

Woodland Baptist Church

June 6, 2012 - Wednesday Night in the Word

Acts 17:1-9 Acting Against the Decrees of Caesar!

1) INTRODUCTION

2) READ VERSES 1-9

3) Verses 1-3 - Our mission STRATEGY must include JEWISH evangelism

a) 1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2 And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, 3 explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ."

i) Synagogue of Jews - What was a synagogue? [Holman Bible Dictionary]

- (1) The synagogue, as we find it in the New Testament, had its roots in the time after Solomon's Temple was destroyed and many of the people were carried into Exile. Local worship and instruction became necessary. Even after many of the Jews returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the Temple, places of local worship continued. By the time of Jesus these places and assemblies were called synagogues.
- (2) Most communities of any size had at least one synagogue; some had several. Jewish sources indicate that a synagogue was to be established wherever there were as many as ten Jewish men. The principal meeting was on the Sabbath. A typical service consisted of the recitation of the Shema (confession of faith in the one God), prayers, Scripture readings from the Law and the Prophets, a sermon, and a benediction. [Luke 4:16-21](#) is the best biblical passage on what happened in a synagogue service in first-century Palestine.
- (3) Local elders had general oversight of the synagogue. They often appointed a ruler of the synagogue. The ruler was a layman who cared for the building and selected those who participated in the service. The ruler was assisted by an attendant. One of his duties was to deliver the sacred scrolls to those who read and return them to the special place where they were kept ([Luke 4:17](#), [Luke 4:20](#)).

ii) Paul went in to the synagogue as was his custom - **etho** - doing what was customary...behavior based on tradition...a habit that one had formed

(1) Also used in Matthew 27 to describe Pilate's custom of releasing a prisoner for the Passover - when the crowd chose to release Barrabas over Jesus.

iii) For three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures

(1) **reasoned** - / dialégomai (Dialogue) ("getting a conclusion across") occurs 13 times in the NT, usually of believers exercising "dialectical reasoning." This is the process of giving and receiving information with someone to reach deeper understanding – a "going back-and-forth" of thoughts and ideas so people can better know the Lord (His word, will). Doing this is perhaps the most telling characteristic of the growing Christian! [Strong's concordance; Helpsible.com]

(2) **Scriptures** - b. ἡ γραφή, the Scripture κατ' ἐξοχήν, the holy scripture (of the O. T.) — and used to denote either the book itself, or its contents (some would restrict the singular γραφή always to a particular passage; also in plural αἱ γραφαί: [Matthew 21:42](#); [Matthew 26:54](#); [Mark 14:49](#); [Luke 24:27](#); [John 5:39](#); [Acts 17:2, 11](#); [Acts 18:24, 28](#); [1 Corinthians 15:3f](#); once αἱ γραφαί comprehends also the books of the N. T. already begun to be collected into a canon, [2 Peter 3:16](#); by metonymy, ἡ γραφή is used for God speaking in it: [Romans 9:17](#); [Galatians 4:30](#); ἡ γραφή is introduced as a person and distinguished from God in [Galatians 3:8](#). εἰδέναι τὰς γραφάς, [Matthew 22:29](#); [Mark 12:24](#); συνιέναι, [Luke 24:45](#). [c&p - biblos.org]

iv) **Explaining and Proving** - dianoigo and paratithemi [or “opening and setting forth” emmaus road] - 2. tropically: τὰς γραφάς, to open the sense of the Scriptures, explain them, [Luke 24:32](#); τὸν νοῦν τίνας, to open the mind of one, i. e. cause him to understand a thing, [Luke 24:45](#); τὴν καρδίαν, to open one's soul, i. e. to rouse in one the faculty of understanding or the desire of learning, [Acts 16:14](#) absolutely, followed by ὅτι, to explain, expound namely, αὐτάς, i. e. τὰς γραφάς, [Acts 17:3](#). [c&p - biblos.org]

v) That is was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead

(1) Necessary - **edei** - it is necessary...inevitable...**Matthew 16:21 - 21 From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.**

- (2) Suffer - **pascho** - I am acted upon, suffer...experience ill treatment...1. in a bad sense, of misfortunes, to suffer, to undergo evils, to be afflicted; Absolutely, Luke 22:15; Luke 24:46; Acts 1:3; Acts 3:18; Acts 17:3 [strong's]
- (3) and to rise from the dead - **anistemi** - I raise up...set up...rise from...the dead - **nekron** - dead...a corpse...dead body...3498 nekros (an adjective, derived from nekys, "a corpse, a dead body") – dead; literally, "what lacks life"; dead; (figuratively) not able to respond to impulses, or perform functions ("unable, ineffective, dead, powerless," L & N, 1, 74.28); unresponsive to life-giving influences (opportunities); inoperative to the things of God.
- (4) This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ...**Christos** - the anointed one.
- (a) Question - Why was it necessary that Christ suffer and die? [Besides the obvious reason of the substitutionary atonement]
- b) Transition Summary - So for three days, Paul intensely dialogued with the Jews and Greeks at the synagogue. He reasoned, argued, persuaded and explained and proved through the Old Testament that Jesus had to suffer, die and be raised from the dead and that Jesus was indeed the "anointed one" promised in the Old Testament.
- i) Also - notice the depth of the teaching - remember his first sermon in Acts 13:16-52 - incredible insight into the Scriptures - we need the same knowledge and become able to stand firm and be able to defend the Scriptures.
- ii) Has anyone noticed the trend the church has toward anti-intellectualism; almost a spitefulness toward Christian education?
- 4) Verses 4-5 Gospel teaching will bring CONVERSION and CONDEMNATION
- i) Here we see the fruit of Paul's three day commitment to the in-depth teaching of the Word of God, testifying to Christ as being the promised Messiah of the Jews...a divided congregation, as Christ promised in his gospels, "I have not come to bring peace but a sword." We see some **conversion** in "some of them" [Jews], "many devout Greeks," and "not a few of the leading women." But we also see rejection, **condemnation** and conspiracy develop within a group of Jews - "Jews were jealous..."
- b) **4 And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. 5 But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a**

mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd.

- i) Some were persuaded - **peitho** - I persuade...urge...3982 peíthō (the root of 4102 / pístis, "faith") – to persuade; (passive) be persuaded of what is trustworthy. The Lord persuades the yielded believer to be confident in His preferred-will (Gal 5:10; 2 Tim 1:12). 3982 (peíthō) involves "obedience, but it is properly the result of (God's) persuasion" (WS, 422).
- ii) not a few of the leading women - **protos** - 4413 prōtos (an adjective, derived from 4253 / pró, "before, forward") – first (foremost). 4413 / prōtos ("first, foremost") is the superlative form of 4253 / pró ("before") meaning "what comes first" (is "number one"). 2. first in rank, influence, honor; chief; principal: without the article, and absolutely, πρῶτος chief (opposed to δοῦλος).

(1) Leading women - politically connected; highly respected; possibly well educated, wealthy...etc....possibly married into huge estates with husbands of high means or extremely powerful political connectedness.

- iii) but the Jews were jealous - Zeloo - Cognate: 2206 zēlóō (an onomatopoeic word, imitating the sound of boiling water) – properly, to bubble over because so hot (boiling); (figuratively) "to burn with zeal" (J. Thayer); "to be deeply committed to something, with the implication of accompanying desire – 'to be earnest, to set one's heart on, to be completely intent upon.'"
- iv) taking some wicked men of the rabble - **wicked** [ponerous] 4190 ponērós 4192 / pónos, "pain, laborious trouble") – properly, pain-ridden, emphasizing the inevitable agonies (misery) that always go with evil. **rabble** [agoraios] - a loner in the market place, with the idea of being an agitator; idea of an idler; "loiterers"
- v) formed a mob - **ochlopoieo** - having collected a crowd - to raise a public disturbance - much like the riots that have happened in America through the years.

(1) What were the worst riots/mob violence that have ever happened in America? Hint: 1992 in Los Angeles

- vi) Set the city in an uproar - **thorubeo** - I disturb greatly, terrify, strike with panic...2. transitive, to disturb, throw into confusion: τήν πόλιν, to set the city on an uproar, Acts 17:5; passive to be troubled in mind, Acts 20:10 (others here adhere to the outward sense); to wail tumultuously, Matthew 9:23; Mark 5:39.
- vii) attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd.

- (1) attacked - **ephistemi** - to stand against...befall, impend...as used in Acts 6:12 - 12 **And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council.**
- c) Transition Summary - It is safe to say that the Jews were serious about stopping this intrusion into their synagogue and the perceived "sheep stealing" that was taking place. It is very worthy to note that until large groups of people began to believe in Jesus, everything seemed to be fine, but when there was actually movement and the synagogue began to lose "members" from its ranks...especially their "leading women," they took quick and decisive action against them.
- i) Are we in danger of this attitude in the contemporary church? Describe a hypothetical situation.
- 5) Verses 6-7 We will be accused of TREASON and SEDITION as was Christ
- i) These "market place loungers" gathered together at the provocations of the Jews, most likely ignited over the "leading women" in the city becoming committed to Paul and Silas. There was also most likely some form of money involved as incentive or at the very least the idea of political gain by cooperating with the Jews. The Jews knew where Paul and Silas would be staying, so they got the market place loiterers stirred up and then gave them directions to Jason's house. [This sounds so very familiar!]
- b) **6 And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, 7 and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus."**
- i) dragged Jason - **suro** - literally to drag...to force away...
- ii) city authorities - **politarches** - a ruler of a city...magistrate...town officer...or judge.
- iii) "These men how have turned the world upside down have come here also, and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus."

- c) Against the decrees of Caesar - decrees - **dogma** - As for Caesar's decrees, which he and his companions were alleged to be flouting, these might be understood in a general and comprehensive sense, or (more convincingly) with reference to certain specific decrees. The *demos* or civic body of Thessalonica, before which the rioters had hoped to drag Paul and his associates, together with the politarches, before whom they voiced their complaint, may well have taken an oath, as other cities in various parts of the empire are known to have done, binding themselves to obedience to the emperor. Such an oath would empower them, and even require them, to take up such a charge as was being made. Moreover, in Paul's preaching in Thessalonica there was apparently a markedly predictive element. His Thessalonian converts, who turned to worship the living and true God, learned also, he says, "to wait for his Son from heaven...Jesus, our deliverer from the wrath to come" (1 Thess 1:10), and it appears that he taught them in addition something about the way in which world events would unfold up to the parousia of Jesus. Now prediction was an exercise of which one emperor after another disapproved: prediction could too easily be used as a political weapon. Augustus, in A.D. 11, had issued a decree forbidding it; this decree was reinforced on pain of death by Tiberius in A.D. 16. Paul's prediction was centered on the one whom he was accused of putting forward as a rival to the emperor of Rome. [F.F. Bruce, Paul, The Heart of an Apostle Set Free, pg 226]
- d) Transition Summary - The marketplace loiterers are successful at stirring the entire city against Paul and Silas and the new house church planted at Jason's home and successful at having Jason brought before the magistrates for questioning and punishment. I wonder what was going through their minds as this was unfolding? Surely they had been told about what happened to Paul and Silas in Philippi. Perhaps Jason had hid Paul and Silas to keep them from being beaten again so soon. Whatever the case, Jason and some new converts are brought before the magistrate for teaching "against the decrees of Caesar."

6) Verses 8-9 Our own GOVERNMENT will PUNISH us, as they did Christ

- i) When the mob presented Jason and some of the brothers to the politarches, a general fear overcame them, but they acted much more discerning and sensible than the politarches of Philippi. In this case they would punish Jason in a less brutal way by extorting money from him with the understanding that these strange teachings would cease and that these outsiders would vacate the city immediately.
- b) **8 And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things. 9 And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.**

- i) Were disturbed - **tarasso** - 5015 tarássō – properly, put in motion (to agitate back-and-forth, shake to-and-fro); (figuratively) to set in motion what needs to remain still (at ease); to "trouble" ("agitate"), causing inner perplexity (emotional agitation) from getting too stirred up inside ("upset").

(1) **Matthew 2:3** - 3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; 4 and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

- ii) taken money as security - **lambano** - 2983 lambánō (from the primitive root, lab-, meaning "actively lay hold of to take or receive," see NAS dictionary) – properly, to lay hold by aggressively (actively) accepting what is available (offered). [2983](#) /lambánō ("accept with initiative") emphasizes the volition (assertiveness) of the receiver. security - 2425 **hikanós** (an adjective, derived from the root, hikō, "arrive, come to") – "properly, reach to (attain); hence, adequate, sufficient" (J. Thayer).

- c) The politarches in this case work in a much more controllable manner as they hear the disturbing charges brought against Jason and his fellow brothers. Instead of rushing to beat them and put them in prison, they simply make Jason put up a substantial financial deposit to ensure that things are put to rest. Most likely, if things were calm for a reasonable amount of time, they would give Jason back his money or at least a portion there of, although this is not for certain.

7) CLOSE

- a) Our mission strategy must include Jewish evangelism
 b) Gospel teaching will bring conversion and condemnation
 c) We will be accused of treason and sedition
 d) Our own government will punish us
- i) Matthew 10:24 - 24 "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant[e] above his master. 25 It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign[f] those of his household.