. Some believed and joined him. (20-34)

OUTLINE

1. PREACHING IN THESSALONICA (1-9)

a. REASONING IN THE SYNAGOGUE (1-4)

- i. Passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they arrive in Thessalonica
- ii. Paul visits the synagogue and reason with the Jews for three weeks
- iii. His goal: to convince them that Jesus is the Christ who had to suffer and rise from the dead
- iv. Some were persuaded, including a large number of devout Greeks and leading women who join Paul and Silas

b. RESISTANCE IN THE CITY (5-9)

- i. Envious Jews use evil men from the marketplace to gather a mob
- ii. They set the city in an uproar, and attack Jason's house
- iii. Unable to find Paul, they drag Jason and others before the rulers of the city
- iv. Accusing them of turning the city upside down, disobeying Caesar, claiming Jesus as king
- v. The rulers take security from Jason and the others before letting them go

2. PREACHING IN BEREIA (10-14)

a. RECEPTION BY THE LOCALS (10-12)

- i. Sent by night to Berea, Paul and Silas go to the synagogue
- ii. The Jews are more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica
- iii. They receive the word with all readiness, then search the Scriptures daily
- iv. Many Jews believe, also Greeks, prominent women as well as men

b. RESISTANCE BY THE OUTSIDERS (13-14)

- i. Hearing of their success, Jews from Thessalonica come and stir up the crowds
- ii. Paul is immediately sent away to the sea, while Silas and Timothy remain

3. PREACHING IN ATHENS (15-34)

a. IN THE SYNAGOGUE AND THE MARKETPLACE (15-18)

- i. Paul arrives in Athens, sends word for Silas and Timothy to come
- ii. While waiting, Paul's spirit is provoked by the idolatry in the city
- iii. He reasons with Jews and Gentile worshippers in the synagogue, and with people in the Marketplace
- iv. Epicurean and Stoic philosophers hear him preach about Jesus and the resurrection

b. AT THE AREOPAGUS (19-34)

- i. Brought to the Areopagus, the inquisitive Athenians invite Paul to present his doctrine
- ii. Paul preaches to the men of Athens
 - 1. Mentioning their spirituality
 - 2. Especially the altar inscribed "To The Unknown God"
- iii. Paul proclaims this God they do not know as the Creator:
 - 1. Who does not dwell in temples
 - 2. Who is not worshiped as though He needed anything
 - 3. Who gives to all life, breath, and all things
 - 4. Who has made from one blood all nations to dwell on the earth
 - 5. Who has determined their appointed times and dwelling boundaries
 - 6. Who does things so that men might seek for Him, grope for Him, and find Him
 - 7. Who is not far from anyone, for in Him we live, move, and exist, even as some of their own poets have said, "We are also His offspring"
 - 8. Who is not an idol, shaped by art and man's devising
- iv. Paul proclaims that God now commands all men everywhere to repent
 - 1. Even though He may have overlooked their ignorance in times past
 - 2. He has appointed a Day of Judgment
 - 3. He will judge the world in righteousness by a Man He has ordained
 - 4. He has given proof of this judgment by raising Him from the dead

- v. The response to Paul's sermon, especially his mention of the resurrection of the dead
 1. Some mocked, others were willing to hear him again
 2. As Paul left, he was joined by some who believed, including Dionysius the Aeropagite and a woman named Damaris

