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April 21, 2024

Acts 17

Paul Preaches at Thessalonica

1Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:

If you recall, Thessalonica was in modern day Greece. Paul crossed the Aegean Sea and began a trip through modern day Greece, coming to the city of Thessalonica. There was a significant number of Jews living there due to this being a very active and influential port city.

The towns mentioned above all sat on what was called the “Roman Road”. There were no synagogues in Amphipolis and Apollonia according to Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers, so Paul and Silas continued to Thessalonica. In Thessalonica there were synagogues that Paul went to.

2And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,

For three weeks on Sabbath Paul went into the synagogue and “reasoned”; presented the Gospel with the local Jewish community.

3Opening 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.

Christ is a title not a name: Strong's Concordance

“Phonetic Spelling: (khris-tos')

Definition: the Anointed One, Messiah, Christ

Usage: Anointed One; the Messiah, the Christ.”

Just so we are all on the same sheet, Jesus of Nazareth, or the son of Joseph, is how He was known. Christ was His Kingdom of Heaven Title.

For Paul to move the Jews from the Law he had to use the Law and the Prophets to show them that they had missed the coming Messiah (Christ). God had told them throughout the Old Testament that He would send His Only Son to them. They thought He would come as a King and free them, they could not understand even today that Jesus came to set them free from their sin, not from world persecution.

Psalm 2:7-9: “You are my Son, today I have become your Father. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance; the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron scepter, you will dash them to pieces like pottery.”

Psalms 89:21 Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.

Isaiah 42:1,4: “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations . . . He will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth...”

Jesus told us that the world hated Him, and that the world would hate us because of our love for Him.

As Paul plied them with their own knowledge of God’s Word from their own Prophets, many eyes were opened. What is happening today in the Land of the Chosen People?

From the Jerusalem Post December 2023

“According to the CBS, around 187,900 [Christians live in Israel](#), composing 1.9% of the population. This represents 1.3% growth from the year before.

The Christian population has been on the rise for at least the last two years. In 2021, the population grew by 1.4% to 182,000, and in 2022, there was about 2% growth to 185,000, according to the CBS.

Three-quarters (75.3%) are Arab Christians who make up 6.9% of the total Arab population.”

<https://www.jpost.com/christianworld/article-779257>

4And 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.

So, those that converted from Judaism and Greek gentiles beliefs to Christianity were a good number.

1 Thessalonians 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;

Paul is always ready to commend the women that he called “chief”, as in important in the community.

Those that Paul and Silas “consorted with” means simply to hang out with in today’s vernacular. In earlier English it had a negative connotation of hanging out with a criminal element.

Jason Seized

***5*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.**

2 Thessalonians 3: [11](#)For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.

*“it meant simply the layman, or untaught person, as distinct from the scholar. The “baser sort” answers to a Greek word describing the loungers in the **agora**, or market-place, ever ready for the excitement of a tumult--the **sub-rostrani** or **turba forensis** of Latin writers. Men of such a class, retaining its old habits, are found even among the Christian converts in [2Thessalonians 3:11](#), “working not at all, but busybodies.”*”

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers

What this tells me is there were a group of men that were unemployed, were always looking for a fight, had nothing to do and

nowhere to be and enjoyed any and all uproars as a change from their otherwise dismal lives.

Hmm, where today would you find such a group of people? Can you say BLM, Antifa, gangs, cartels? These folks are easily plied just like in the day of Paul. A small payment for services rendered and wait for the next call of rebel rousing.

There always needs to be one or two targets. When they could not find Paul and Silas, they moved onto the second target in this case the second target was Jason.

Jason is a Romanized version of Jesus.

Point the crowd at the target and sit back for a result. In the Greek system of government there would be a ruling class either appointed or elected to be the like a city council. That is who “the people” were in this verse they sat in power over the city. They brought Jason before the city council for judgment of bringing in men like Paul and Silas that threatened to disrupt their power system within the Jewish community.

6And 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;

Anybody visiting Jason were now thrown in as co-conspirators. Does that word sound familiar today. The point being not much has changed in 2000 years.

The allegation was of course very broad “turned the world upside down”. What does that mean? It means whatever the ruling class wants it to mean.

7Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, *one* Jesus.

Claudius Caesar had declared that there was only one King and anyone saying the contrary would be considered an enemy. So, when Paul declared that Jesus Himself had declared Himself King of the Jews at His trial, this gave the folks in Thessalonica ammunition to accuse Paul of sedition against the Roman King.

8And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.

The real troubling here is that the civic leaders were afraid of the Romans if the word got out that there was unrest in the city of Thessalonica.

9And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.

Unlike now in major cities in the US, at this time “bail” was required of the defendants. This was to ensure that their guests would cause no more trouble. The rebel rousers were not detained, arrested nor required to post bail but Jason, who was simply the host of Paul and Silas was. Not much has changed in 2000 years.

Paul and Silas at Berea

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

Berea is just a few miles southwest of Thessalonica. As per Paul’s MO and Silas of course went to the local synagogue. It was the logical place to go as it would likely be the only place that Paul would find gentiles who associated with Jews. If you can imagine being a gentile and finding the only place you felt safe was in a Jewish synagogue. Listening to the rabbis and those present discussing the Law and the Prophets as they read from the scrolls. Probably not fully accepted they continued to join the Jews and listen. Some choosing to become Jewish by ritual.

11These 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.

A key term and direction from and by God in this verse. What made the Bereans “more noble” than the Thessalonians? The Greek term for “noble” according to Strong’s Concordance is:

Transliteration: eugenés

Definition: of noble race

You may recognize this word from the early 1800’s a word coined by non-other than Charles Darwin’s cousin Francis Galton. He first used the term in a book he wrote in 1883 “Inquires into human fertility and its Development”. Best sell you can be sure.

Of course, the meaning has changed drastically once the anti-God heathens got their hands on it. It first as you see was a term of esteem in the Greek during Paul’s time.

The point God makes here is that these people did several things that made them stand out even in these times. That should hold true today, this very day.

1. they received the word with all readiness of mind

2. and searched the scriptures daily

3. whether those things were so.

We can’t just receive every word with all readiness of mind for the simple reason that some words are lies. The words we are to receive with readiness of mind is the exact WORD OF GOD, the

Bible. To not be fooled requires a spirit led assessment of what you are hearing measured against what the Word of God says. If there is confusion as to something you hear and not seeming to match up with God's Word, seek God's Wisdom first. If you still are uncertain, seek out wisdom from those you already trust in understanding God's Word. If they can't answer a question for you, then lay it aside and wait upon the Lord.

Isaiah 40:31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

12Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

The Holy Spirit led the way, prepared the hearts of those in Berea, and added to the Church Big C. Here again we see that Paul calls out "honorable women" which were Greek Gentiles, also of men and indication is that it was not a small group that believed.

13But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.

Evil does not rest; it seeks to find Truth and subvert the Truth for the benefit of the Father of Lies; Satan. It must have pained God

sorely that His Own Chosen People would now pursue his chosen teachers, all over human power.

Yet, here they come to stir up the people in another town. They had caused trouble in their own town and that wasn't enough, they needed to go out of their way to stir up trouble in another town. That is what busybodies do: they have nothing to do but cause trouble.

Vs 5..... moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort

14And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still.

Paul was the lightning rod for Satan in all of this. He hated Paul as Paul was being used to point thousands to Christ. The very Christ that Satan had killed to end this idea of saving the human race. He, Satan had been given control of earth from Adam, and he was not going to just stand by as the Paul went about telling people about Jesus the Messiah.

15And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed.

A bit of a difficult sentence but what it means is that Paul told the brothers in Christ that brought him there to Athens should return

and fetch Silas and Timotheus immediately and bring them to him. Which they did.

It is believed that trip from Berea to Athens was done by boat, so it is uncertain how long the trip took. The distance is about 100 nautical miles. Berea is on the Aegean Sea and Athens is located far southwest on the edge of the Mediterranean Sea.

Paul at Athens

16Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

When Paul saw the paganism and idolatry had taken over Athens, his “Spirit was stirred in him”.

Athens was the center of business and travel and had long been a center for philosophical endeavors. A good deal of learning took place in Athens and is the seat of origin form many of our democratic methods in America and the West. It was the center of Greek mythology.

Bible Study.com

“Athens was known, among many things, for its giant temple dedicated to the Greek god Zeus. The temple of Zeus, which was larger than the Parthenon, had 104 columns each of which was about 56 feet (17 meters) tall. The building itself was made of marble and was 315 feet (96 meters) long and 131 feet (40

meters) wide. The huge statue of Zeus on his throne, housed in the temple, is considered by many to be one of the seven wonders of the world.”

<https://www.biblestudy.org/biblepic/athens-apostle-paul-missionary-journeys.html>

Today Athens is the Capital of Greece, near financial ruin for many reasons. Greece has been bailed out by the European Union (EU) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) on occasion. They were a heathen nation, dedicated to myths, other gods and recent Archeological excavation at the temple of Zeus have found the remains of a teenage boy that some believe may have been sacrificed to Zeus. God is not tolerant of idol worship and forbid Israel from engaging in it, to no avail.

17Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.

It is believed that Paul walked around the city engaging anyone who would talk about Christ. He would do it in the synagogues when people were there.

This term devout from the Greek is according to Strong's Concordance:

sebomai **seb'-om-ahee**: to revere, i.e. adore -- devout, religious, worship.

Whether these were gentiles that believed in God or other Jews we are not sure, but what we know is that they did believe in God.

18 Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.

Biblestudy.org

“The Epicureans believe the purpose of life is to 'eat, drink and be merry,' meaning to seek and indulge in the pleasures of life whenever possible. The Stoics, on the other hand, believe in depriving themselves and pursuing some sort of harmony with all that exists.”

So, to these mental elites, Paul was a babbler. Babbler is a strange word, according to Strong's Concordance it means:

“Transliteration: spermologos

Phonetic Spelling: (sper-mol-og'-os)

Definition: a seed picker, one who picks up scraps of knowledge

Usage: a babbler, gossip, one who picks up seeds and trifles as does a bird.”

It's like a bird walking around pecking at small pieces of food on the ground except for a human; one would be picking up small bits of knowledge but not able to put it all together into a meaningful understanding.

Intellectual elites which I know little about and not one, seem to have a curiosity about new things. They enjoy having their interest peaked about new ideas. I prefer pursuing the Truth and have found that God's Word is the TRUTH. There are many levels to

God's Truth all linked together, bound by the Creator God. Indivisible, and quite distinguishable from man's truth and often scientific truth. When two or more truths are at odds, always go with God's Truth, the rest may catch up later.

The stage here is set in the "market" where Paul was speaking and some of the elites heard him. So they as the words imply took him gently by the hand up the adjacent ascent to the top of what is called Areopagus. Translated this is "Mars hill" according to Strong's Concordance

Phonetic Spelling: (ar'-i-os pag'-os)

Definition: "the Hill of Ares", Areopagus, a hill in Athens

Usage: Areopagus, or Mar's Hill, an open space on a hill in Athens where the supreme court was held.

The background story as to how it got its name is from myth. This according to Greek myth is where Mars was tried for murder. This from Pulpit Commentary.

"Mars' Hill, close to the Agora ("the market") on the north, was so called from the legend that Mars was tried there before the gods for the murder of a son of Neptune. It is (says Lewin) a bare, rugged rock, approached at the south-eastern corner by steps, of which sixteen still remain perfect. Its area at the top measures sixty paces by twenty-four, within which a quadrangle, sixteen paces square, is excavated and leveled for the court. The judges seem to have sat on benches tier above tier on the rising rock on the north side of the quadrangle. There were also seats on the east and west sides, and on the south on either side of the stairs. The Areopagus (the upper court) was the most august of all the

courts at Athens. Socrates was tried and condemned before it for impiety. On the present occasion, there is no appearance of judicial proceedings, but they seem to have adjourned to the Areopagus from the Agora, as to a convenient place for quiet discussion.”

19And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?

They of course had heard Paul speaking about Jesus the Messiah, God of Israel.

20For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.

21(For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)

Paul Before the Areopagus

22Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

Strong's Concordance

“Transliteration: deisidaimonia

Phonetic Spelling: (dice-ee-dahee-mon-ee'-ah)

Definition: a religion, superstition

Usage: religion in general; in a bad sense: superstition.”

Paul's apparent attempt is to attack them for their disrespect of the True and Living God, but he does so in a manner as to not offend them in the beginning. The term can either mean dedicated religious people or dedicated superstitious people, in otherwards, idiots in my vernacular.

23For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

Strong's Concordance

Phonetic Spelling: (ag-no-eh'-o)

Definition: to be ignorant, not to know

Usage: I do not know, am ignorant of (a person, thing, or fact), sometimes with the idea of willful ignorance.

In my humble opinion if you remain “willfully ignorant” another word for that is “idiot”. Paul points out that they had identified an unknown god but had put no effort into learning who that might be but were satisfied with worshiping the gods they knew but were not real just figments of their imaginations. Paul didn't say all that but that was his point. Now Paul, who knew the Truth is going to help these folks understand or at least know this unknown God's name and who this unknown God is.

Paul will start with God capital G. All of their gods were made by the hands of man from stone and wood. They have no concept of a living God, One that Creates and Cares for His Creation.

24God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; 25Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

This living God not only created all things he created all of mankind. He created them one blood, meaning all men are related regardless of what nation you reside in. That in itself was heresy to most cultures, especially the Greeks as they held themselves in high esteem, just like the Romans and most others.

April 28, 2024

As a brief recap, Paul is speaking to the intellectual elites of Athens Greece. These men and women hold themselves in high esteem intellectually. They think of what they heard Paul say in the marketplace as “babble”. But their interest was piqued when Paul said he would tell them about their statue to an unknown God. This God is the One and Only True God, He is the only God who has power over creation but the very act of Creating, making all things out of nothing. In order to

get these intellectuals to the Truth Paul has to lead them through the manner in which God created all of mankind.

26And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

The issue Paul describes here is the birth of mankind through one woman, Eve and one-man Adam. This makes all of mankind, those truly born of woman and of man all brothers and sisters. God determined the makeup of man and woman and determined based on their initial failings as to the length of their human lives. Even though not stipulated here God also determined eternity for humanity and the two possible locations: heaven or hell. He left the choice up to mankind as to where he/she would spend eternity. That choice was focused on One other person and what HE accomplished. Jesus the Messiah the Son of God.

1 Timothy 2: 1I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; 2For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. 3For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; 4Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. 5For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; 6Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. 7Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.

27That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:

The idea Paul is presenting is that mankind was in darkness and these Greek intellectual elites especially were in a darkness brought on by arrogance and false superiority.

Vs 27.....if haply they might feel after him

The reaction to being blind is to feel one's way around to find their way. Paul goes onto say that this living God is right here, He is not some far off god that your statues represent, He is alive and in us.

Even though written to Israel this next verse is universal in its direction.

Deuteronomy 28:9 And thou shalt grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways: and thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save thee.

28For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

Hebrews 2:11 For both the One who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.

I am not an expert in Greek so what I say I say from repeating what I have studied. The way God has Paul put this is of Greek philosophical importance.

Their gods were not personal, they did not individually interact with the Greeks. Paul is pointing out that this God, the One True and Living God, not only interacts with those that Believe in Him but is part of our very being and existence, once they repent, submit, and ask Christ in.

From Ellicott's Commentary

"The first points to our animal life; the second--from which is derived the Greek word used by ethical writers for passions, such as fear, love, hate, and the like--not, as the English verb suggests, to man's power of bodily motion in space, but to our emotional nature; the third, to that which constitutes our true essential being, the intellect and will of man."

29Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

Living God vs statues carved by man from stone.

30And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:

*KJV lexicon "hupereido **hoop-er-i'-do**: to overlook, i.e. not punish -- wink at.;"*

It is perhaps like raising a child, when they are quite young, we may just let them get away with something that later in life is unacceptable. Like taking a brothers/sister's toy and playing with it without asking. God is now saying, no more. You will be held accountable for what you do as an individual. That accountability now brings mankind to his only way out of being held accountable; REPENTENCE and acceptance of the Blood of Christ to cover all of our sin.

31Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Paul tells the Greek Elites, that accountability as sure as the stone you are sitting on, on Mars Hill is coming. There is a day of judgement coming, in which the world (dwellers) will without a doubt be judged in righteousness. The judgement will be done by Christ whom God has Ordained to Judge. The guarantee of this coming judgement was the RESURRECTION OF THE JUDGE FROM THE DEAD.

32And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this *matter*.

There is no bottom depth to stupidity, you can just keep digging and mocking makes a great shovel.

However, others may have been pricked in the heart, that reality may have called, and they are thinking about answering.

33So Paul departed from among them. 34Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

Those who chose to follow God, choose wisely. God will not be mocked, and His Word Will come true.

Isaiah 55: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

Matthew 24:35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.

Numbers 23:19 God is not a man, that He should lie, or a son of man, that He should change His mind. Does He speak and not act? Does He promise and not fulfill?

Deuteronomy 32:2 Let my teaching fall like rain and my speech settle like dew, like gentle rain on new grass, like showers on tender plants.

Isaiah 40:8 The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever."

Isaiah 44:26 who confirms the message of His servant and fulfills the counsel of His messengers, who says of Jerusalem, 'She will be inhabited,' and of the cities of Judah, 'They will be rebuilt, and I will restore their ruins,'

Isaiah 45:23 By Myself I have sworn; truth has gone out

from My mouth, a word that will not be revoked: Every knee will bow before Me, every tongue will swear allegiance.

Isaiah 46:10 I declare the end from the beginning, and ancient times from what is still to come. I say, 'My purpose will stand, and all My good pleasure I will accomplish.'

Even though historically Athens had one of the smallest number of converts based on how Paul put it and historical documents from the time, Paul was not deterred.

Paul is now going to proceed to new towns and some that he already visited.

All verses are copied from <https://biblehub.com/> in King James