

THE BOOK OF ACTS | GOD'S REVELATION OF TRANSITION

SESSION 52 | ACTS 16-11-24

ACTS 16:11-15 | THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY: LYDIA'S CONVERSION IN PHILIPPI

- Verses 11-12 –
 - They first came to Samothracia, an island in the Aegean Sea, then arrived in Europe at Neapolis, the port city, which is about 10 miles from Philippi, the most populated city of the region.
 - The city is named after Philip of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great. Impressive ruins of the city remain today.
 - Note that Philippi was not only the **chief city** but also noted as a **colony**.
 - A κολωνία [kolonia] was a Roman military outpost.
 - The name survived in English usage and was originally used of settlements of soldiers. The name *Lincoln* is an abbreviation of *Lindum Colonia* in England, which was originally a colony of Roman veterans.
- Verse 13 –
 - This verse, first of all, displays that the “church” was still Jewish in its orientation (i.e.: no split had occurred between synagogue and “church”).
 - Second, however, this verse *might* give us a clue as to the time of year. The Greek phrase translated **on the sabbath** is not typical. Literally, it says, “on the day of the Sabbaths.” A few things of note:
 - Sabbaths is plural, though translated into the singular in KJV and (I believe) all other major translations.
 - This phrase (or very similar) is used in the plural in John 20:1, as well as Lk. 24:1 and Mark 16:2, referring to the day Jesus was raised from the dead.
 - Resurrection day was on the first of seven sabbaths counted from Passover to Pentecost.
 - It is likely that Paul is saying, “On the first Sabbath of the *Feast of Weeks*...” If this assumption is correct, then this took place in March / April.
 - From this we can also assume the following:
 - The women gathered were Jewish, or at least God-fearing gentiles.
 - There were not enough men in the town to have a synagogue (a minimum of 10 men was required, this was called a *minion*). Had there been a synagogue, the women would likely have gathered there.
- Verses 14-15 –
 - We are not told about the other woman, but Lydia is mentioned. It would be speculation to know what response the other women had.
 - We are often told that Lydia was “the first convert in Europe.” But the text tells us that she **worshipped God** before Paul ever came.
 - In truth, we do not know if she was given the Gospel of the uncircumcision or of the circumcision (Gal. 2:7). The charge against Paul and Silas in verses 20-21 hint at Judaism, but those bringing the charge are also not to be trusted.
 - Her baptism doesn’t solve the issue, for Peter (who was “in charge” of the Gospel of the circumcision) baptized, and later we will see the Philippian jailor baptized, presumably under Paul’s Gospel.
 - Indeed, it could be that this woman accepted *both* Gospels. As a Jew, she believed that Jesus was Messiah and was coming to save the world through her nation. As an individual, she accepted the grace-gift of salvation.
 - Outside of the spiritual aspects of her decision, we know that Lydia was a **seller of purple**, which gives indication that she was a wealthy person who often dealt with wealthy and powerful people. She also was a hospitable person, and her heart was opened by the Lord to allow Paul, Silas, and Timothy to stay in her home.

- Verses 16-18 –
 - This girl was the victim of both demon possession and human trafficking.
 - It is unknown if they **went to prayer** on the Sabbath or another day, but either way, the Jewish prayer times are being observed.
 - The girl had a **spirit of divination**.
 - The Greek is a *pneuma Pythanos*, a “spirit of Python.” Python was the dragon-like creature killed by Apollo in Greek mythology.
 - At the Temple to Apollo at Delphi, the high priestess came under the name *Pythias*, and was closely associated with oracles.
 - This spirit enabled the girl to give oracles (i.e.: **soothsaying**).
 - Both from verse 16 and verse 18 there is every indication of the supernatural in this account, and there is no reason to remove the supernatural.
 - Does the devil know the future? Not likely.
 - However, he does know the *present* in a stronger way than our limited-presence ability gives us ability to know. Knowing the *present* gives the ability to know the *future*.
 - This **soothsaying** was, therefore, like insider-trading. She was able to have an awareness of the future because she had a supernatural awareness of the present.
 - We should also be reminded that most people are not looking for a vision of the *distant* future, but rather the *immediate* future. She was able to provide this vision.
 - The girl **brought her masters much gain**. That is, she was “pimped out” spiritually rather than sexually.
 - The girl was incessantly repeating *the truth*: **these men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation**. This would have been a welcome announcement, save for two reasons.
 - First, it would associate Paul & crew to this pagan worship.
 - Second, **this did she many days**, making true ministry/evangelism difficult.
 - Paul recognized that this was demonic and commanded the spirit to come out of her.
 - A side note: Luke is the author, and references to **we** (v. 16) always include Luke (unless they are quotations). This becomes evident in verse 17, where Luke refers to **Paul and us**. In these cases we are made aware that Luke is present, thus writing his history as a first-hand account.
- Verses 19-21 –
 - These verses show us several things that serve as words of warning and advice to the wise, even outside their context.
 - First, “follow the money.” This is a case in which the charge against Paul and Silas has little to do with the real issue. The girls **masters** were only concerned with their loss of income, but the charge against Paul and Silas was related to **customs, which are not lawful for us to receive** as Romans. Likely, the supposed unlawful customs were from very strict interpretations of some Roman laws, as Jews were normally afforded freedom of their religion.
 - Second, beware of so-called “red flag” laws, which will inevitably be used against law enforcement and against people of non-conformist ideals in order to remove a person’s civil liberties.
 - Third, the work of religion and the work of state need to remain separated. Religious people have full right to influence the state, but the state must not entangle itself in matters of religion.
- Verses 22-24 –
 - Often the **magistrates** are influenced by the **multitude**, and this almost always leads to a dangerous outcome.
 - Note: the word **rent** is the past tense of the past participle *rend*, which means “to rip.”
 - The **jailor** is here introduced for narrative purposes only. Though he is now just the one charged to **keep them safely**, he will soon become one of the most talked about figures in Christian evangelism.