

## Acts 17 Paul's second journey continues

Vs. 1-4 Paul is traveling the Via Egnatia – the Roman road built to connect Rome with Constantinople. He is headed from Philippi to Thessalonica, the most important city of Macedonia.

Paul follows the pattern he has set for entering a city and speaking the gospel. His growing reputation among the diaspora Jewish communities is largely due to his authoritative Bible teachings.

His biblical authority is affirmed in this text by a sequence that is reflective of a trained scholar.

1 –he spoke from the scriptures

2 – He argued, explained

3 – He proved

“Argued” in this instance is to be understood as interpreting the contemporary meaning scripture for present readers – this is the same word used in Luke's Gospel as Jesus instructed disciples on the way to Emmaus.

He begins in the synagogue, where he worships on consecutive Sabbaths. Some Jews are convinced and others turn away. Presenting Jesus as the Messiah divides the house of Israel. Some Jews bring legal action against him. The gentiles are convinced but Paul and Silas flee in the face of the rejection.

The concept of a suffering, resurrected Messiah is alien to the Jews and so the controversy Paul creates.

The accusations brought against him are similar to those brought in Philippi. He is accused of disturbing the peace in a way that goes against Roman political conventions.

Vs. 5-9

Paul's opponents start a riot and when Paul and Silas could not be found they turned on the one who had given them hospitality – Jason. A host is responsible for the actions of his guests

Vs. 10-12

Paul and Silas run to Berea – a major city about 50 miles southwest of Thessalonica in the foothills of the Olympian mountains and the regional center of the imperial religion – that is Caesar is divine. Interestingly the Jews took to Paul's teachings eagerly and studied with him every day. Paul calls upon the scriptures as "witness" to the truth of his teaching. The scriptures as witness supply any information needed to reach the "fair" verdict that Jesus is in fact the anticipated Messiah.

Vs. 13-15 when the Jews in Thessalonica hear of Paul's teaching in Berea, they come to the city to incite trouble – Paul is hurried away to safety – first to the coast then over 200 miles to Athens.

Vs. 16 -34 Paul in Athens

Vs. 16 -21 Arriving in the city Paul is deeply distressed by the numerous idols. The Greek meaning is that of being troubled within his spirit - his mind and his soul. The words indicating the number of idols literally paint a picture of a forest of idols.

Here Paul continues to follow the pattern he has established - he argues – debates – in the synagogue. Here though he also goes to the market place – the agora – to teach.

It appears that Paul had at some point done his homework. He is able to communicate with the Athenians using phrasing and references they could relate to. He used their language and their philosophies to relate

Among those gathered in the market place are Epicurean and Stoic philosophers.

Vs. 22-34 Paul is taken to the Areopagus to share his "new" teaching with those who gathered there to hear and debate new thoughts and ideas.

Paul introduces himself as an authorized herald of the living deity whose transcendence above the earth requires no Athenian residence, priesthood or religious practices.

He addresses the altar to the unknown god by commending the Athenians on their piety. There is a hint of irony in Paul's statement – you are so religious you even worship gods you don't know.

Paul implies that the Athenian religion is not rational since they are most devout to something they don't even know about.

Then Paul announces – this god you worship in ignorance I proclaim to you. In fact this is THE God – the definitive deity dependent on no one.