

ACTS 17:1-12

- A. Acts 17:1 - Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:
1. After being requested to leave Philippi, they pass through several regions, ending up in Thessalonica.
 2. Thessalonica was named after Alexander the Great's sister. The city's population was at that time about 200,000 - consisting of Romans, Jews, and mostly Greeks.
 - a. This city was strategically located so that it was used as a main route for those traveling from Rome to eastern providences. Thessalonica was controlled by the Roman military. Its busy harbor was Macedonia's chief outlet to the sea. Thessalonica was called the key to all of Macedonia.
 - b. This city was first called "Therma" because of the many hot springs in the area. Though a Roman providence, the city enjoyed the status of a free city. That allowed them to have self-government, as long as they followed Roman rules (many advantages).
- B. Acts 17:2-3 - And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Acts 17:3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.
1. As Paul's custom was (in Acts), he goes to a synagogue and preaches/teaches there for three sabbaths. This was perhaps because Paul knew they believed in God, giving him a starting point.

*But also remember, Israel as a nation had rejected Christ. They were already being set aside and the Messianic Kingdom was being deferred until a later date (after the Rapture and Tribulation). Paul's message, if not believed on, would leave the Jews from Jerusalem to Rome without excuse before God (Rom. 11:11, 14).
 2. Also remember, because Acts is a transitional book, its main purpose is to give the account of the fall of Israel and to explain why salvation was sent to the Gentiles apart from Israel being needed.
 3. Paul would use the Jewish Scriptures as a means to show them that indeed Christ fulfilled O.T. prophecies, proving He was the Messiah.
 - a. Then Paul would lay the foundation of Christ's D.B.R. as the only remedy for their sins. This would establish faith in Paul's new Christ-given message of grace. Paul "opened" the Word to them (John 1:41).
 - b. *No doubt Paul gave his own personal testimony of who he was in the Jewish faith, his conversion in Acts 9, and then the events that had taken place on his missionary journey.
- C. Acts 17:4 - And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.
1. The power of God began to move in a number of people who came to faith in Christ. Included among the new believers was a large number of women who were very influential in this community (chief women).

* The women here were receptive to Paul's gospel of grace. Paul's message was **liberating** to these women because **Judaism** had many restrictions and **Paganism** enslaved women. Paul's messages were for all - **equality**, women and men were partners in serving Christ. The gospel of grace.

2. When it says "**three sabbaths**", that does not mean Paul was only with them two weeks. More than likely he spent **some** time there. Paul went to the Jews three sabbaths, but he laid the foundation for the Thessalonica Body Church - local church - and that took several **weeks**.

I Thessalonians 1:3, 5-7, 9-10 - Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; 1Thess. 1:5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. 1Thess. 1:6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: 1Thess. 1:7 So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. 1Thess. 1:9 For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; 1Thess. 1:10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

II Thessalonians 2:4-5 - Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. 2Thess. 2:5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

I Thessalonians 2:9 - For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.

- D. Acts 17:5-8 - But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. Acts 17:6 And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; Acts 17:7 Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, *one* Jesus. Acts 17:8 And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.

1. Paul's ministry was so successful here that the **unbelieving** Jews' jealousy caused them to gather some low-life thugs to help them against Paul and Silas. Here we go **again!**
*Satan is relentless. Anyone who shares **dispensational truth** is open to attacks everywhere (I Peter 5:8; Eph. 6:10-12).
2. With this gang of scoundrels, these Jews disturbed the peace of the city by causing a **riot**. Some believe that some of this gang-mob were the **low kind of lawyers or attorneys**, without principle, who gave advice to try to destroy Paul's ministry and message. Some believe they could have even been part of a religious **mafia!**
3. They go to Jason's house because evidently Paul and his team had been staying there. If this is the same Jason in Romans 16:21, he would be **related** to Paul and it seems that is the case.
 - a. Not finding Paul and Silas there, they take Jason and a few believers with them. They take them to the local authorities to accuse them of causing others to yield to Jesus as king, **not** Caesar. The issue is **final** authority.

- b. This satanic mob's statements were of course not true, but only fabricated or made-up.
*It has been said that the gospel will make one sad, glad, or **mad**!

E. Acts 17:9 - And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.

1. As the city authorities hear the charges against Jason and other believers, they come to the decision that there has not been enough evidence to charge them. But to keep the peace, they take them over and secure a bond, or **court** costs, or a **re**straining order from Jason and the others.

*Then they let them go.

2. **Have you noticed how the persecution toward the Little Flock in the **first** half of Acts has now shifted to the Body Church believers in the **last** half of Acts? Even Satan recognized the change, yet **most** of Christendom today doesn't!

1 Thessalonians 2:14-15, 3:3 - For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they *have* of the Jews: 1Thess. 2:15 Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: 1Thess. 3:3 That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.

F. Acts 17:10 - And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming *thither* went into the synagogue of the Jews.

1. Possibly for fear of further mob violence, the believers, while they had the opportunity, have Paul and Silas to leave at night to go to Berea (about **45** miles southwest).

*Amazingly, there is **no** discouragement in Paul's team for they immediately continue their ministry by going to the synagogue in Berea.

2. What a testimony that is. Paul has poor **eyesight** and perhaps even malaria, yet as a fugitive from place to place, nothing can stop the **bur**den he has for Christ's message of hope.
3. Berea was a less significant city/village and difficult to get to from Thessalonica. Evidently the terrain was awful, having three rivers to cross.

*Can you see these weary men, tired and struggling, as they travel through the darkness (at first)? Paul, the great apostle, not on the main road (to not be caught), but on the back roads **fleeing**.

Note: Do we truly understand what other believers have gone through in order to bring the gospel to us (Foxe's Book of Martyrs - Trail of Blood)?

G. Acts 17:11-12 - These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Acts 17:12 Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

1. What a difference! Paul is welcomed in Berea through belief in his message by a large number of Greeks, women, and a few Jews. God does know and care **when** we've had a difficult time. He encourages us to keep going on!

2. When it says the people at Berea [were more noble than those in Thessalonica], it means that they were more **educated** and **open**-minded.
 - a. The Thessalonians had to be **persuaded** by Paul's God-empowered reasoning of scriptures. Paul was convincing and they were convicted by the way he delivered the grace message.
 - b. The Berea believers were not swept off their feet by eloquent oratory, but they searched the scriptures daily to **see** if what Paul said was true.

**** Evidently, they had more faith in the Word of God than the man and the way he explained it. We should always simply trust in God's truth in the Word.**

II Timothy 4:2 - Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.

3. Berea's people had intellectual wisdom. They truly wanted to know the reasoning, the evidence, and the **proof from scripture** of Paul's and Silas' message. That caused them to study what scriptures they had (O.T.) and be open-minded to see **if** Paul's gospel, testimony and message lined up to scripture. Were they true or not? They loved truth.
4. The result of not telling what God's Word meant, but allowing the **Word** to tell them what was meant, brought in a large number of believers (converts). ****They did not allow religion, opinions, or traditions to prevent them from God's truth.**

Note: That is simply what we are asking people to do **today**. To just have an open mind and consider the scriptures, what they say about dispensations, and to put scripture **above** one's denomination, tradition, or personal preferences.

5. It seems apparent that Paul did **not** preach about the mystery as he went to the synagogues. His purpose in Acts was to proclaim to the Jews that Christ died, was buried, and rose again. He was indeed the O.T. prophesied Messiah. It is **then** that he would reveal the truth of the gospel of grace.
 - a. ***If one only had the book of Acts, he could not discover that there was such a thing as the **Mystery** Program. It is only after reading Paul's epistles to the churches that we begin to learn and make sense of God's Mystery. God's full and complete Mystery revelation is revealed in Paul's epistles written **after** the transition shown in the book of Acts. Some mystery truths are given in Paul's early books, but **full** clarity about the Mystery is found in his later epistles.**
 - b. Note: Again, it is important to remember Acts was **not** written to tell the story of the birth and growth of the **Body** Church of our dispensation. Rather, Acts was written to give us the account of the temporary fall of Israel and to explain **why** salvation, not under law but under grace, was sent to the Gentiles.
 - c. Paul's ministry, both in Acts and his early epistles, is consistently distinguished/separate from that of the **12** (Acts 2:38, 16:30-31).

****These Berea believers teach us that God's truth is not based upon church dogma or traditions. God's Word means what it says and He expects us to study it dispensationally and believe it enough to **stand** upon its truth.**

II Timothy 2:15 - Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.