

**these that  
have turned the  
world upside  
down**

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***Acts 17:1 – 21***

~ We continue traveling with Paul and Silas on the second missionary journey in this report from our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God. Paul crossed over into Europe in our previous report, which was a memorable, significant, revolutionary transition that brought the Gospel to most of our American ancestors. That does not mean we have any claim to superiority; in fact, God chooses the weak things of the world to let His people know that there is no merit basis in salvation. Our salvation is ONLY because of His sovereign grace. We all need to thank Him for that today – right now.

On this second missionary journey, we first went with Paul to Philippi where he received very rough treatment. Even so, a little church sprang into existence there and, when we get to the little epistle to the Philippians, we will find they were closer to the apostle Paul than any other church – or any other group of believers, for that matter. In this report, we continue forward. If you have a good Bible with a map it will be very helpful to your understanding. Paul is moving west in Macedonia and his next significant stop for missionary activity is going to be in Thessalonica...

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

~ Paul used the synagogue as a springboard into the communities he visited at every stop on his missionary journeys. Not everyone believed, but some did. Those who rejected the Gospel message pushed him and his teaching right out onto Gentile streets, into Gentile neighborhoods and into their homes. That's how God worked through what Paul almost certainly considered a dismal failure. That's when SOME of the Gentiles believed. That's also when a local church came into existence.

Amphipolis means: "round city." Most cities were built in squares – and still are. Well, this one was round with a round wall around it. This city was located on a very prominent Roman road called the Egnatian Road. It was three miles from the Aegean Sea; and it subsequently became the main power base of the Athenians. The Egnatian Road was at least five hundred miles long. The Roman army traveled this road extensively; all travel and commerce crossed this road and now, missionaries are coming down it. Apollonia was also on the Egnatian Road; and here comes Paul into Thessalonica!

Thessalonica was thirty-eight miles west of Apollonia on the Egnatian Road; and, although inland, Thessalonica was still a seaport. There were three rivers that flowed through the city and into the sea. Thessalonica was significant in the day in which we are studying. It was a Roman colony. The city was rebuilt in 315 B.C. and had been renamed for the stepsister of Alexander the Great; whose name was Thessalonica. Some people believe it was named for the warm springs that were there but, apparently, it was named by one of the generals in Alexander's army who assumed control over the area at the death of Alexander the Great...

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

***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.***

~ Verse three is a critical note in a limited and abbreviated ministry of Paul the apostle. Paul was in this place for less than a month; three weeks to be exact. During that time, he established the Gospel of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, many turned to Jesus and a church was organized and established. During those three weeks Paul taught them all of the great doctrines of the Scripture including looking for our Blessed Hope of the world and the rapture of the church. That is all included in Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians, which is the first epistle Paul wrote. Thessalonians deals with the second advent of Christ in its entirety. So, quite a ministry in a very short period of time is revealed.

Paul is emphasizing how the Scriptural Messiah must needs have suffered. The modern, liberal Jesus was never even made uncomfortable. Well, Paul preached the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ exclusively. There was no other theme, point or theology in his teaching. As we have said several times previously: you will not find a message given by any of the apostles where the death, burial and resurrection of Christ is not the centerpiece. Today, that just somehow isn't the heart of the Gospel message anymore. Even in fundamental circles, the cross is always the focal point. They never get past the cross. Christ was raised for our justification, friends. The church today has completely lost sight of Him as a living Man in the Glory.

Christ Jesus is at the right hand of God the Father at this very moment. This is critical to comprehend and keep in mind. See, it's one thing to talk about the historical death of Christ; but, the question is, how are YOU related to Him? Well, that relationship is the theme of Galatians; and we'll get there soon enough. In the meantime, ask yourself: is it meaningful to you that Christ died and rose again? Are you related today to the true and living Christ? How is the Gospel meshed and geared into your life? The answers to those questions reveal what a so-called Christian life is all about.

Modern religion manifests in myriad conservative and liberal realms, but the contemporary church doesn't recognize Christ in His proper place of worship. Every Sunday sermon should be Easter Sunday oriented – but it's not. Any sermon that fails to mention the resurrection of Christ is not a Gospel message according to the Word of God, my beloved. Strong, Shed, Thornwell, Hodge all have extended sections in their writing on the death of Christ; and His death is important - however, they each have extremely limited sections on the resurrection. It's no wonder modern day theologians don't properly, correctly and completely teach the Word of God. Unfortunately, a death emphatic theology structure misses the boat to the other side completely. The resurrection is the basis for all New Testament teaching; and I am purposely over-emphasizing that point....

***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.***

~ SOME believed, which means some didn't believe. When we give out the Word of God, not everyone is going to choose to accept Christ after hearing our testimony. The extreme minority will believe, but the majority will not. Personally, I don't believe the Lord allows us to know of those who turned to Him as the result of our witness. My estimation is every single convert count turned in to a church today is a complete fabrication. That's the way it is today – you can just write that down. Well, the ones that didn't believe were lewd fellows of the baser sort, and there are a WHOLE bunch of them running around today; particularly clamoring after women who think they are teaching the Bible when, in reality, are simply perpetuating self-pride through a sexist theology. I know this may step on some toes on this forum on which I teach. Well, examine yourselves because, candidly, most of you are NOT in the faith – not even close. I know you think you are – but – you're not....

***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.***

***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;***

~ Saying the world had been turned upside down was an understatement. I don't believe we should dismiss this as oratory gesturing or hyperbole, because they said exactly what they meant. When Christianity penetrated the Roman Empire, a revolution began. This teaching had a tremendous effect on those receiving it. Today, we don't see much Christian revolution happening - except in the wrong direction. It's shameful we don't have genuine revival that turns people back to the Lord Jesus Christ and to the Word of God because that would certainly be revolutionary. Why don't we get rid of all the hypocrisy and pretending to be a Christian nation and all that nonsense, friends? Why don't we try confession of sins and repentance for a change? We know our leaders are not even close to Christians, and we know they totally and completely reject the Word of God as a basis for

which to govern a country with. Let's stop playing church. We Americans seem to think everyone is a genuine born again Christian, but we are the biggest pagan nation that ever existed in the history of the world – INCLUDING Rome. We have nothing but pretense abounding in the church and, until we recognize that, and get back to the Word of God, and a LIVING Christ, we are going to continue to devolve into chaos....

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

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

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

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

***11 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.***

~ So, Jason had to post bond to get out of jail in verse nine; and as soon as he was out, they skipped town. You would think this trouble would slow Paul down, but it sped him up! Moving on, Berea was closer to the coast. See, these were reasonable people, and they studied the Scriptures. As a result, there came into existence a church! We don't hear much about that church like we do the church that was established at Thessalonica; and this proves the strongest churches arose where the persecution was the strongest! That is simply a marvelous encouragement to me. The trouble we have in this country today is that there is no persecution. I know that is not a popular thing to say, but it happens to be true. Most so-called Christians totally take the church for granted. That's why the average Christian man who actually believes God is also taken for granted, by the way – but I digress, sort of. What a tremendous picture we have here....

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

**13 But 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.**

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

**15 And 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.**

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

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

~ So, our safari closes out this report with Paul continuing alone on his second missionary journey. He goes to Athens and sends men back to check on the believers in Thessalonica and Berea; and to make a report of church progress. Athens was the cultural center of the world at this time, and they are WHOLLY – not partially – consumed by idolatry. The market in Athens was directly at the foot of the Acropolis. I can just see Paul buying and selling his goods there. He may have been making tents for some income. Well, as he went about his daily business, we know what he was talking about: the Lord Jesus Christ and His death, burial and resurrection....

**18 Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics, 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.**

~ The philosophy of the Epicureans was, more or less, hedonistic; they believed that the way to overcome the flesh was to just give it all it wants.

Their theory goes: if you want liquor, drink all you can hold. If you want sex, get it in an all-night orgy. They would have really been at home here in America today. Those things were nothing new to them. The Stoics believed in restraint; and their theory was to hold the body under control. Naturally, both groups derided Paul as a babbler. That's the way they do it today, too. Of course, they had so many gods they couldn't keep track of them – but they sure criticized Paul for having a God at all.

The resurrection of the True and Living God Paul taught was utterly foreign to them. Many critics allege Paul stole his ideology from Platonism and didn't honestly believe in the bodily resurrection. Well, Paul didn't have an ideology. Paul taught a bodily resurrection. Platonism is a spiritual resurrection or, more specifically, the influence of a spiritual entity permeating society, which is a hazy concept of somethingness. The sincere student of Scripture understands it to be just another disguised form of religious liberalism. Frankly, it's merely old Greek philosophy. See, these philosophers didn't quite comprehend Paul. Christ was a little too deep for their philosophy, which had apparently already gone to seed at the time in which we are studying. Make a note....

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

~ Areopagus is a peculiar rock formation at the base of the Acropolis. At the top is the Parthenon, with all of its connecting buildings. The statues are incredible. This city was WHOLLY given over to idolatry at this time. This location is elevated from the marketplace; and this is where Paul was brought to speak. I'm sure every preacher who has ever visited there has read Paul's sermon on Mars Hill. If you go there, you will undoubtedly find some preacher reading it out. If you have the opportunity to visit – don't read it aloud – sit down and read it silently after asking the Holy Spirit to bring you wisdom, judgment and spiritual discernment. They already got the message. A long time ago. They reject it; and there are some that God gave up. See Romans chapter one.

These who asked Paul about the doctrine of Christ were completely in the dark spiritually; much more so than the Galatians or the people at Philippi

had been. See, these people thought they were superior intellectually. The most difficult people in the world to reach today are the ever-so-smart church members. They just don't think they have anything new to learn from the Word of God. They all want to take their version of some Gospel to a bar and convert people by some new manner or method they have devised. The church is constantly attempting to update its worldly appeal; and they're typically quite successful attracting emotion and sensationalism. The situation worsens our society as a nation of self-righteously entitled elitists emerge. What a tragedy it is. These are the meanest of the mean and sinful people, by the way. They will not recognize their need for a Savior from their sins. Their daily living is iniquitous. They refuse to recognize Christ or to make their lives count for God. It's all about them....

***20 For 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).***

~ My safari friends, this is precisely the problem in our modern Christian world. They constantly need to hear some new thing! Our technology updates itself today faster than we can download said updates; and we expect the same from Jesus. Some people live for the next new television show or movie. Others, for their next meal made of some new recipe they've never had before. Everybody is trying to come up with something new and "next level." They all want to coin some novel, smart or sophisticated phrase; but it's just the same old song and dance the Athenians did in an attempt to make their lives meaningful. There's nothing new under the sun, friends.

Every single day, we are inundated with new ideas, new gadgets, new concepts for gadgetry, new philosophies and new theories. Interestingly, nothing is really new. Our means and devices for executing tasks are constantly changing – but they aren't new. Everyone thinks they know something or that they can do something no one else knows or can do – but they don't. They all think they are the most important creatures to ever



come into the world, too. Well, there are those who will say Paul completely failed on Mars Hill. I have heard people say Paul fell flat on his face in Athens. I could not disagree more. This is his greatest and most profound sermon. We'll consider the full extent of that message in our next report ~

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