

Acts 17:1 – 18:22, Part Two
Remainder of the Second Journey: Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth

I. Thessalonica and Berea – 17:1-15

Paul left Philippi and with his fellow-ministers headed down the Egnatian Way to Thessalonica, a journey of about 70 miles (17:1). Paul finds a synagogue there and commences his apostolic preaching according to the pattern already established – to the Jew first, and then to the Greek. The Result is a considerable number of conversions that include many “God-fearers,” along with the “leading women.” This outcome creates the context for rioting. They are accused of being social revolutionaries (Acts 17:6), acting contrary to Caesar, (note the similarity here to the mob’s response to Pilate when Christ was on trial in Jerusalem). It appears that Paul was in Thessalonica only a few weeks (17:2), and was bundled off the beaten path to Berea (17:10-15). Persecution breaks out here as well, authored by the trouble-makers in Thessalonica, and so from here as well, Paul is sent away, this time to Athens, leaving Silas and Timothy to work with the new believers in Berea (17:14).

● **Excursus on 1 and 2 Thessalonians**

- A. Apostolic Witness: 1:1; 2:1-4
- B. Apostolic Heart: 2:17-19; 3:1-8
- C. Apostolic Instruction (while there only a short time): 4:1-18
 - 1. Sexual Purity
 - 2. Christian Love
 - 3. Resurrection Hope
- D. Pastoral Concern: 2 Thess. 2:1-5
- E. Pastoral Instruction: 2 Thess. 3:6-13

II. Athens - Acts 17

- Here we find Paul confronting a different and new opponent of the Gospel. He has dealt with Jewish unbelief and persecution, as well as Roman Imperial opposition. Now he faces Greek Philosophical Objections to the claims of the Gospel.
- The Areopagus: Ancient center of Greek Philosophical Schools. Fifth century play by Athenian dramatist Aeschylus, Apollo founds the court of the Areopagus with the words, “when a man dies and his blood is spilled on the ground, there is no resurrection.” We need to understand at the outset that the Greek and Roman ideal was of continuing existence (at best), but that bodily resurrection is flatly ruled out.
 - A. Two Primary Schools
 - 1. Epicurean: “gods” are distant, have no interaction with us, and abide in perpetual pleasure. To approximate the life of the gods is to pursue pleasure.
 - 2. Stoics: essentially pantheists, making no distinction between “god” and “creation.” Divine life is in all things.

- B. Paul Challenges Both
 - 1. Epicurean – God is not far from each of us and we are called to seek him – Acts 17:27
 - 2. Stoics: God created all things and people and is distinct from them, ruling over and above all things and persons – Acts 17:24
 - Note again, how Paul begins preaching among the Gentiles away from the synagogue with the doctrine of creation.
- C. Paul’s Final Blow to the Pagan Worldview - Resurrection – Acts 17:30-31

III. *Corinth – Acts 18:1-22*

Corinth was a port city, the political capital of Achaea, highly commercialized, thoroughly pagan (“Corinthianizing” was the term of the ancient world for prostitution), and home to the “Oracle of Delphi.”

- A. Aquila and Priscilla – Tent-Making Business Partners (note: Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19)
 - 1. Church Hosts
 - 2. Gospel Workers
 - 3. In Corinth over the riots in Rome concerning “Chrestus” (Suetonius).
 - B. Synagogue Ministry: Resistance and Success – 18:4-8
 - C. Change in Strategy - staying a year and a half: Acts 18:9-11
 - D. Gallio and Dating Paul’s Ministry
 - 1. Gallio was the brother of famed philosopher Seneca (a tutor to Nero).
 - 2. Know he was Proconsul from late 51 to early 52, leaving over ill-health
 - 3. Paul appears before Gallio toward the end of his 18 month stay in Corinth, so that puts Paul’s second journey somewhere around 49.
 - E. Departure from Corinth and Return to Antioch (with Aquila and Priscilla, leaving them – very strategically it turns out! – in Ephesus).
- *Excursus on 1 Corinthians* (we do not have the first letter Paul wrote this Church: 1 Corinthians 5:9).
 - I. Please, no more divisions! – 1:10
 - II. Spiritual Infancy – 3:1-4
 - III. Need for Discipline to Bring Order – 4:17-21
 - IV. Immorality Unchecked – 5:1-2
 - V. Lawsuits – 6:1-8
 - VI. Prostitution – 6:12-20
 - VII. Answering Questions – 7:1
 - A. Marriage Issues – 7
 - B. Meat Sacrificed to Idols – 8
 - C. Financial Support of Ministry – 9
 - D. The Church and Worship – 10-11
 - E. Spirituals – 12-14
 - F. Eschatology -15
 - G. Collections/Offerings - 16