

## ACTS CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### Read vs. 1-9

1. *In vs. 1, it talks about what "they" did. Who is this referring to? (see Acts 15:40)*

*Notice the change in the pronouns used to describe the travelers. In Chapter 16:11-16 it seems as though the author, Luke, is with them. In 17:1, it switches to "they", which seems to refer only to Paul and Silas. Possibly Luke stayed in Philippi when Paul & Silas continued on to Thessalonica. Since he wasn't arrested and jailed in Philippi with Paul & Silas, they might have decided that he would be the most likely person to stay in Philippi and help establish the new believers.*

2. *What people does Paul seek out in Thessalonica? (vs. 1 & 2)*

*Notice in verse 3 that he explains and gives evidence that Christ had to suffer and rise again. This was a stumbling block for Jews. They had expected a Messiah who would rescue them and become their king. The concept of a suffering Savior was new to them and they would need to understand that this had always been God's plan before they could accept that Christ was indeed their savior.*

3. *Paul used the \_\_\_\_\_ to try to convince them that Jesus is \_\_\_\_\_.*

*It is scripture that has power to change people's lives. Hebrews 4:12 reminds us that "the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." We should be bold to use scripture without apology. It will do its' intended work in the hearts of those whom God is calling to Himself.*

4. *What resulted from his preaching? (from vs. 4)*

*This is always the result of preaching the Word. Some will believe and some will reject. It is not because of our presentation. God can use the worst of speakers if they are preaching the Word of God. Contrary-wise, we should not feel personally rejected by those who do not believe. It is not us that they are rejecting, but God. Our job is to be faithful, to explain the scriptures and then to let the Holy Spirit work. It is not in our power to change hearts. We shouldn't take the credit when a person believes and we shouldn't be depressed when they don't. It is a spiritual work and God must do the spiritual work.*

*We know that a church was established here, even during this brief visit, because we have the letters of I & II Thessalonians that are written to them.*

5. *What prompted the unbelieving Jews to make trouble for Paul and Silas? (vs. 5)*

*Ultimately it was Satan stirring them up and putting this jealousy in their minds. Eph. 6:12 tells us that “our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” This is where we need the power of prayer. Pray for yourself as you try to be a witness for Christ. Remember to pray for your pastor and for missionaries, too. Remember, it is a spiritual battle that we are in. No amount of self-effort can win another person to Christ. Trust the work to God and leave it to Him.*

6. *Why was Jason involved in the trouble? (vs. 7)*

*In verse 9 we read that Jason made a pledge and they were released. This was probably what we would call “posting bond.” It was money paid that would be forfeited if there was any further trouble. Paul leaves the city, but keeps track of them and is very concerned. Read I Thes. 2:14 and 3:1-5 which was written later from Corinth. It tells us that after Paul left, the new believers did suffer persecution. Paul ached for them. He could hardly stand it that he wasn’t there to help them. He sent Timothy back to them to encourage them and to bring back word to Paul. He longed to know that they were standing strong.*

Read vs. 10-15

7. *What was commendable about the Jews in Berea? (vs. 11)*

*In Jeremiah 29:13 God tells the Jews that they would find Him when they sought after Him. God does not try to hide Himself. When a person earnestly investigates the Word with an open heart, God reveals the truth to him. Read John 6:37 where Jesus reminds us that everyone whom God has chosen will come to Him. God is using Paul and his preaching of the word to gather up those whom God has chosen as His own.*

8. *As a result of their searching the Scriptures, \_\_\_\_\_(vs. 12)*

9. *Who stirred up trouble in Berea? (vs. 13)*

*In verse 14 we see that the believers try to protect Paul by sending him away, but Silas and Timothy stay in Berea to help establish the church. Paul goes on to Athens alone, but sends word back to Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible.*

*What tenacity Paul had! He was chased out of nearly every city he visited, but still he was faithful to keep preaching. He no doubt worried about the welfare of Silas and Timothy, but it seemed to be Paul that was the lightning rod for the persecution. You have to admire Silas and Timothy for staying with him!*

Read vs. 16-34

10. *In Athens, Paul was troubled because \_\_\_\_\_(vs. 16)*

*He probably hadn't planned to do anything until his team joined him, but he was overcome with the desire to preach the truth. Can you imagine Paul walking around the city, observing all of the different idols. The more he saw, the more anxious he was to preach to them and give them the truth. Paul said in I Cor. 9:16 that he was "compelled" to preach and "woe is me if I don't preach the gospel." When God chose Paul to be a special instrument for Himself, he gave him a HUGE desire to preach. He just couldn't NOT preach! We see that happening in this verse.*

11. *He uses a three-pronged approach in Athens. He not only preaches in the synagogue, but also \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 17)*

*Once again Paul begins in the synagogue with the Jews and the Greeks who worshipped the one true God. But he also branches out to the market place during the week.*

12. *Why did the philosophers think Paul was peculiar?*

*The Epicureans and the Stoic philosophers are mentioned here. The Epicurians believed that the chief end of life is pleasure. In other words, if it makes you happy then you should do it. The Stoics did not believe in a personal God. They considered themselves intellectual. They believed that God was present in everything and that life was governed by fate. They taught that a person needed to be self-sufficient because there was no help available. Not surprisingly, suicide was common.*

*We don't have to look far to see that these life-philosophies still exist today. Do you know anyone who lives as though the chief goal of their life is pleasure? Do you know any intellectuals who believe in self-sufficiency. Call it what you may, but the thinking of today's population really isn't any very original. Satan still uses the same old tools to keep people from coming to Christ. And the same gospel is still what they need to hear. We are all sinners, unable to save ourselves, but there is a Creator God who desires to have you and He Himself has provided a way of salvation through His Son.*

13. *What were the Athenians particularly known for? (vs. 21)*

*When I read about the Athenians, the picture comes to my mind of university students sitting in a coffee shop discussing the meaning of life. 2 Tim. 3:7 talks about those who are "always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." Consider I Cor. 1:21. God says that the wisdom of the world does not lead men to Him. Instead He uses the foolishness of preaching to draw people. Don't be ashamed of the message of the cross, even when you are dealing with the highly educated. They need the gospel, too.*

*In verse 22 we read that Paul preached on Mars Hill (the Areopagus). This place was connected to a group that examined and then licensed public speakers. They either gave them the OK or scoffed at them. Socrates had been condemned by them 400 years earlier.*

14. *A good evangelist will meet people's needs at their own level. From what basis did Paul launch his gospel message to the Athenians? (vs. 22 & 23)*

*We see Paul using a very different approach here. Usually, when he was talking to Jews, he would begin by reciting their own history to them. Here he appeals to their religious nature. It is a very logical approach. He sees that they have an idol erected for the "unknown God." Paul sees this as an opportunity to enlighten them about this God that they truly don't know....His God, the creator of the universe.*

15. *The living God is not like the Greek gods because: (vs. 24- 26)*

*The God he presents to them is certainly not like the gods that they worship. A god who isn't served by human hands because he doesn't need anything is a new concept for them. Instead He is reaching out to them and desires a relationship with them.*

16. *Paul again gets their attention by quoting \_\_\_\_\_ (vs. 28 & 29)*

*Paul quotes from Epimenides and Aratus. This was a good way to spark their interest and to show them that he was familiar with their culture and religion. He uses that thought (that we are his offspring) to show that the true God isn't made of gold or silver or stone. If we are His offspring, wouldn't He be like us? He is getting their thoughts directed in the right direction!*

17. *God is anxious for all men to \_\_\_\_\_ ( vs. 30)*

*The word repent means to change direction....to stop going the way you are going and make a complete opposite turn-around. It was their thinking about God that they needed to change. Paul goes on in verse 31 to warn them that God is going to judge the world. God provided proof that Jesus was from Him by raising Him from the dead.*

*Nothing has changed in this message from God. He still desires people to repent, to consider that they will one day stand in judgment before Him and to realize that the gospel is the truth. People think that they are now too sophisticated to believe something as old fashioned as the gospel, but nothing under the sun has changed since the time of Paul. People are still sinners in need of grace. The goal of life is not pleasure. No amount of self enlightenment is going to lead to the truth. Independence does not lead to eternal life. God is still the Creator and He still offers only one plan of salvation. James 4:10 tells us to "humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up." Acts 4:12 tells us that "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."*

18. *What doctrinal issue finally divided Paul's listeners? (vs. 32)*

*Some sneered....it was just too unbelievable. Others wanted to hear more. The gospel always divides. People cannot understand it without the help of the Holy Spirit. Compare*

*both I Cor. 1:18 and I Cor. 2:14.*

19. *Were there any among them that became believers? (vs. 33 & 34)*

*History records martyrs as coming from Athens years later. There were also important men in the church's history that came from Athens.*