

NT History for Juniors: Lesson 23, "The Second Missionary Journey (continued)"

I. THESSALONICA AND BEREIA

- A. The first part of the 2nd Missionary Journey brought Paul and Silas (with Timothy and Luke) to Philippi.**
1. **Paul and Silas had been jailed in Philippi**
 - a. But the Lord delivered them from prison by a miraculous earthquake and even the jailor believed.
 - b. The magistrates of the city sent Paul and Silas away with an apology because they had jailed Roman citizens without a trial.
 2. **From Philippi Paul and Silas went to Thessalonica (about 90 miles away; a three day journey on foot)**
 - a. For three days Paul preached and taught in the synagogue in Thessalonica and proved from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ who had to suffer and rise again from the dead.
 - b. Some of the Jews believed, many Greeks and some of the chief women became Christians.
 - c. But the unbelieving Jews were filled with envy and stirred up the people against the missionaries.
 3. **Why were the unbelieving Jews so opposed to the Good News of Jesus Christ? It was because of Paul's teaching that "Christ must needs have suffered and risen from the dead" (Acts 17:3).**
 - a. The Jews were expecting a mighty king. A suffering Messiah was something they would not believe.
 - b. And besides, Jesus had not only suffered and died: He had been crucified, and every Jew knew Deut. 21:23 ("He that is hanged on a tree is cursed of God").
 - c. If Jesus was cursed by God, how could He be the Messiah? The Jews did not believe that Jesus had to be cursed so that God would not curse us. Jesus was cursed *for our sins* (Gal. 3:13).
 4. **The unbelieving Jews of Thessalonica came up with a way to get rid of these Christian missionaries.**
 - a. They gathered together a large crowd of wicked men around the house where they knew that Paul and Silas were staying. Paul's host was a man called Jason.
 - b. When they did not find Paul and Silas they grabbed Jason and a few other of the believers and dragged them in front of the rulers of the city. "*These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also whom Jason hath received and these do all contrary to the decrees of Caesar saying that there is another king, one Jesus*" (Acts 17:6-7).
 - c. Jason had to pay a sum of money ("security") to the authorities as guarantee that he would keep the peace. Therefore it was decided to send Paul and Silas away in the middle of the night to Berea, about 60 miles away or two days journey on foot.
- B. In Berea Paul went to the Jewish synagogue and he found them better listeners than the Thessalonians.**
1. **Instead of getting angry with Paul for preaching Christ crucified the people of Berea searched the Scriptures whether these things were so.**
 - a. Could Paul be right in saying that the Messiah is this Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, and could He have risen from the dead? What does the Bible say? So, day by day, they went to the synagogue and read the Bible very carefully.
 - b. They found, no doubt, many passages which teach that the Messiah must suffer (Ps. 22; Isa. 53) and others which teach that Christ will rise again (Ps. 16:9-10; Job 19:25). There are others.
 - c. And, so, convinced by the Bible which they checked, many of the Bereans believed.
 2. **But the unbelieving Jews in Thessalonica heard that Paul was preaching in Berea and they followed him there to destroy his work.**
 - a. Again, they stirred up the people as they had done in Thessalonica.
 - b. So, the believers in Berea sent Paul away by ship while Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea (perhaps Luke was still in Thessalonica?).

II. IN ATHENS

- A. Athens is the capital city of Greece, and it was a city of great learning and culture.**
1. **But Paul's impression of Athens was that it was a city of terrible idolatry (Acts 17:16)**
 - a. Athens was filled with temples to different gods and goddesses (they are all ruins now); on every corner there were temples, altars and images.
 - b. In fact, the people of Athens were afraid that they might accidentally forget to worship one of the gods so they had a separate altar: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD (just in case!)
 - c. Surely a place like Athens needed to hear about the true God and His Son Jesus Christ.
 2. **Paul began to preach – as he always did – in the Jewish synagogue**
 - a. Outside of the synagogue Paul found many people to talk to. There was the Greek marketplace, a place where people came not only to buy and sell but to discuss new ideas.
 - b. The people of Athens loved to discuss new ideas.

B. After Paul had been in Athens a short time he came to the attention of the philosophers.

1. The philosophers loved to learn, and to discuss. The word philosophy means “love of wisdom.”

- a. Philosophers like to talk about the great questions of life: Who am I? Why am I here? What is the meaning of life? Where did the world come from? Where will it all end? How shall I live? How will I find the greatest happiness?
- b. Different philosophers had different opinions, but man by his wisdom cannot find the truth about God. God is too high. We can only find out who God is through His Word, but these philosophers did not have the Word of God.
- c. Two types of philosophers especially were in Athens: the Epicureans and the Stoics. The first believed that pleasure is the reason for living; and the second believed that this world is a world of suffering and we should try to end our feelings so that we are not affected by suffering. Neither believed in God.

2. These philosophers met Paul in the marketplace and wondered what this new teaching of Paul was all about and so they asked him to come to a meeting on Mars’ Hill.

- a. Paul’s speech on Mars’ Hill is found in Acts 17:22-31. Paul began with the altar TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. *That God*, the one you do not know, said Paul, I preach unto you.
- b. Paul explained to these men that the God they do not know made the world (the Creator) and that He does not need to live in temples or be worshipped by men’s hands.
- c. And then Paul explained that there is coming a day of judgment when God will judge men for their sins by the man Jesus Christ whom He has raised from the dead.
- d. When the philosophers of Athens heard about the resurrection some laughed at Paul and others wanted to hear more and some believed (the Greeks did not believe in the resurrection of the body).

III. IN CORINTH

A. From Athens Paul sailed to Corinth, a very important city of business & commerce, and a very wicked city.

1. In Corinth Paul met two Jews called Aquila and Priscilla.

- a. These two became Christians. Because A & P were tentmakers with Paul he worked with them during the day while on the Sabbath Day he preached in the synagogues of the Jews.
- b. Soon Silas and Timothy joined Paul in Corinth; and Paul became very bold to preach Christ.
- c. But the Jews in Corinth (like the Jews elsewhere) opposed Paul so he left the synagogue and preached to the Gentiles in the house of a man called Justus (the ruler of the synagogue, Crispus also believed).

2. The Lord spoke to Paul in a vision, “Be not afraid ... I have much people in this city” (Acts 18:9-10).

- a. That was good news to Paul: God promised protection, and God promised fruit on Paul’s work.
- b. So, Paul continued in Corinth a year and six months.
- c. But, when the Roman governor was replaced by a man called *Gallio* the unbelieving Jews saw an opportunity to stop the work of Paul.

B. The Jews took hold of Paul and brought him to the judgment seat of Gallio to accuse him [Paul had been in danger before: the people of Lystra had stoned him; the people of Philippi had accused him and he had been imprisoned; the Jews of Thessalonica had stirred up trouble against him, and now the Jews of Corinth wanted to stop his work].

1. “This man persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law” (Acts 18:13)

- a. But Gallio was not interested. He said that if Paul was a criminal or had done something illegal he would listen to them but not if it was a religious question.
- b. So, Gallio chased the Jews away from his judgment seat and Paul was free to go.
- c. The Greeks, probably because they were angry with the Jews, took Sosthenes (the chief ruler of the synagogue) and beat him in front of the judgment seat, but Gallio did not care. Not much of a judge!

2. After this Paul stayed in Corinth “yet a good while” (Acts 18:18) until it was time for him to return to Jerusalem. He had made a promise (a “vow”) and he intended to worship God in the Temple.

- a. So, he left Corinth, and made his way to Ephesus. While in Ephesus for a few days he went into the synagogue and preached about Christ.
- b. The Jews in Ephesus desired him to stay with them but Paul could not. He promised to return to Ephesus later (“I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem but I will return again unto you, if God will” [Acts 18:21]).
- c. God did will, because after visiting Jerusalem and Antioch, Paul went on his Third Missionary Journey where he concentrated his work in Ephesus.