

Acts 17: PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY CONTINUED

Introduction

Last year we stopped our study of the book of Acts at chapter 16, marking the beginning of the second missionary journey of Paul. Paul and Barnabas partnership ended over a dispute on bringing John Mark for the second journey. John Mark had quit on them during the first journey. Unfortunately, the dispute could not be resolved, separating the two original missionary partners. Barnabas took John Mark, and Paul took another disciple, Silas, with him. Paul and Silas met a young man named Timothy at their first stop and decided to bring him along. The journey lasted about three years, from 49 AD to 52 AD, and spans through Acts 16 to 18.

Acts 17 continues the account of Paul's second missionary journey, during which he was accompanied by Silas and Timothy. Acts 17 entails their experiences in Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens. In Thessalonica, Paul continued his usual approach of starting his work in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks. However, things turned ugly quickly as some jealous Jews formed a mob and incited a riot in the city against them. For their safety, Paul and Silas had to be smuggled out and sent to Berea. The Berean Jews were of a different sort. It was recorded that they were of "more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. However, the trouble makers in Thessalonica still followed them to Berea to trouble them. Paul was then escorted to Athens, Silas and Timothy stayed at Berea.

Athen was a completely different place compared to Thessalonica and Berea; it was a city full of idols and all kind of strange beliefs. This change made Paul expand his reach beyond just synagogues, but also to the market place. "He reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there." He even went to speak at the meeting of the Areopagus, aristocratic council or the high court of ancient Athens where he presented the gospel.

Study the Scriptures: Read the Passage Acts 17:1-34

Note your thoughts as you read:

Write down any questions that come to mind as you read:

Think Through the Following Questions

1. How much do you think Paul's evangelistic approach and methodology in each city reflect his understanding of his audience?
2. Why did the Jews In Thessalonica become jealous of Paul; so much so that they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city?
3. What do they mean by accusing Paul and his team of having turned the world upside down?
4. Why do you think the Bereans were more receptive to Paul's message than the Thessalonians?
5. Analyze Paul's evangelistic message in Athens at the meeting of the Areopagus (Acts 17:22-34) compared to his previous messages to the Thessalonians (Acts 17:2-3) and in other places. What are the differences and why?
6. How does Paul use the Athenian's religious practices as a starting point for his message?
7. What can we learn from Paul about how to engage in meaningful spiritual conversations with people from different cultural and intellectual backgrounds?
8. How does Paul's speech at the meeting of the Areopagus illustrate the balance between contextualizing the Gospel message and maintaining its core truth?

Lessons Learned: Are there any new things you learned from this passage today?

Application: How do you think this will impact your thinking and/or actions going forward?