

WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY- Acts Chapter 17

Verse 1- 4- Paul and his companions continued their missionary journey through two port cities to Thessalonica, a major port city (a three-day walk from Philippi). Their first stop was a synagogue, which was Paul's usual custom. He spent three weeks visiting there on the sabbath to explain and prove to them using the scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah and why he had to die and be resurrected. Paul probably quoted some of the old testament prophecies about Jesus. (Isaiah 7:14, ESV 636), (Micah 5:2, ESV 866), (Isaiah 53:5-6, ESV 684) While only a few Jews were persuaded by Paul, a large number of Greeks and influential women were converted. This is in keeping with God's intention that opened salvation to people outside of the Jewish faith and heritage. (Romans 10:11-13, ESV 1047), (1Timothy 2:1-4, ESV 1094), (John 3:16, ESV 984), (Ephesians 1:4-5, ESV 1078) One thing to note is that Paul did not use his own personal testimony to persuade them, even though he certainly had a great testimony to use. In this instance, he chose to stick to the scriptures, probably because he knew that the stubborn Jews would only listen to the old scriptures and prophets because of their intense penchant toward tradition. (Mark 7:6-8, ESV 934), (Isaiah 43:18-19, ESV 673), (Colossians 2:6-8. ESV 1087) For some of the Jews this worked. Unfortunately, as we learned earlier in our study of Acts, stubborn unbelievers existed then just as they do now, and they continue to hinder our mission work.

Verse 5-9- Then, some of the non-believing Jews got jealous of Paul and Silas. They actually recruited some people of bad character to help them form a mob and start a riot against Paul and Silas. They went so far as to try to find them at the home of their host, Jason, in order to bring them before the crowd. Unfortunately, for these stubborn and vengeful unbelievers, Paul and Silas were not at Jason's home when the crowd came, so they attacked and dragged-out Jason and some other believers in their stead. This type of extreme behavior is typical in situations of envy or jealousy, according to the bible. (James 3:14-18. ESV 1115), (Proverbs 10:12 ESV 594) The curious part of this whole event is what were these angry people jealous of? Why would just speaking about Christ make them so angry and determined to get rid of Paul and his company? The answer is found in verse 6. They shouted before the city officials that Paul and his men had "turned the world upside down {KJV}," or "caused trouble all over the world {NIV}." The evil mob's only accusation was actually a testament to the effectiveness of the disciple's mission. These angry non-believers were upset over the impact that was being made through the gospel that the missionaries were teaching. Without knowing it, their accusers were actually complimenting their success. (Isaiah 55:11, ESV 686) In addition, the accusation was fictional because it said that Paul and the other missionaries were calling Jesus "another king," but Paul called Jesus, "Christ" which meant, "Son of God" or "Anointed," or he called Him "Messiah," which means "Anointed or Chosen One." These unbelievers had no idea

that this Jesus was far above the title of king. They did not understand that His authority far overruled any earthly human authority. (Daniel 4:34-35. ESV 827), (1 Chronicles 29:11-12, ESV 394) (2 Corinthians 4:3-4. ESV 1068), (Ephesians 4:18, ESV 1081) So, they made up an accusation that Paul and his company were trying to overthrow the Roman empire that was led by Caesar. Of course, the purpose for this was to cause a panic and fear among the people and the city officials that the Roman empire might attack them for insubordination. As we discussed at the beginning of our study, fear of persecution has long been used as a hindrance to faith. So, the unbelievers thought they had to get rid of these men preaching about a new king before the Roman officials could hear about them. When they couldn't find Paul and his men, they decided to take his host, Jason and some other men that had been with them. This was to send a message to Paul to get out of town. The bond that they took from Jason and the others was likely not a bond paid for themselves to ensure that they reappear before the officials, but rather, a security deposit that might be returned to them if and only if Paul and Silas left town, or it could have been a threat that more would be taken from them if Paul and Silas did not leave. This was a different kind of persecution. It did not involve physical violence, but a threat was still implied. In this case the believers complied with the law as was always their intention, but the spread of the gospel was still not stopped because Paul and Silas had already accomplished within three Sabbaths what the Lord had planned. (Mark 12:15-17, ESV 940-941), (Luke 20:22-25, ESV)