

PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY (2) Acts 17

Introduction:

1. F.F. Bruce's history of the early church is called The Spreading Flame.
2. A forest fire, if fanned by strong winds, will rapidly cover a large area.
3. The Gospel, fanned by the winds of persecution, spread throughout the world in an incredibly short time (Rom. 10:18; Col. 1:23).
4. Acts 17 is an example of what was taking place all over the world.
 - a. Persecution forced Paul and Silas to leave Philippi, but a strong church was left behind.
 - b. Persecution caused the missionaries to flee from Thessalonica but not before they had established the church (1 Thess 1:8).
 - c. Persecution also brought about their departure from Berea after they had firmly planted the Cause of Christ.
 - d. Paul proclaimed the true God to the philosophers of Athens.

Discussion:

- I. PAUL PREACHED THE GOSPEL IN THESSALONICA (1-9).
 - A. The missionaries passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia "because there was no synagogue of the Jews there."
 1. The Gospel was preached first to the Jews (Rom. 1:16).
 2. The synagogue provided a ready made audience for preaching the Gospel.
 3. It was 33 miles from Philippi to Amphipolis and another 28 to Apollonia.
 4. The missionaries traveled 40 miles farther to Thessalonica.
 - B. Thessalonica was the main seaport of Macedonia.
 1. It was originally known as Therma because of hot springs.
 2. Cassander rebuilt the city and renamed it in honor of his wife, the sister of Alexander the Great.
 - C. Paul and Silas preached in the synagogue for three sabbaths.
 1. They proved the prophets predicted the death and the resurrection of the Christ (1 Cor. 1:23)
 2. They showed that Jesus fulfilled these prophecies.
 3. Some Jews, many Greeks and several leading women obeyed the Gospel.
 - D. The unbelieving Jews were jealous of the missionaries' success.
 1. They enlisted wicked idlers to stir up trouble.

2. They assaulted the house of Jason where Paul and Silas lodged.
3. Jason and other brethren were dragged before the rulers.
4. They were accused of “turning the world upside down” and “acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar.”
5. Jason and the brethren were required to post bond.
6. Paul and Silas were sent away by night.

II. PAUL PREACHED THE GOSPEL IN BEREIA (10-15).

A. The missionaries fled to Berea, 40 miles away.

1. They began teaching in the synagogue.
2. The Berean Jews were “more noble minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.”
3. Many Jews, Greeks, and prominent citizens believed.

B. Jews from Thessalonica came to Berea to stir up opposition.

1. Paul was escorted by brethren to the sea.
2. Silas and Timothy remained behind while Paul went on to Athens to wait for them.

III. PAUL PREACHED THE GOSPEL IN ATHENS (16-21).

A. Paul was provoked when he saw Athens was filled with idols.

1. “It was easier to find a god than a man in Athens.”
2. Athens was the educational capital of the ancient world.
3. It was an illustration of Paul’s description of the Gentiles:

“Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man - and birds and four-footed animals and corruptible things” (Rom. 1:22, 23).

4. Paul taught in the synagogue on the sabbath and in the marketplace daily.

B. Paul encountered the philosophers in the marketplace.

1. The Epicureans’ philosophy was “eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die.”
2. The Stoics’ philosophy was indifference to both the joys and sorrows of life.
3. They asked, “What does this babbling (seed-picker) say?”
4. They brought him to Mars Hill to hear him more fully.

IV. PAUL PREACHED TO THE PAGAN PHILOSOPHERS (22-34).

A. He found an altar inscribed “to the unknown god.”

1. He complimented them for being very religious.
2. He proclaimed the “unknown God” to them.

B. Paul contrasted the gods of the Greeks with the God of Heaven.

1. God made the world and all things in it.
2. He is the Lord of both Heaven and earth.
3. He does not dwell in temples made with men’s hands:

“But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, Heaven and the Heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built” (1 Kings 8:27)!

4. God is not served by men’s hands as though he needed anything (Psa. 50:12).
5. He gives to all life and breath and all things.
6. He has made from one man every nation on earth.
7. He has determined the destinies of the nations.
8. He wants men to seek Him for He is not far from any of us for “in Him we live and move and have our being.”
9. We are the offspring of God.
10. If we are God’s offspring, how can we think God is made of physical matter shaped by man’s art and craftsmanship?

C. In the past God had “overlooked” the ignorance of idolatry.

1. Now, all people everywhere must repent.
2. A great day is coming when all will be judged.
3. The Judge will be the One God raised from the dead.

Conclusion:

1. When Paul mentioned the resurrection, some began to mock.
2. Others promised to give him another hearing.
3. Some believed, including a judge and a prominent woman.
4. We must not let the foolish philosophies of men keep us out of Heaven.
5. Everyone needs to repent in the light of the coming Day of Judgment (2 Cor. 5:10; Acts 2:38).`

