



## Acts

### Lesson 16, Chapter 17

Several new churches had been established by Paul and his co-workers on the first missionary journey. These churches were not buildings with a sign in front that read “First Church of Iconium,” or “Lystra Bible Church.” They had no steeples or stained-glass windows and no paid pastoral staff. They didn’t even have a youth group or an organized Sunday School. What these churches did have were changed people. These people believed the truth of the gospel and now had to face the challenge of living it in a culture that was very much opposed to their beliefs. When they took their stand for Christ it many times meant losing their family, their reputation, their job, or possibly their life. In their society persecution was a sure companion to living for Christ. When Paul and his team went out to evangelize a region, it is possible they expected the trouble and opposition that met them. Maybe that is why they never responded with despair but with perseverance. God had called them to do a job, and though much risk was involved in fulfilling it, the risk wasn’t what they focused on but the faithfulness of the One who had sent them.

Acts 16 introduces us to Paul and Silas new companion, Timothy. God directs them to Macedonia, and in its capital city Philippi they meet Lydia. She responds to their message and becomes the first convert in of that region. Her home becomes the starting place of the church in Philippi.

#### READ CHAPTER 17

1. Find Amphipolis, Apollonia, and Thessalonica on a map. Why do you think Paul always went to the local synagogue to preach when most Jews resisted the gospel?

In chapter 17, the missionaries move south down the coast of Macedonia to the port city of Thessalonica. For the next three Sabbaths they preach Christ in the local synagogue, and many people believe. As usual, many also oppose them, and they are arrested and taken before the authorities. In order to have Paul and his men released, Jason, a fellow believer, puts up a bond guaranteeing there would be no more trouble. Paul’s group moves inland several miles to the small town of Berea. The people of Berea receive the gospel with joy which agitates the unbelievers from Thessalonica even more. Many came to Berea to capture Paul, but his friends had sent him off to Athens while Timothy and Silas remained. They would join Paul at a later date.

Athens, later being the home of Plato, Socrates and Aristotle, was the philosophical capital of the world. Here they had idols to every imaginable god including an unknown God that seemed to catch Paul’s attention. After the people of Athens accuse Paul of “proclaiming a strange deity,” Paul uses their recognition of an unknown god to introduce the one True God. Though many refuse the truth, many others were saved. Even in the midst of great wickedness, God’s Spirit reveals truth to those who will hear it.

2. *What were some of the Old Testament Scriptures that Paul probably used to “explain and prove that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead?” vs. 2-3 See Acts 2:23-36; 4:8-11; 7:37-53; 8:30-38 and 13:23-41 for examples of using the OT to prove the gospel.*
  
3. *What did the mob in Thessalonica accuse Paul and Silas of as basis for their attack? Vs.5-8 In what similar situation was this excuse used? See John 19:12-16.*
  
4. *Why did Paul say the Bereans were “of more noble character” (NIV) than the people of Thessalonica? How can this be a warning to us? 17:11-12*
  
5. *Though many opposed Paul and his message in Thessalonica, many received the message with joy and a church was established there 17:1-4. Skim 1 Thessalonians verses given and list phrases that tell of Paul’s relationship with this church.*

*1 Thessalonians 1:2-7*

*2:1-8*

*2:17*

*3:4-10*

*4:9-12*

*Others:*

6. *From 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11, what specific concern did the people of Thessalonica have that Paul addresses for them?*
  
7. *Why did Paul need to leave Berea? Why do you think Silas and Timothy remained in Berea? 17:13-15*

8. *What was the first thing Paul noticed while he was waiting in Athens?*



*“The adjective Luke uses (“full of idols” vs.16) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament and has not been found in any other Greek literature. Although most English versions render it ‘full of idols’, the idea conveyed seems to be that the city was ‘under’ them. We might say that it was ‘smothered with idols’ or ‘swamped’ by them. ...In consequence, there were more gods in Athens than in all the rest of the country, and the Roman satirist hardly exaggerates when he says that it was easier to find a god there than a man. There were innumerable temples, shrines, statues and altars. In the Parthenon stood a huge gold and ivory statue of Athena, ‘whose gleaming spear-point was visible forty miles away.’ Elsewhere there were images of Apollo, the city’s patron, of Jupiter, Venus, Mercury, Bacchus, Neptune, Diana and Aesculapius. The whole Greek pantheon was there all the gods of Olympus. And they were beautiful.”*

*~ John Stott Commentary on Acts*

9. *In a city where gods were continually worshiped, why would they find Paul’s description of the gospel and Jesus so strange (vs. 19-20)?*

10. *How does Paul say his God differs from all of theirs? Vs. 24-31*

11. *What were the different responses to Paul’s mention of the “resurrection of the dead,” and why do you think they each responded that way?*

12. *How does our world compare to what Paul faced in Athens? How can we learn from his response to the wickedness he encountered there?*

***Prayer requests:***

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

***Group time notes:***

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---