

Jesus Christ's work through the Apostles to the Uttermost

Paul's second missionary Journey

"... and ye shall be witness unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judae'a, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Acts 1:8

Introduction: Acts chapter 17 continues the 2nd Missionary journey for Paul and Silas as they arrive in Thessalonica. It is from this point that we begin to recognize some of the places to which Paul wrote epistles. The predictability of the results from the preaching of the Gospel are set forth; some believe while others do not. Those that search the Scriptures find a reasoned faith. In the last part of chapter 17 we find one of the most important evangelistic addresses in the New Testament. Paul moved with compassion in Athens speaks to a people that are steeped in idolatry.

Outline:

The Reasoning in Thessalonica

The Readiness in Berea

The Rejection in Athens

I. The Reasoning in Thessalonica v1-9

Note: I and II Thessalonians were written around 52 A.D probably from Corinth (Acts 18). Paul is writing to correct misconceptions concerning the coming of Christ. In II Thessalonians, Paul is addressing apparently a forged letter received which had caused much dismay (II Corinthians 2:1,2).

A. Responsibility to Reason v1,2

1. *"And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them..."*
2. Paul did not look at them as unreachable.
3. Paul did not witness only when it was convenient.
4. Paul did not allow pride to hinder his witness.

B. Reasoned out of the Scriptures v2

1. *"...reasoned with them out of the scriptures..."*
2. Our reasoning comes from the Bible – Can we reason from the Bible if we do not know the Bible?
3. **God has made us with the ability to reason. – Isaiah 1:18**
4. **God has given us the ability to choose. – Joshua 24:15**
5. **God has provided us salvation through a reasoned faith. – John 1: 38,39**

C. Relayed the truth v3

1. *“Opening and alleging...”* – To explain what is obscure (**Luke 24:32**)
2. What did he reason?
 - a. **That Christ must needs have suffered.** *“...that Christ must needs have suffered...”* – There was an expectation of a conquering King. But why must Jesus suffer? **Romans 3:25** Propitiation - The act of appeasing wrath and conciliating the favor of an offended person; the act of making propitious.
 - b. **That Christ rose from the dead.** *“...and risen again from the dead...”* Why is it important that Christ rose from the dead? **I Corinthians 15:17-19**
 - c. **The Christ is the Saviour.** *“...and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.”* - Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah
 - d. **Micah 5:2** He was born in Bethlehem.
 - e. **Genesis 49:10** He was of the tribe of Judah.
 - f. **Isaiah 11:1, 10** He was descended from Jesse, and of the royal line of David.
 - g. **Daniel 9: 24-27** He came at the time prophesied.
 - h. **Isaiah 53: 1-12** His appearance, character and work correspond with the prophecies.

D. Results of the Reasoning v4,5

1. *“And **some of them believed...**”* – There is only two results concerning the Gospel.
2. *“But the **Jews which believed not, moved with envy...**”*
3. You cannot replicate God’s people because of this the Jews were moved with envy. No doubt they saw something different and did not understand why Paul was so successful.
4. The condition of unbelief denies one spiritual insight.
5. **I Corinthians 2: 12-14** *Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

E. Repeating of the reproach of Christ v5-9

1. **v7** *“...these do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king, one Jesus.” (Matthew 27:11 “...the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews?...”)*
2. *“For therefore **we both labour and suffer reproach**, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.” I Timothy 4:10*
3. Speaking of Moses the Bible says, *“Esteeming **the reproach of Christ** greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.” Hebrews 11:26*
4. **John 15:20** *“Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.”*
5. **v6,7** *“These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; **Whom Jason hath received...**”*
6. We stand together as part of the family of God. These new Christians were guilty by association with Paul and Silas and most importantly Jesus Christ.
7. These [**Jason, and of the other**] plainly testified of their innocence in causing sedition and uproar. **v9** *“And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.*

II. The Readiness in Berea v10-15

“Man’s disappointments are God’s divine appointments.” – Paul Chappell

Example: “William Carey translated the Scripture into over a dozen Indian languages. One afternoon after twenty years of plodding labor in that country, a fire raged through his printing plant and warehouse. All of his printing equipment was destroyed, but most tragically, many of his precious manuscripts were completely consumed by fire. Of course, Carey had no computer back-up files. Twenty years of nonstop labor were gone within a few hours. How would he respond to this crushing devastation? Carey wrote to a pastor-friend, Andrew Murray, in England: “The ground must be labored over again, but we are not discouraged...we have all been supported under this affliction, and preserved from discouragement. To me, the consideration of the divine sovereignty and wisdom has been very supporting... I endeavored to improve this our affliction last Lord’s day, from **Psalm 46:10**, *Be still, and know that I am*

God. I principally dwelt upon two ideas: God has a sovereign right to dispose of us as he pleases, and we ought to acquiesce in all that God does with us and to us.””

A. Prudence of the Brethren v10 (Prudence differs from wisdom in this, that prudence implies more caution and reserve than wisdom, or is exercised more in foreseeing and avoiding evil, than in devising and executing that which is good.)

1. *“And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea...”*
2. Principle of caring for others by the brethren - *“That there should be no schism in the body; **but that the members should have the same care one for another.** And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”* **I Corinthians 12:25-27**
3. We are to be *“...wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.”* (**Matthew 10:16**)

B. Predictability of Paul and Silas v10

1. *“...who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.”*
2. There should be some predictability when it comes to you and I. In one commentary it noted, Silas did not have to turn to Paul and ask “What are we doing in the next city?”
3. Could this be said of us, “I wonder if so and so will be at church on Sunday night?” etc....

C. Promise of the Word of God v11-13

1. *“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.”* **Isaiah 55:11**
2. What made the difference in Berea? Why were they “*more noble*” (Great; elevated; dignified; being above every thing that can dishonor reputation; as a noble mind; a noble courage; noble deeds of valor.”
3. **Received the Word** – to receive you must be at a place to hear
4. **Readiness of mind** – their heart was willing to “hear,” They had an expectation...
5. *“Therefore speak I to them in parables: because **they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not,** neither do they understand.”* **Matthew 13:13** – They did not believe because they did not want to believe.
6. **Researched** – Re (again) – Searched (to look for) *“daily, whether those things were so.”*

D. Precious Results v12,13

1. **v12** *“Therefore many of them believed;”*
2. **Hebrews 4:12** *“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”*
3. The results from examining the Scriptures in contrast with those in verse 4 where the Bible states, *“And some of them believed...”*
4. *“The word honourable refers to rank—the word is used of Joseph of Arimathea” - (Luke 23:50, Mark 15:43) John Phillips Commentary*
5. All in all, Jews believed and honourable Greek Men and Women.

E. Presence of Opposition v13-15

1. **The lengths the enemy went to:** They heard and they went. v13 *“But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also...”*
2. **The strategy they took:** *“...and stirred up the people.”* – ‘Rabble-rousing’ Why is this important to note?
3. The word ‘*stirred up*’ can be defined as “a motion produced by winds, storms, waves, etc.; to agitate or shake”
4. **2 Corinthians 2:11** *“Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: **for we are not ignorant of his devices.**”*
5. **v14,15** Again, we see the prudence of the brethren. Paul is conducted by the brethren to Athens, while Timothy and Silas continue the work there in Berea. Such care and concern is seen by even the newest of brothers and sisters in Christ.

III. The Rejection in Athens v16-34

A. Results of the depravity of Man v16

1. *“Athens illustrates to what great heights of achievement man can ascend and still be ignorant of God. Athens illustrates what knowledge amounts to apart from divine revelation [the Word of God].” “When Paul came to Athens, his eyes fell on the Parthenon, built 447-432 B.C. and considered to this day one of the greatest masterpieces of architecture, probably the most perfect building ever conceived and built by man. Athens was famous for mathematics. It was the Athenians who laid down its principles,*

terminology, and methods. Pythagoras, and Aristarchus set astronomy on its course: Archimedes invented the science of hydrostatics. Philosophy was virtually a Greek invention, with Plato and Aristotle dominating Western thought since Europe became civilized. Aristotle was famed for his philosophy and logic, his physics, biology, ethics, and political science. The Greeks also pioneered the way in political science. Liberty, law, democracy, and parliament, all originated with Greece. The Greeks gave the world not only a love for knowledge and a love of beauty, but a love of freedom. But for all that, Greek civilization was spiritually bankrupt.” – John Phillips Commentary



2. Paul's "spirit was stirred in him" Why? "when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry."
3. Does it bother us that Hampton is given to idolatry? Are we stirred by the depravity of Man? Or have we become desensitized to this world. "That's just the way things are!"

B. Response it demanded v17

1. "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."
2. **Notice Paul was motivated by what he saw.**
3. Paul spoke with anyone and everyone. Whomever would listen to the Gospel.
4. **Notice, Paul did not compartmentalize his life.** (the Synagogue, the market, and privately)

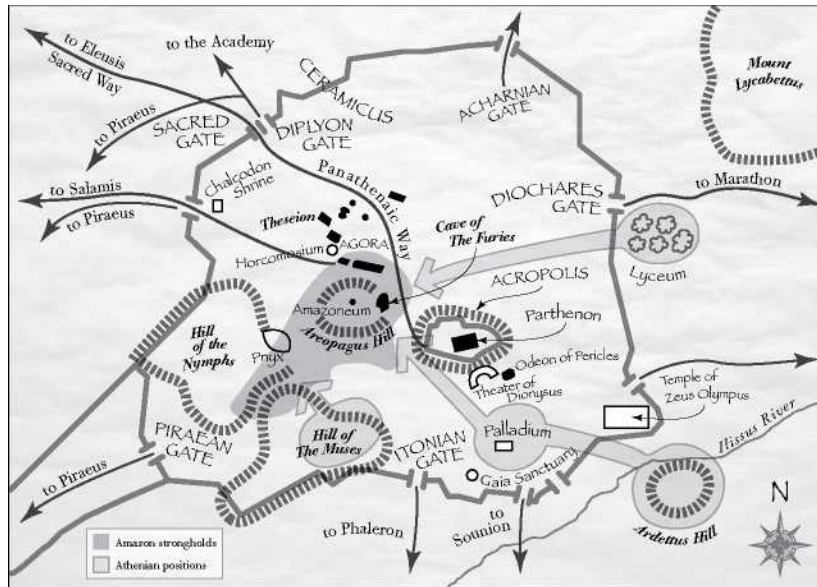
5. **Notice, Paul did not witness to some and not to others.** Paul had a plan that was not arbitrary, however it is evident that he desired the same thing God does.
6. **2 Peter 3:9** *“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, **not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**”*
7. **Notice, Paul did not limit God with time constraints.**
8. The takeaway is this, service to the Lord is not something we do, but rather we are servants of the Lord. In other words, death to self, and Christ living in me. Consider this verse: **Galatians 2:20** *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”*

C. Reasoning of the philosophers v18

1. **Epicureans** – Believed that pleasure is the ultimate goal in life. They advocated living in such a way as to derive the greatest amount of pleasure possible during one's lifetime, yet doing so moderately in order to avoid the suffering incurred by overindulgence in such pleasure. Emphasis was placed on pleasures of the mind rather than on physical pleasures. Epicureans did not deny the existence of the gods; rather it denies their involvement in the world. They also did not believe in existence after death. According to Epicureanism, the gods do not interfere with human lives or the rest of the universe in any way.
2. **Stoicks** – The Stoicks were opposite of Epicureans. “Their school of thought had been founded by Cyprus (340-260 B.C.), a contemporary of Epicurus. As far as the Gods were concerned they were fatalists and pantheists. God was the world soul, the was God’s body. Their leading maxim was that man should live according to nature. At its best, Stoicism was marked by moral earnestness, marred however, by spiritual pride. Man should be unmoved by passion. He should be unmoved by joy or grief, pleasure or pain. In other words, indifference was the key to life.” - John Phillips Commentary
3. Seen in these tragic two ‘philosophies’ is man’s attempt to come to terms with life and the problems that we face. They were the Gentile equivalent of the Pharisees and Sadducees.
4. The two reactions – *“What will this babbler say?” “He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods:”*

D. Regard for “new” things v19-21

“v21 (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.)”



1. **(air-ē-op-a-gus) The Areopagus (Mars' Hill)** was a rocky height in Athens, opposite the western end of the Acropolis. It rises gradually from the northern end, and terminates abruptly on the south, over against the Acropolis, at which point it is about fifty or sixty feet above the valley.- Smith Bible Dictionary
2. “On many accounts this was the most celebrated tribunal in the world. Its decisions were distinguished for justice and correctness; nor was there any court in Greece in which so much confidence was placed.”- Albert Barnes
3. **Curiosity on the Surface – v20**“For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.”- This is different than what they were used to hearing. (The Bible is set apart from everything else. God’s plan of redemption is unlike any other.)
4. **Craving for God on the Inside**
5. **While it is true that the Bible teaches us** “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.” (Romans 3:10,11) **Man knows there is a God and that something is missing.** Instead of ‘seeking’ “after God,” Man creates his own god (even in Athiesm).
6. “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was

darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.” (Romans 1:21-23)

7. “There is no culture recorded in human history which has not practiced some form of religion.” Joshua J. Mark- Professor of Philosophy at Marist College, New York

E. Running to the Gospel

1. **Paul stood – v22** “*Paul stood...*” – Can you imagine the intimidation of the crowd?
2. **Paul was polite – v22** “*Ye men of Athens*”
3. When Paul remarks that they were **v22** “*too superstitious*” he is not being derogatory but stating that they are very zealous to worship of gods. As a matter of fact, he is going to use this to present the Gospel.
4. **Paul paid attention** – He ‘perceived’ in **v22** and in **v23** “*and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.*”
5. We must know about other ‘religions’ and how to speak to people. Part of that will be by paying attention to what people say and do. Example: Very religious neighbors versus the man with a large boat.
6. **Paul understood their plight** - “*Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.*”
7. We must understand that people are blinded and lost in their trespasses and sins.
8. **2 Corinthians 4:3,4** “*But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*”
9. **Paul presented the truth –**
 - a. **God created all – v24** Presupposes a Moral Accountability “*seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples...*” He discounts polytheism (many gods) and pantheism (all is god).
 - b. **God is self-sufficient – v25** God in the Old Testament reveals Himself through the name “I AM” (**Exodus 3:14**) “*...as though he needed any thing...*” Our lives

however are dependent upon him. *“he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;”*

- c. **God is Sovereign and Man is all common – v26** *“And 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;”*

- d. **God necessarily gave us His Word and His Son (the Bible and Jesus) v27,28** *“That 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: For 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.”* – The reference is to the dim light of natural revelation and even as Paul quotes perhaps from a heathen poet Aratus. “Aratus was a Greek poet of Cilicia the native place of Paul, and flourished about 277 years before Christ. As Paul was a native of the same country it is highly probable he was acquainted with his writings.”

- e. **God is much more than man’s contrivance – v29** *“Forasmuch 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.”*

- f. **God is longsuffering but has made known the way of Salvation – v30** *“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; **but now commandeth all men every where to repent:**”* Paul is inviting these that are hearing to forsake their idolatry by repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

- g. **God will judge man in the person of Jesus Christ. – v31** *“Because 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.**”* The great infallible proof of the Gospel is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. **Acts 1:3** *“To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:”*

F. Rejection of the Multitude v32,33

1. v32 *“And they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked:”*
2. **There are those who will mock.**
 - a. They will mock Jesus Christ, they will mock the Bible, they will mock your “holy” living. They will mock the narrative in the Gospels to include the resurrection as fairy tales.
 - b. This word mocked was used to describe those who on the Day of Pentecost “mocked” Peter and the Apostles.
3. **There are those who will delay.**
4. *“and others when said, We will hear thee again of this matter.”*
5. *“People who defer inquiry on the subject of religion seldom find the favorable period arrive.” – Albert Barnes*
6. *“I’ll get saved one day.”*
7. There is the possibility of some needing to ‘soak’ on what is being told, but there is also the possibility that this is nothing more than an excuse.
8. *“No church was organized at Athens.” – Albert Barnes*
9. *“Indeed no great church would be found in Athens during the first three hundred years of Christianity.” – John Phillips*
10. v33 *“So Paul departed from among them.” – There comes a point in which we must discern to move on.*

G. Reaching of Some v34

1. *“certain men clave unto him, and believed:”*
2. Notice two items listed
3. They ‘clave to Paul.’
4. They also *“believed.”*
5. Let us beware not to get caught up in following man alone, but rather following God and seeking men who are doing likewise.
6. **I Corinthians 11:1** *“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”*
7. **Galatians 1: 8,9** *“But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”*