

## Acts 17 – Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens

Soils: hardened, rocky, thorny, fruitful

### ❖ Thessalonica

- Taught the Jews in synagogues from the scriptures (Old Testament)
  - Christ must suffer, and rise from the dead
    - Isaiah 52-53 ?
      - Probably written 700 BCE
      - Solid evidence of earlier than 300 BCE
      - People all over the world immediately recognize this is about Jesus (AD 30)
  - Jesus is Christ
  - Some believe – lots of Greeks and some prominent women
  - Paul stayed for some time, evidently, due to the teachings referenced in 1+2 Thessalonians (probably too many to cover in just 2 weeks)
- Unbelieving Jews take action
  - Motivated by Jealousy
  - Using low means – is this a tactic of truth?
  - Persecuted Jason
    - Christians had “turned the world upside down!”
    - Claimed a threat to Rome – another king
- Paul and Silas leave by night

### ❖ Berea

- More noble minded
  - What made them more noble minded?
    - Received the word with readiness of mind
    - Searched the scriptures daily
  - THEREFORE – many believed
- Thessalonian disbelieving Jews are persistent
  - Followed and stirred up the people against

### ❖ Athens

- Paul is moved by their idolatry
- Went to the Jews in the synagogue
- In the marketplace – with everyone!
- Philosophers met him
  - Epicureans
    - Happiness is Truth...descended to sensuality
  - Stoicks
    - Live at peace with nature, suppress desires
- Spent their time telling or hearing something new – “news”
- Given a chance to speak to an assembly at the Areopagus

- What kind of soil are they?
  - We can't tell until some time passes
  - Should we judge if a person will hear? No
  - Paul sows indiscriminantly
- What will he teach?
  - From the OT to people who knew it...
  - Now he teaches from a philosophical perspective
- Unknown God
  - Starts with an observation about where they are – ambiguous, but likely intended positively
  - Unknown god – can we be “safe” by covering all the bases? No – there is only one
  - Personal Creator...not like Stoics thought (pantheistic)
  - One family – all mankind
  - Not left to chance, but planned...not like the Epicureans thought
  - Available – near to us all
  - Poets
    - Cretan Epimedes (c. 600 B.C.E.)
    - Cilian Aratus (c. 315-240 B.C.E)
    - Cleanthes (c. 331-233 B.C.E)
  - Not physical...but beyond materials (fed in to belief in spirits)
  - Overlooked ignorance...but that time is up!
  - Jesus is the Christ – proved by the resurrection!
  - This is as much as many can handle
  - Some believers – eventually formed a strong church in Athens (soil?)