
Completion of Paul's Second Missionary Journey
Acts 17:1 - 18:22

Introduction

The persecution and pain Paul experienced at Philippi did not stop him from moving on through Macedonia to preach the gospel. Although he always preached in the synagogues first, the majority of the converts were Gentiles.

From Macedonia, Paul traveled south to the province of Achaia where he debated with philosophers and preached the gospel in Athens. Some Athenians heeded Paul's message and believed, but there is no record of a church being established in that city. From Athens, he went to Corinth where he was faced with persecution from the Jews again. He received encouragement from the Lord and stayed there for over a year and a half.

Outline of Acts 17:1-18:22

- I. At Thessalonica - Acts 17:1-9
- II. At Berea - Acts 17:10-14
- III. At Athens - Acts 17:15-34
- IV. At Corinth - Acts 18:1-18
- V. Returning to Antioch - Acts 18:19-22

I. At Thessalonica - Acts 17:1-9

Paul's first stop after leaving Philippi was Thessalonica, the capital of the province of Macedonia. Just like before, Paul went to the Jews first. He preached in the synagogue proclaiming Jesus as the Christ for three sabbaths. He used the Old Testament to show how the prophets predicted the suffering and resurrection of the Messiah. He also showed them through the prophecies that Jesus was the Messiah of whom the prophets spoke. Some of the Jews believed, but most of the believers were *devout Greeks*.

The Jews that did not believe envied the attention Paul was getting. They gathered some evil men from the marketplace and led an angry mob to the house of Jason. They

were looking for Paul and Silas. When they didn't find the missionaries, they dragged Jason and other new believers to the *rulers of the city*. The Jews twisted Paul's words about the spiritual kingdom of God. They said that Christians were supporting a **rival** king. This was a serious charge, because it was treason against the Roman emperor. The rulers made Jason and the other believers pay them *security* before they would let them go. Because of the danger, the believers sent Paul and Silas away at night to the town of Berea.

II. At Berea - Acts 17:10-14

The town of Berea welcomed Paul and Silas. They were more accepting than the Jews in Thessalonica. They listened to what Paul said about Jesus. Then, they searched the Scriptures to compare what Paul said to God's written word. They found that the Scriptures truly did testify of Jesus (John 5:39) and many believed, both Jews and Gentiles, women and men. Never forget how important it is to check the things you are taught with what the Scriptures say. There are always people who will tell you that the right thing to do is wrong. Some pastors do not preach everything in the Bible, because they do not believe it. If you do not check the Scriptures for yourself, you will not know when something is being left out or if you are being lied to. Will you commit to reading your Bible daily? The better you know God's word, the harder it will be for you to be deceived.

It wasn't long before the wicked Jews from Thessalonica arrived in Berea to start trouble again. Their hatred for Paul's message caused them to travel almost 50 miles (probably done over two days). The new Berean believers sent Paul to Athens with an escort. Silas and Timothy remained in Berea to build up the church. They rejoined Paul at a later date.

III. At Athens - Acts 17:16-34

Athens was in the Roman province of Achaia. It was famous for its schools, and it was filled with **philosophers** and scholars who loved to **debate**. It was also overflowing with idols to many different gods.

The art and buildings of Athens were beautiful but displayed the worship of many different idols. Paul's spirit was weighed down by the darkness of the idolatry he saw all around him. The city was so filled with pagan art that one Roman poet wrote it was "easier to find gods than men" in Athens.¹ Paul wanted to tell the Athenians about Jesus to bring light into their dark world. For it was Jesus himself that said, *"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life"* (John 8:12).

On the Sabbath, he went to the synagogue to speak to the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles. Every day he went to the public marketplace, or agora, to speak with anyone who was there. The marketplace (agora) was a gathering place for philosophers to debate. The Epicureans and the Stoics were two different groups of philosophers with very different views and they both debated with Paul.

Those who believed in the philosophy of Epicurus (341-270 B.C.) were called Epicureans, just like one is called a 'Christ'ian when he believes in Christ. "The Epicureans sought after pleasure only, though not necessarily evil pleasures. For them, pleasure was the absence of pain. So they avoided anything that might cause pain to their body, mind, or heart. Religion, raising a family, and public office were avoided. You can see that speaking with these thinkers must have been quite a challenge for Paul."²

The other group of philosophers were the Stoics and they were the most popular influence at

the time. They were followers of Zeno (320-250 B.C.), and "(they) believed that the world was run by some **divine** force. Since people could not control their own destiny, they had to accept both pain and pleasure as it came along, and feel no pleasure."²

These philosophers called Paul a *babbler*. The greek word for babbler actually means a "seed picker." It was a term used about a person who picked up scraps of learning here and there. Today, a "seed picker" would be someone who didn't go to school; his knowledge would be from what he has spoken about with others at the mall, grocery store, park, etc.

Because Paul's teaching was new and strange, the philosophers wanted to hear more. *For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.* In Athens, the people were not concerned with the truth. They were concerned with knowledge. Once they knew about something, it was no longer important. It is exciting to talk about something new that no one else knows about yet. If you go to an early preview of a movie that has not been released in the theaters yet, your friends will be very interested in what you have to say about the movie. They will want all the details. Once your friends see the movie, you may talk about a few scenes together, maybe laugh about a few parts, but you will find other things to talk about because the excitement of it being new is gone. This is how it was for the Athenians all day, every day. It was like being hungry, gathering food to eat, showing it off to everyone, but never sitting down to eat and enjoy the food. They were never satisfied and content, just greedy for more.

Paul was taken to the Areopagus, also known as Mars Hill, where he addressed the philosophers and members of the council. Their desire to hear anything new gave Paul the perfect opportunity to preach the gospel. Paul began by making his teaching personal to the Athenians. He said that he saw they were a very religious

¹ Word Studies in the New Testament, Marvin R. Vincent

² The David C. Cook Journey through the Bible, V. Gilbert Beers

people and had even put up an altar *TO THE UNKNOWN GOD*. Paul knew that they were not trying to worship the true God with that altar. They were just trying to make sure they did not leave any gods out. Still, it was a great way to get their attention and point out that they themselves admitted not knowing every 'god.' Paul used the inscription to the unknown God to introduce them to the one true God.

The true God was different from all other gods they had ever known. He created the world and everything in it. He gave life and breath to all things and cannot be held in a temple or made by the hands of men. He made all people from one blood (referring to Adam) and had planned the times and boundaries of all the nations. In other words, history is "His story."

Paul concluded by saying that *God commands all men everywhere to repent* because He has chosen a day of judgment. Repentance is not an option or an invitation. Repentance is commanded. Those who reject Jesus will be rejected by Him on the day of judgment.

Some mocked Paul. Others said they would hear him some other time. But, some believed.

IV. At Corinth - Acts 18:1-18

Paul's next stop was the busy city of Corinth, 50 miles from Athens. It was between two seaports, Cenchrea on the Aegean Sea and Lechaum on the gulf of Corinth. The city was always filled with travelers and merchants. Corinth was also the worship center of Aphrodite (goddess of love). The city was known for its immorality.

Paul may have been tired and discouraged when he arrived in Corinth. He had been chased out of three cities by the Jews and his preaching in idolatrous Athens did not bear much fruit. God encouraged Paul by giving him work, new friends, support for his ministry, a place to preach to the Gentiles, many converts, and a vision. God is faithful!

In Corinth, Paul met fellow Jews Aquila and Priscilla. He was invited to live and work with them because they were all tentmakers. Aquila and Priscilla later became Paul's faithful partners in ministry (Romans 16:3-5).

When Silas and Timothy joined Paul in Corinth, they brought both moral and physical support: good news from Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 3:6-10) and money from Philippi (2 Corinthians 11:9 and Philippians 4:15). As a result, Paul was able to concentrate on his preaching. By the power of the Spirit, he *testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ*.

When the unbelieving Jews *opposed him and blasphemed*, Paul *shook his garments*. This was a sign of breaking friendship with them. He had preached the gospel and warned them of the judgment to come, but they rejected his message. If the weatherman tells you it is going to rain, but you choose not to take your umbrella, you will get wet...and it will not be the weatherman's fault. In the same way, it would not be Paul's fault when the blaspheming Jews faced judgement. Thankfully, not all Jews rejected the truth. Justus and Crispus were two Jews that believed.

Through a vision, the Lord spoke to Paul, encouraging him to speak the gospel boldly and assuring him that no one would hurt him. Paul obeyed and stayed in Corinth to teach the word of God for another year and a half.

While Paul was in Corinth, Gallio was appointed as proconsul (governor) of the province of Achaia. The Jews hoped that because Gallio was new, they might be able to convince him to give a verdict against Paul. They seized Paul and accused him of persuading men to *worship God contrary to the law*. They were talking about the Roman law which did not allow anyone to practice any religion that was not recognized by Rome. Even though Judaism was a recognized religion, the Jews hoped to prove that Christianity was an **illegal**

religion. However, since Christianity came from Judaism, it had protection under the law.

Gallio refused to be involved in the case and said that Paul's so-called crime was not against Rome. If Paul was guilty, it was a matter for the Jewish law and the Jewish community. He dismissed the case and sent them away. The people watching in the agora took advantage of Gallio's rejection of the Jews' case and beat Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue. Gallio did not bother to intervene.

V. Returning to Antioch - Acts 18:18-22

Paul stayed on in Corinth and wrote 1 and 2 Thessalonians while he was there. When he left, he took Priscilla and Aquila with him. They travelled to the seaport Cenchrea and while they were there, Paul had his hair cut because he had taken a vow. The ship they boarded sailed from Cenchrea to Ephesus, where Paul again preached in the synagogue. From Ephesus, Paul sailed to the port of Caesarea. He then traveled by land to Jerusalem where he greeted the church. Finally, his journey took him back to Antioch for a time of rest, and he retold the adventures of his second missionary journey. †

Prayer

Thank God for giving you His word, the Bible, and ask him to help you search the Scriptures for the truth all the days of your life.

Memory Verse

Acts 17:30-31 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.

Vocabulary

rival - someone trying to be equal to or pass up another; a competitor

philosophers - a person who studies or specializes in the study of knowledge based on logic

debate - to argue or discuss opposing sides

divine - coming directly from God or a god

illegally - done against the law or rules

Questions for Acts Lesson 15

All questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

DAY ONE: Review last weeks lesson and notes.

1. What did you learn from the Athenians that you could apply to your life?

2. a. What encouraged Paul during his stay in Corinth?

b. ♥ (Heart Question) How has God encouraged you?

DAY TWO: Read Acts 18:23-19:7.

3. a. What do you learn about Apollos in Acts 18:24-26?

b. How did Priscilla and Aquilla help him?

c. How was he then able to help others?

4. a. How were the 12 disciples from Ephesus like Apollos?

b. What question did Paul ask the disciples from Ephesus when he met them?

c. From the following Scripture passages, why was this an important question?
Romans 8:9

Titus 3:4-5

1 John 3:24

5. a. Why were the 12 disciples baptized again? Give verse: _____

b. What happened after Paul baptized and laid hands on them?

DAY THREE: Read Acts 19:8-20.

6. Circle the statements which are true.

Paul spoke for 3 months in the synagogue

Paul spoke about the kingdom of God

Paul got the measles

Everyone in Asia heard the word of the Lord

Paul left the synagogue because of opposition

God worked miracles through Paul

Paul spoke for 2 years at the school of Tyrannus

7. a. What happened to the 7 sons of Sceva? Why?

b. What good things happened as a result of this incident?

DAY FOUR: Read Acts 19:21-28.

8. List the places Paul planned to go after Ephesus.

9. Who was Demetrius and what was his occupation?

10. Mark the following statements T (true) or F (false) and give the verse where you found it. If the statement is false, correct it.

- a. (T or F) vs. _____ Demetrius made a profit from selling silver shrines of the goddess Diana (Artemis).
- b. (T or F) vs. _____ Demetrius accused Paul of saying that the handmade gods were not gods at all.
- c. (T or F) vs. _____ Demetrius claimed that Paul's teaching would ruin the reputation of the silversmiths and destroy the magnificence of the goddess Diana (Artemis).
- d. (T or F) vs. _____ In response to Demetrius' speech, the people cried out, "Stone that evil Paul!"

DAY FIVE: Read Acts 19:29-41.

11. a. From verses 29 and 32, the people of Ephesus were:

☐ confused ☐ united

b. (T or F) Most of the people who had gathered in the theater did not know why they were there.

c. What can you learn from this that might be useful for your life?

12. a. Who tried to speak to the crowd unsuccessfully? What was the response?

Give verse: _____

b. How long did this go on?

c. Who quieted the crowd?

13. Circle the statements which the city clerk made. Give verse for each one you circle.

vs. _____ be quiet and do nothing rashly

vs. _____ Paul blasphemed your goddess

vs. _____ we will hang Paul and his friends
in the morning

vs. _____ Demetrius should take his case to court

vs. _____ we have no reason for this disorderly meeting

vs. _____ Paul is dangerous

VOCABULARY FOR ACTS LESSON 15

***"The more words you know, the more clearly and powerfully you will think...
and the more ideas you will invite into your mind."***

— Wilfred Funk

DAY ONE: Write the definition for the vocabulary words.

rival - _____

philosophers - _____

debate - _____

divine - _____

illegaly - _____

DAY TWO: Write three sentences using three different vocabulary words from this lesson.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

DAY THREE: Circle the word's synonym(s). (Synonym is a word / phrase that means the same thing.)

rival - opponent..... competitor helper

debate - tiff..... agreement argument

divine - unkind godly perfect

illegally excusably wrongly justifiably

DAY FOUR: Match the word to its meaning.**rival**

done against the law or rules

philosophers

someone trying to be equal to or pass up another; a competitor

debate

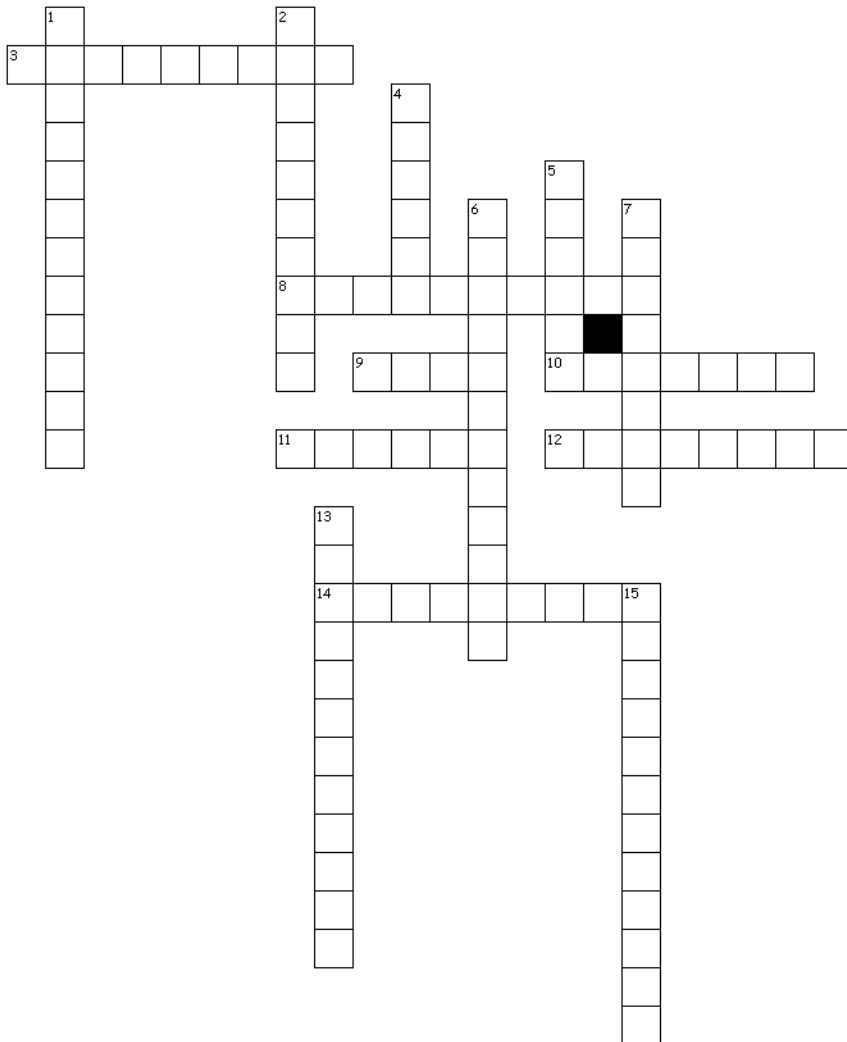
coming directly from God or a god

divine

to argue or discuss opposing sides

illegally

a person who studies or specializes in the study of knowledge, causes, nature, etc. based on logic

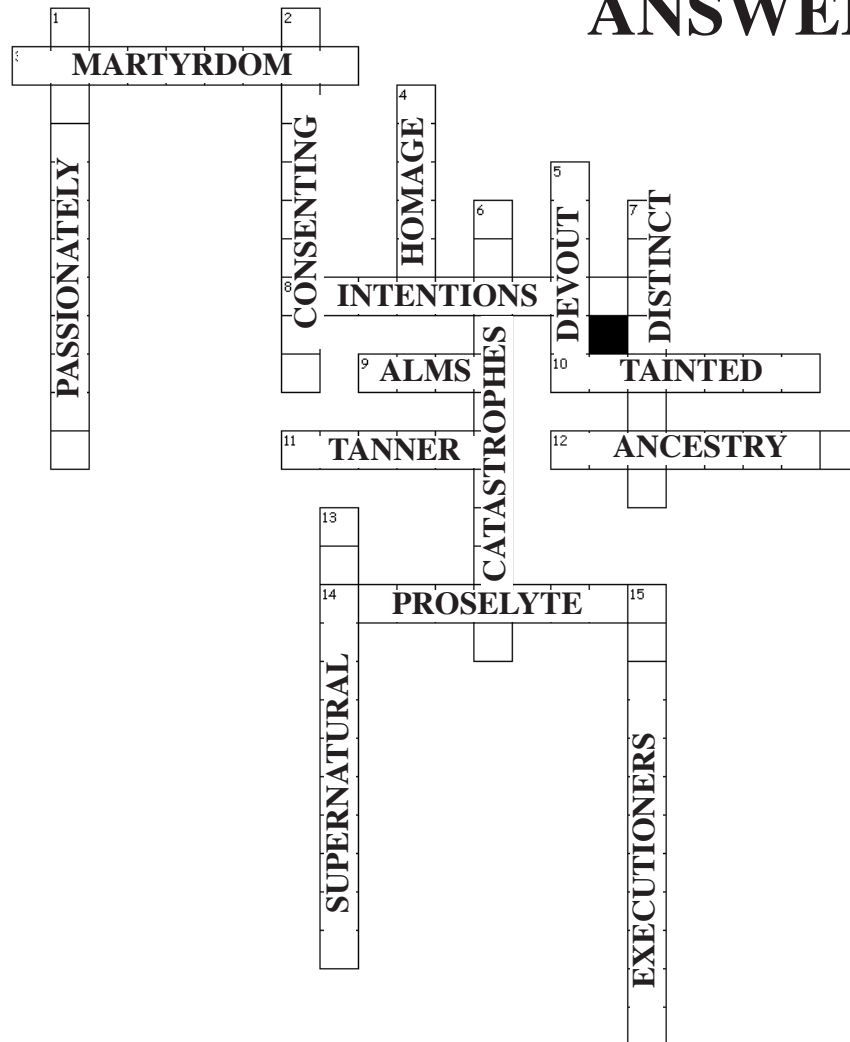
DAY FIVE: Review previous vocabulary words.**Across**

- 3. the death or slaying of a person who is killed for his beliefs
- 8. plans or ideas
- 9. money or food given to the poor
- 10. affected with a bad quality; contaminated
- 11. a person that converts an animal hide (skin) into leather
- 12. your family before you
- 14. a person who has converted from one religion to another

Down

- 1. with strong emotion
- 2. giving permission or agreeing with something
- 4. special honor or respect shown
- 5. totally committed to a cause
- 6. large disasters
- 7. recognizably different from something of a similar type
- 13. beyond scientific understanding or the laws of nature
- 15. ones who put a person to death

ANSWER KEY



martyrdom/the death or slaying of a person who is killed for his beliefs

executioners/ones who put a person to death

passionately/with strong emotion

ancestry/your family before you

tainted/affected with a bad quality; contaminated

proselyte/a person who has converted from one religion to another

consenting/giving permission or agreeing with something

supernatural/beyond scientific understanding or the laws of nature

catastrophes/large disasters

devout/totally committed to a cause

tanner/a person that converts an animal hide (skin) into leather

alms/money or food given to the poor

intentions/plans or ideas

distinct/recognizably different from something of a similar type

homage/special honor or respect shown