

THE BOOK OF ACTS | GOD'S REVELATION OF TRANSITION

SESSION 54 | ACTS 17:1-9

ACTS 17:1-9 | THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY: THESSALONICA

- Verse 1 –
 - In Thessalonica we have the first encounter of the Kingdom message with a European Jewish synagogue.
- Verses 2-3 –
 - Even after receiving the mystery, the urgency was the gospel of the Kingdom, and Paul consistently took this message to the Jewish people, in the synagogues.
 - Paul **reasoned with them out of the scriptures**, which is the best way to convince anyone of a theological truth, and a skill that Christians should hone.
 - Paul's position was that **Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead**. That is, that the Kingdom gospel is dependent upon these events, and therefore this gospel could not have been proclaimed prior to the resurrection.
 - Furthermore, his position was that **this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ**.
 - Thus Paul's message was one of the *theological* identity of the Messiah followed by the *physical* identity of the Messiah.
 - Paul did not see this as a quick message. He had done this for **three sabbath days** before encountering the problems expressed in vv. 4 and following.
- Verse 4 –
 - Since faith cometh by hearing (Rom. 10:17), it is no surprise that some of them believed.
 - They consorted with Paul and Silas, literally they "cast their lots with..."
 - Of those who believed, some were devout Greeks, that is, Greeks of Jewish faith, and a large group from the chief women.
 - It is not known why, but the reference to the women is also used in Acts 13:50 (in a negative context).
 - This is testimony against the view that the ancient Jewish world was chauvinist, with no place nor respect for women in the society.
- Verse 5 –
 - Those not convinced **believed not** and were further **moved with envy** that Paul and Silas, as newcomers, were able to gain such a quick following.
 - Unfortunately, rather than deal with the argument that Paul set forth, they further abused some men who were open to abuse: **lewd fellows of the baser sort**. They found men who were easily influenced, had nothing to lose, and used them to **set all the city on an uproar** to turn public opinion against Paul.
 - This, in my opinion, is the cheapest and sleaziest kind of *modus operandi*.
 - A person who has an intellectual and substantive disagreement should put forth better argumentation with the facts.
 - Sadly, people who are "losing" an argument often resort to backhanded tactics and dishonest manipulation.
 - This is (unfortunately) not just an ancient Jewish method of "winning" a losing battle.

- Verses 6-7 –
 - The identity of Jason is unknown, but he was hosting Paul and his companions. There is also a Jason mentioned in Romans 16:21, presumably the same man.
 - The **rulers of the city** are πολιτάρχης [politarches], thus “citizen rulers.”
 - The word is only used in v. 6 and v. 8.
 - A second century arch (now located in the British Museum) was found in Thessalonica which uses the word *politarches*, and has seven *politarches* named, including three men who are recorded elsewhere in Acts as Paul’s companions: Sosipater, Secundus, and Gaius (it is unknown if they are the same men).
 - The fact that the uproar included the terminology of turning the **world upside down** gives indication that Paul’s work was well-known by this time.
 - The accusation against Paul and Silas was the same as the one leveled at Jesus, that of insurrection. This is evidence that Paul was teaching a Kingdom Gospel in the synagogue as well as the indication that he must have been teaching the Kingdom as the earthly, physical, and future reign of Jesus Christ, and *not* as the spiritual “rule and reign” of Christ in the hearts of His followers.
- Verses 8-9 –
 - The **lewd fellows of the baser sort** (v. 5) used this false charge to stir up **the people and the rulers of the city**.
 - When the rulers **had taken security of Jason** (i.e.: *bail money*), the city officials **let them go**.
 - We are not told what became of this matter, but likely the rulers gave a quick investigation and found it to be nothing. That did not matter to those behind it all, because it was sufficient to get Paul and Silas out of town (v. 10).