

9/30/07

Acts 17

Paul and Silas having departed from Philippi after being shamefully entreated come to the city of Thessalonica by the direction of the Holy Spirit enlarging the boundaries of the second missionary journey.

It would appear that Luke remained in Philippi till rejoining them, evident by the next “we” section.
Acts 20:5-6

17:1-9 The ministry at Thessalonica.

17:1 The journey to Thessalonica.

- 1) They passed through Amphipolis. vs. 1a
 - a) The city was a military station, 33 miles from Philippi.
 - b) It was the capital of the first district of Macedonia which included Philippi.
 - c) The city was named after its geographical location, the river Stryman almost surrounded the city on both sides, about three miles from the sea.
- 2) They also passed through Ampollonia. vs. 1a
 - a) The city was 30 miles from Amphipolis and both of these cities

lay on the great Egnatian Highway that ran east to west.

- b) Amphipollonia means belonging to Apollo.
- 3) They came to Thessalonica. vs. 1b
 - a) The city was founded by Cassander, one of the generals that succeeded Alexander the Great and named it after his wife, the half-sister of Alexander.
 - b) The city was founded at 315 B.C., on the site known as Therma which was an important seaport on the Aegean Sea with thriving commerce and was the capital of Macedonia, the largest city.
 - c) Today it is known as Solonica in Turkey.
- 4) They came to a the synagogue of the Jews.
 - * The place where the Scriptures were believed.

17:2-3 The ministry to the Jews.

- 1) Paul’s custom was the Jew first then the Gentile. vs. 2a-b
 - * Rom. 1:16, 29, 10
- 2) Paul was there for three Sabbaths. vs. 2c
 - a) Some say he had to have been there for more than of three weeks but the Scripture are clear.

- b) Lenski points out that the aorist implies that Paul's work was completed in the three weeks.
 - c) We do know that the Philippians sent to Paul two offerings, the first while he was at Thessalonica. Phil. 4:16
 - d) Paul worked night and day. 1Thess. 2:9, 2Thess. 3:8
- 3) Paul attempting to preach Jesus to the Jews from the Scriptures. vs. 2c-3
- a) The word reasoned "dialegomai" means to discussed and argued with them about the word. vs. 2c
 - * The idea is to reveal the truth of the Scriptures, the O.T. scrolls of the law, the writings and the prophets.
 - b) The word explaining "dianoigo" means to open up thoroughly and is used when Jesus opened up the Scriptures to the men on the road to Emmaus. vs. 3
 - * Lk. 24:32
 - c) The word demonstrating "paratithemi" means to set besides so as to show the relationship, almost like a mini parable. vs. 3
 - 1)) The death and resurrection, the complete work of atonement.
 - 2)) Christ means the Messiah.

17:4 Those who believed.

- 1) And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks. vs. 4a
- 2) Not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas. vs. 4b

17:5-9 The opposition of Paul by the Jews.

17:5-6 The evil plot.

- 1) The Jews instigate the opposition against Paul. vs. 5
 - a) These Jews were not persuaded "apeitheo", they did not allow themselves to believe what Paul preached.
 - b) The word envious "zeloo" means to be heated or boiled in mind or spirit, the word zeal and jealousy come from it, but it was bad zeal that motivated them.
 - c) The identity of these men, evil "poneros", means bad in nature. vs. 5c
 - d) Their tactic was to gather a mob of lowlifes from the market place and attack the house of Jason. vs. 5d-e

17:6-7 The thwarted plot.

- 1) They dragged Jason and other Christians to the magistrates of the city, not having found Paul and Silas. vs. 6a-b

- 2) The accusations were true but distorted to gain sympathy in their opposition.
- 3) The accusations against Paul were three. vs. 6c-7
 - a) They cried out that these men had turned the world upside down and had now come to Thessalonica. vs. 6c-d
* The implication was that they had heard of the preaching of the gospel in Asia Minor.
 - b) The man Jason had harbored them in his house and liable for the disturbance. vs. 7a
 - c) The men were acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king—Jesus, this was treason. vs. 7b-d
* Disrupting the Pax Roma by an “illicit religion”.

17:8-9 The outcome resulted in payment of bail and possibly to insure the leave of Paul from the city.

- 1) The crowd and rulers were agitated by the accusations. vs. 8
 - a) Thessalonians were Romans, they were loyal to Rome and Caesar bound to administrate Roman Law.
 - b) Both were troubled “tarasso”, agitated and disturbed in mind, being one with in sympathy with the accusers.

* Used when Herod was troubled and all Jerusalem with Him, Mk. 2:3

2. The rulers held Jason responsible for the disturbance and solution. vs. 9
 - a) They took security from Jason, he had to post bail, paying a bond.
 - b) Jason was guaranteeing that Paul would leave the city, stopping him from preaching. vs. 9

17:10-15 **The escorting of Paul to Berea.**

17:10 The brethren rescued Paul and Silas.

- 1) The city of Berea was south-west about 45-50 miles away from Thessalonica.
- 2) The city was off the main highway and called by Cicero, “out of the way town”.
- 3) The urgency is expressed by the word immediately, showing the danger of the moment.
- 4) The cover of night served two purposes; to travel and to be unnoticed.

17:11 The characteristics of a Bereans.

- 1) They were fair-minded, which means generous or friendly in attitude by the context, while in Corinthians it means to be well born. 1Cor. 1:26
- 2) They received the word with all readiness
* They were eager rushing forward to hear the word.

- 3) They searched the scriptures daily to find out if those things were so.
- a) They scrutinized is the word and investigated the truth of what was being said in light of the scriptures continuously. 1Cor. 2:12-13, 2Tim. 3:16-17
 - b) Word is used for judicial inquiry. Acts 4:9; 12:19; 17:11; 24:8; 28:18
 - c) The believer is to test all things and hold to that which is good. 1Thess. 5:21

17:12-13 The result was repentance and salvation.

- 1) Many Jews believed, a historical fact. vs. 12a
- 2) A good number of Grecian or Hellenist, men and women, by the phrase “and also not a few of the Greeks”. vs. 12b-c
 - a) These were prominent women as well as men “euscheman” of good standing and influence.
 - b) Sopater was from Berea, who accompanied Paul later to Asia, at the end of the third mission. Acts 20:4
- 3) The Jews from Thessalonica heard Paul was preaching at Berea, so they came 45-50 miles to stir up the crowd. vs. 13

* The word “but” again marks the sharp contrast between the work of God and the work of Satan!

17:14-15 The believers at Berea rescued Paul escorting him to Athens.

- 1) The situation was critical and they wasted no time. vs. 14a
- 2) The manner of transport was a ship. vs. 14b
 - a) They took Paul to the Aegean sea,
 - b) To the province of Achaia.
 - c) The companions of Paul, Silas and Timothy remained at Berea. vs. 14c
 - * Timothy who had been in either Philippi or Thessalonica was at Berea now.
- 3) Paul was escorted to Athens by the brethren from Berea. vs. 15a
 - a) This was Paul’s next place to preach!
 - b) Some think they changed their minds and went by land but it is opinion.
- 4) Paul sent the brethren back with a message for Silas and Timothy to come as fast as they could and they departed. vs. 15b-c
 - a) Silas and Timothy met Paul at Athens they were sent back to encourage the Thessalonians in their suffering. 1Thess. 3:1-6

- b) Paul then moved to Corinth, where Silas and Timothy met Paul at Corinth and gave him the good report of the Thessalonians about their faith and love, along with a second gift from them. Acts 18:5; Phil. 4:14; 2Cor. 11:8-9
- c) Corinth is most likely where he wrote 1Thessalonians and sent it.

17:16-34 The ministry at Athens.

17:16 The city of Athens.

- 1) The city of Athen was looking back on its glory and living on its past excellence.
- 2) The city was the intellectual and artistic capital of the world.
- 3) It was the home of famous lawyers, historians, stage drama, poets, philosophers, and orators.
- 4) Men like Pericles, Demosthenes, Sophocles, Socrates and Plato to name a few.
- 5) The universities were still highly regarded.
- 6) There were 30,000 gods and a multitude of temples.
- 7) Athena, the goddess of art and wisdom, in Latin Minerva.
- 8) The Acropolis, Parthenon, etc.

- 9) Xenophon the historian said, "The whole of it is one offering to the gods".
- 10) The Spirit of Paul was provoked "paraxuno, he was stirred up in anger, exasperated, in astonishment by the overwhelming amount of idolatry.
- * The imperfect tense expresses not a sudden loss of temper but a continuous settled reaction of Paul over the misrepresentation of God and the sensual perversion of idolatry, being jealous for God.

17:17 The ministry of Paul at Athens was two-fold.

- 1) He reasoned in the synagogue to the Jews and proselytes. vs. 17a
 - a) The word reasoned "dialegomai" means to think different things with oneself, ponder them and then to dispute with others.
 - b) The tense is the imperfect, not once but it kept taking place.
- 2) He with the people in the market place daily. vs. 17b
 - a) The marketplace "agora" was the center of public life, buying, selling and social interaction was ongoing.
 - b) The apostle would mingle and enter into dialogue with the people daily, he kept doing this by the imperfect.

17:18 The encounter with two philosophical parties.

- 1) The Epicureans. vs. 18a
 - a) They believed in creation as happenstance or chance.
 - b) They denied life after death.
 - c) They were materialist and pleasure was the pursuit of life and tranquility.
 - d) They denied judgment or punishment after death.
 - e) They were much like the Saducees.
- 2) The Stoics. vs. 18a
 - a) They were named after the founder Zeno who taught from a porch in 340-265 B.C.
 - b) They were pantheistic, identifying God with the material universe as a force embodied in nature.
 - c) They believed everything happened by God's will and therefore were fatal pessimists, who exalted reason and virtue.
 - d) They were unemotional and indifferent to pain and pleasure.
- 3) The mocked Paul by calling him a babblers. vs. 18b-c
 - a) The word babblers "spermologos" meant a seed picker, one who would lounge around the market picking up scraps and a person with no original ideas of his own, who plagiarized all.

- b) They though Paul was talking about another god.
 - 1)) They mistaken Paul's preaching of Jesus as two new gods, Jesus the male god and the female consort resurrection "anastasin.
 - 2)) The word gods "daimonia" is used 52x's in the Gospels for demons.

17:19-21 The apostle preached to the philosophers.

- 1) The two philosophical parties decided to take Paul to the Areopagus. vs. 19
 - a) This was the outcome or result of the ongoing discussion from day to day, indicated by the two aorist tense "They took him and brought him".
 - b) This was the location where the judges convened who, by appointment of Solon, had jurisdiction of capital offences, (as willful murder, arson, poisoning, malicious wounding, and breach of established religious usages). The court itself was called Areopagus from the place where it sat.
 - c) The Areopagus was the hill as well as the Supreme Court of Athens, it was the very place where Sacrotos was condemned.

- d) Some think that Paul was brought before the court in defense but there is no indication in the text, only that he proclaimed the Gospel to the .
- e) Their appeal was that they might know this new doctrine he spoke about, not to defend himself before them, as some interpret it. vs. 19b-c
- 2) Their appraisal was that it was some strange thing to their ears, therefore they were inquisitive, wanted to know what those things meant. vs. 20
- 3) Their reputation of all the Athenians and the foreigners present is clearly stated, “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.” vs. 21
 - a) Both Thucydides and Demosthenes rebuked the Athenians for this passion for the new.
 - b) A complete waste of time!
 - c) The description sounds like the people of the United States of America today!
 - d) The custom of the Athenians was much like today excepting anything and everything as truth. vs. 21

17:22-31 Paul's address to the Areopagus.

17:22-23 *The introduction to his sermon.*

- 1) Paul confirms them as religious people. vs. 22
- 2) Paul identifies a common starting point, the unknown God whom they are ignorant of, he knows and proclaims to them. vs. 23

17:24-28 *The body of the sermon.*

- 1. He declared to them that God created the world not chance, He is Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent and Eternal and created the world and everything in it, without exception. vs. 24a
- 2. He declared the Creator to be Lord of heaven and earth, therefore He could not be indifferent or far removed from man, He is the ultimate authority over man. vs. 24b
- 3. He pointed out that the Creator does not dwell in material temples, He is separate from His creation, refuting pantheism.. vs. 24c
- 4. He declared that God is not worshipped or serve properly by man's hands as if He needed anything from man or was dependent on man. vs. 25a-b
- 5. He told them, it was just the opposite, He gives to all life, breath, and all things, He is the source and sustainer of everything. vs. 25c-e

6. He proclaims that all the nations are the result of the one man God created, Adam, not like anthropology teaches. vs. 26a
7. He declares that the same Creator has determined before hand every nations duration and their territory to be occupied but man rebelled. vs. 26b
8. The Creator has done all this in order that man might seek him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us, being very concerned for His creation, man. vs. 27
9. He created man after His image and in His likeness, man is to be more cognizant that his life, abilities and health is due to Him, “for in Him we move and have our being”. vs. 28a
10. Paul confirms the created relationship of all mankind to God by quoting the words of their poets Aratus from Tarsus, who was quoting the Stoic Cleanthes, “For we are also His offspring”, even though he is referring to Zeus. vs. 28b-c
 - a. This dose not mean everybody is saved and going to heaven.
 - b. This means that everyone is created by God!

17:29-31 *The conclusion of the sermon.*

1. Since man is created in the image of God, it is wrong to think of God or relate to Him through idolatry, for it degrades God and makes a gross error regarding nature of God, Who is Spirit. vs. 29
2. The time of ignorance by the pagan gentiles of the past is over and now God commands all men everywhere to repent. vs. 30
 - a. This does not mean that God did not care or ignored it but that He in His mercy did not destroy them completely by their distortion of God.
 - b. The call to repent is universal, there is no exception, “all men everywhere to repent”, repent “metanoeo” means to think differently, to change your mind, turn around. 2Cor. 7:9
3. The reason being is that God has appointed a specific day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man Christ Jesus whom he has ordained. vs. 31a
 - a. God has appointed a day when He will judge the world. vs. 31a
 - b. God will judge in righteousness. vs. 31a
 - c. God will judge man by the person of Jesus Christ, who He has ordained. vs. 31a

- d. God has assured the world of this day of judgment to all by raising His Son from the dead. vs. 31b

17:32-34 The response of the people

17:32-33 The one who rejected the gospel.

- 1) Some mocked, the word means to throw out the lip to jeer. vs. 32a-b
 - * The Greeks believed in immortality of the soul but denied the resurrection of the body.
- 2) Others procrastinated. vs. 32c-d
 - a) They presumed to live the next day and that they might have another opportunity to hear the gospel again.
 - b) Both are a mistake!
- 3) Paul departed from the midst of the Areopagus. vs. 33

17:34 The one who received the gospel.

- 1) Some believed the resurrection
- 2) Dionysius a court member.
- 3) Damaris could of been either a prostitute because women were not in public life in Greek society, her name “damaris” means “a heifer”.