

Paul and Silas are continuing their missionary journey (Paul's second) and arrive at Thessalonica, where many Gentiles and some Jews believe on Jesus Christ. However, the unbelieving Jews recruit a crowd of trouble-makers to protest and riot against the message of salvation through Jesus Christ, a situation that could have easily become violent had the protesters been able to find Paul and Silas.

1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:

“Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia” – After having been asked to leave by the magistrates of the city (Acts 16:39), Paul and Silas have left Philippi and continue their journey through Macedonia in obedience to the Lord's calling (Acts 16:9-10). They passed through the towns of Amphipolis and Apollonia, each of which were about 30 miles further along the road. They apparently passed through these towns without stopping to preach.

“they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews” – Another 40 miles beyond Apollonia was the city of Thessalonica, the capital of Macedonia. It was an important commercial center and had a population at that time of around 200,000. This city was large enough to have a synagogue, which may not have been true of Amphipolis and Apollonia and perhaps the reason Paul and Silas did not remain and preach in those cities.

2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, 3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

“And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them” – Paul had a great love for his own countrymen, and so he always made an effort to reach the Jews whenever he found a synagogue. **Rom. 10:1** *“Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.”*

“and three sabbath days reasoned [discussed] with them out of the scriptures” – For three consecutive sabbaths, Paul went into the synagogue and engaged in a discussion with the Jews meeting there. He no doubt focused on the OT scriptures that referred to the coming of Christ (the Messiah), answering their questions and objections.

“Opening [explaining] and alleging [demonstrating; proving], that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead” – Paul proved from the OT scriptures that it was prophesied that Christ (the Messiah) would have to suffer, die and then rise from the dead. These Jews believed that the Messiah was coming and Paul was showing them the scriptural evidence that the Messiah was predicted to die and then be resurrected.

“and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ” – This line is phrased as a quote from Paul. After proving that the Messiah (Christ) would need to die and rise from the dead, Paul declares that Jesus of Nazareth, Who died on the cross and three days later rose from the dead, is the Christ that the scriptures predicted. Jesus fulfilled these prophecies (and more) that pertain to the Messiah.

4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

“And some of them believed, and consorted [associated with] with Paul and Silas” – “Some” refers to a portion of Jews who were convinced by Paul's teaching since the believing Gentiles are mentioned separately. Most of the Jews rejected Jesus as the Messiah but this smaller portion believed in Jesus and began associating with Paul and Silas, apparently wanting to hear more.

“and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few” – The “devout Greeks” were Gentiles that feared the God of Israel and apparently also worshiped at the synagogue. In contrast to the Jews, a great number of these devout Greeks believed in Jesus. The “chief women” were apparently the wives of many important and influential men of the city. These women had become proselytes of the Jewish religion and now they had become believers in Christ.

5 But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

“But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy [zeal driven by envy, hatred, or anger]” – It seems that the motivation for these unbelieving Jews was jealousy and not the well being of the people believing in Jesus as the Christ. Jealousy and envy was also one of the motivations for the Jews who brought Jesus to Pilate (Matt. 27:18; Mark 15:10). The Jews did not like the fact that these people (Jews and Gentiles) were turning away from what they considered to be correct beliefs and from their teachings.

“took unto them certain lewd [evil; wicked] fellows of the baser sort [lit. from the marketplace; fig. common; low; vulgar], and gathered a company” – These Jews did not gather respectable men who could debate Paul and Silas on an intellectual basis. Instead, they gathered up a group of worthless men from the street who liked to cause trouble in order to protest Paul and Silas and create a riot.

“and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted [to stand upon; to be present] the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people” – After getting the city all stirred up, they marched to the house of Jason, intending to drag Paul and Silas out to face the accusations of the people. We are not told who Jason was, or why these people thought that Paul and Silas would be at his house. Perhaps Paul and Silas had been residing at Jason's house but just happened to not be there when this crowd of protesters surrounded the house.

6 And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; 7 Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, *one* Jesus.

“And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city” – Paul and Silas were not in the house but these protesters did not simply leave. They apprehend Jason and other “brethren” (believers) who happened to be there and drag them to the authorities in order to accuse them.

“crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; Whom Jason hath received” – Apparently word of the preaching of Christianity had gotten around to these people at Thessalonica. Their accusation that those who preached Jesus Christ had “turned the world upside down” indicates the impact that the gospel was having in the region. They had heard news of Paul and Silas traveling from city to city and preaching Jesus Christ and they accusers were saying that now these preachers had arrived in Thessalonica. Since they did not have Paul and Silas in their custody, they direct their accusation against Jason and accuse him of welcoming the troublemakers and giving them lodging in his house. They considered Jason to be guilty by association.

“and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, *one* Jesus” – They accuse Paul, Silas, Jason, and all those associating with them of treason for the “crime” of saying that there was “another king” (Jesus) that should be served instead of Caesar.

8 And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. 9 And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.

“And they troubled [to make anxious or distressed] the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things” – It was a dangerous thing to challenge Caesar, who could send legions of soldiers there to kill many people and enforce his sovereignty. So when they heard the accusation that “another king” was being advocated, it made the people and the rulers of the city very nervous and concerned.

“And when they had taken security [enough; sufficient] of Jason, and of the other, they let them go” – Apparently the rulers received a pledge from Jason and the others that had been accused in order to guarantee that they would not cause any more trouble. This pledge may have been money (as in paying bail) or a promise. Once the rulers were satisfied, Jason and the others were released.

10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming *thither* went into the synagogue of the Jews.

“And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea” – Seeing that it was not safe for Paul and Silas to show their faces in public, their fellow believers sent them out of Thessalonica under cover of darkness. Paul and Silas go Berea, another Macedonian city about 45 miles to the west.

“who coming *thither* went into the synagogue of the Jews” – Paul’s habit was to go to the local synagogue when he entered a new city, and this is what he and Silas do when they arrive in Berea. They presumably go to the synagogue on the next sabbath after their arrival.

11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. 12 Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

“These were more noble [respectable] than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind” – The Jews in Thessalonica had rejected and opposed the preaching of Jesus Christ out of hand because they didn’t agree with it, not because they could prove it wrong out of the scriptures. In fact, they likely did not even attempt to do so. However, the Jews at Berea were more open-minded to the gospel of Jesus Christ, ready to accept it if the scriptures demonstrated it to be true.

“and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” – Rather than dismissing the gospel out of hand, they searched the scriptures thoroughly to verify the assertion of Paul and Silas that Jesus was the Christ. If Paul’s preaching contradicted scripture then the Bereans would have rejected it, but if Paul’s preaching agreed with the scriptures then they would be ready to accept it.

“Therefore many of them believed” – In contrast to the Jews at Thessalonica where only “some of them believed” (v. 4), many of the Berean Jews believed because they recognized that Jesus fulfilled the scriptural predictions of the Messiah.

“also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few” – Besides the Jews, many Gentile women and men also believed. The word “honorable” refers to prominent men and women who were respected in the city.

Verses 13-34: The Jews from Thessalonica hear that Paul is now preaching the gospel in Berea and so they came to Berea to cause trouble and stir up the people against him. The brethren at Berea send Paul to Athens for his safety, while Silas and Timotheus remained behind. Paul sent back a message that Silas and Timotheus should join him as soon as possible and while he waited in Athens, Paul became burdened for the Athenians because he saw how the whole city was devoted to idolatry. After disputing in the synagogue with the local Jews and preaching in the market daily, some of the local philosophers were curious and wanted to hear more from Paul about his new teachings. They bring Paul to Mars Hill in order to give him a fair hearing and he preached the gospel to them. Some scoffed when Paul mentioned the resurrection of the dead but others believed.