

<sup>1</sup> Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia - Both these cities were on the Egnatian Way between Philippi and Thessalonica. Amphipolis was the capital of the eastern district of the province of Macedonia, and was about **33 miles west of Philippi**. ----- **Apollonia was some 30 miles farther west**, and **Thessalonica was another 37 miles beyond that**. ----- They came to Thessalonica - A seaport for the second district of Macedonia, Thessalonica served as the capital not only for the district but also for the whole Roman province of Macedonia. It was the largest city in Macedonia, and because of its location has always been an important city.

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**Thessalonica** When the Apostle Paul visited the city, it was larger than Philippi and reflected a predominantly Roman culture. Thessalonica was a free city, having no Roman garrison within its walls and maintaining the privilege of minting its own coins. Like Corinth, it had a cosmopolitan population due to the commercial prowess of the city. The recent discovery of a marble inscription, written partly in Greek and partly in a Samaritan form of Hebrew and Aramaic, testifies to the presence of Samaritans in Thessalonica. The book of Acts testifies to the presence of a Jewish synagogue there (17:1). **Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary**.

**Thessalonica** . . . Among these converts were in all probability Aristarchus and Secundus, natives of Thessalonica, whom we afterward find accompanying Paul to Asia at the close of his 3rd missionary journey ([Acts 20:4](#)). The former of them was, indeed, one of the apostle's most constant companions; we find him with Paul at Ephesus ([Acts 19:29](#)) and on his journey to Rome ([Acts 27:2](#)), while in two of his Epistles, written during his captivity, Paul refers to Aristarchus as still with him, his fellow-prisoner ([Col. 4:10](#); [Philemon 1:24](#)). Gaius, too, who is mentioned in conjunction with Aristarchus, may have been a Thessalonian ([Acts 19:29](#)). How long Paul remained at Thessalonica on his 1st visit we cannot precisely determine; certainly we are not to regard his stay there as confined to three weeks, and Ramsay suggests that it probably extended from December, 50 AD, to May, 51 AD (St. Paul the Traveler, 228). In any case, we learn that the Philippians sent him assistance on two occasions during the time which he spent there ([Phil. 4:16](#)), although he was "working night and day" to maintain himself ([1 Thes. 2:9](#); [2 Thes. 3:8](#)). **The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia**.

Also see: **1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 1:7-10, 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 2:13 & 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 1:3**

<sup>2</sup> Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,

<sup>3</sup> explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and *saying*, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ."

<sup>4</sup> And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.

<sup>5</sup> But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

<sup>6</sup> But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have **turned the world upside down** have come here too.

**Acts 17:6 (NASB)** When they did not find them, they *began* dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also;

**Acts 17:6 (NIV)** But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other brothers before the city officials, shouting: "These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here,

<sup>7</sup> Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king--Jesus."

<sup>8</sup> And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things.

<sup>9</sup> So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

**Acts 17:9 (ESV)** And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

**Acts 17:9 (NIV)** Then they made Jason and the others post bond and let them go.

<sup>10</sup> Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

**BEREA** A city of Macedonia to which Paul with Silas and Timotheus went when persecuted at Thessalonica ([Acts 17:10, 13](#)), and from which also he was compelled to withdraw, when he fled to the sea-coast and thence sailed to Athens ([Acts 14](#), [Acts 15](#)). Sopater, one of Paul's companions belonged to this city, and his conversion probably took place at this time ([Acts 20:4](#)). It is now called Verria. **Easton's Illustrated Bible Dictionary: And Treasury of Biblical History, Biography, Geography, Doctrine, and Literature.**

**Berea was about 50 miles southwest of Thessalonica.** To reach it they could have traveled the Egnatian Way westward until, about daylight, they would come to the side road leading off in a more southerly direction toward Berea (modern Voeria). **New Testament History** --- Acts by Gareth L. Reese pg. 617

<sup>11</sup> These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to *find out* whether these things were so.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men

<sup>13</sup> But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds.

<sup>14</sup> Then immediately the brethren sent Paul away, to go to the sea; but both Silas and Timothy remained there.

<sup>15</sup> So those who conducted Paul brought him to Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed, they departed.

**Athens** was the home of the great philosophers of the golden age of Greece—Pericles, Socrates, Demosthenes, Plato --- and remained a center of philosophy, literature, science, and art. It boasted the greatest university of the ancient world and was the meeting place of the world’s intelligentsia. It was also a pluralistic city, where many gods were worshipped side by side.

**Halley’s Bible Handbook** pg. 676

<sup>16</sup> Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols.

**Acts 17:16 (NIV)** While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was **greatly distressed** to see that the city was full of idols.

<sup>17</sup> Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the *Gentile* worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there.

<sup>18</sup> Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, "What does this babblor want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods," because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.

**And also some of the Epicurean (philosophers)** - This was one of the two great schools of Greek thought in the first century. Men who embraced the doctrines of the philosopher Epicurus, 342-270 B.C., were called Epicureans.

Some of the major tenets of the Epicureans were: (1) Pleasure is the highest end in living. "Eat, drink and be merry" has come to be a popular summary of this philosophy, but it may be a not-quite-proper summary. By pleasure, Epicurus meant good pleasure (and it pleased him to be generous, kindly, and patriotic). But his followers formed their own standards of pleasure, and too often they lived lives indulging the pleasures of the flesh; (2) They taught that matter is eternal, and therefore they denied that the world was created by some deity. (3) They denied the immortality of the soul. (4) They denied any idea of future retribution, after death, for deeds done in this life. (5) They denied the idea that the gods exercised any providential control over human affairs.

**And Stoic philosophers** - Stoic philosophers were advocates of the theory originally taught by Zeno of Cyprus who died in 264 B.C., after living to the age of 96. Because he regularly held his classes on one of the porches in the market place, his followers were called "Stoics" (from the Greek word *stoa* which means "porch"). The Stoic philosophy was well known in Tarsus, Paul's hometown; it is possible to name at least six famous Stoic philosophers who came from Tarsus.

Doctrines of the Stoics included these: (1) The world was created by Zeus. (2) All things were governed by the "Fates," to whom Zeus himself was subject. (3) Self-denial was thought to contribute to the highest end in life. Passions and affections were to be suppressed and restrained ("Grin and bear it!"); apathy or indifference to either pleasure or pain, or mastery over all desires and lusts, so that none gained control of the man; these were what the Stoic aimed for. (4) They denied the immortality of the soul, some holding that the soul would exist only until the destruction of the universe, and others that it would finally be absorbed into the divine essence and become a part of deity (i.e., they believed in the transmigration of souls).

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<sup>19</sup> And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new doctrine *is* of which you speak?"

<sup>20</sup> For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean."

<sup>21</sup> 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.

<sup>22</sup> Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious;

<sup>23</sup> for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you:

<sup>24</sup> God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.

<sup>25</sup> Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.

<sup>26</sup> And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,

<sup>27</sup> so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;

<sup>28</sup> for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'

<sup>29</sup> Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.

<sup>30</sup> Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,

<sup>31</sup> 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."

<sup>32</sup> And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, "We will hear you again on this *matter*."

<sup>33</sup> So Paul departed from among them.

<sup>34</sup> However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

### **Questions Acts 17**

1. What do we learn about those who were converted at Thessalonica? (Also use the scriptures mentioned in the box on page 79)

**Questions Acts 17**

2. Who caused the uproar at Thessalonica, and what happened to Jason and some brethren?
3. List the lesson or lessons to be learned from Acts 17:11.
4. Who stirred up the people of Berea?
5. Who remained at Berea as Paul went to Athens?
6. Why was Paul's spirit provoked within him?
7. How does Gareth L. Reese describe the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers?
8. Why were the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers interested in Paul?
9. How does Paul begin his message at the Areopagus?
10. God commands all men to do what?
11. Describe the response of Paul's message at the Areopagus.
12. What will you choose to remember from this chapter?