




1. Luke notes “they” passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia and came to Thessalonica. What is inferred by Luke using the third person “they”? Why do you think they passed through two cities while later stopping for an extended time in Thessalonica? (Acts 16:6-7 may provide some guidance, along with the end of verse 1.)
2. According to v. 2, what was Paul’s custom? Amongst Jews what did Paul rely upon as the basis for his reasoning? What was his three-step process in reasoning with the Jews (3)?
3. When the Jews had differences with Paul, whom did they recruit to create an uproar, and what methods did they use (5)? Verse 6 says, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also.” What does the phrase, “...*have come here also*,” reveal? Whose world was being turned upside down, and how? Discuss.
4. What charge was used by the Jews in verse 7 to accuse Paul and his followers? Compare and contrast this charge with that of the Philippian Gentiles in 16:20-21.
5. What was so disturbing about these charges to the “people” and the city authorities (8)? (Also see Acts 16:20-21 and Acts 18:2) What did they fear?
6. Why were the Jews in Berea described as “more noble” than their peers in Thessalonica (11)? How does their example still challenge us today?
7. Verse 12 notes Greek women of high standing believed. A similar reference is made in v. 4 where it says [many] leading women ... joined Paul and Silas. Also, Paul’s first audience in Europe consisted of women, and his first convert in Europe was a woman, Lydia. What does all this reveal about the Holy Spirit’s strategy and Paul’s attitude toward women?
8. In verse 13 a pattern of persecution by the Jews is repeated, this time by Thessalonian Jews. In light of Acts 13:45,50; 14:2,19; and 17:5-8, what patterns do you see in these persecutions by the Jews? How does Paul later reflect on this in 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16?
9. In verse 14 Silas and Timothy stay in Berea while Paul is escorted by “the brothers” (other traveling companions, or new Berean believers) to Athens. Why was this separation necessary? How do you think Silas and Timothy then ministered in Berea? (see 16:32,40)
10. Paul had now been spirited out of town on many occasions in the book of Acts for his own safety, but new believers remained behind to continue the work in a culture growing more antagonistic. What similarities do you see with the attitude toward Christians in our culture today? How does this encourage you in the cultural challenges you face?



## Who Will Be King?

### Leader Notes for Acts 17:1-15



Paul, Silas and Timothy move on from Philippi to their second and third extended stops in Europe. The narration goes from first person “we” to third person “they”, indicating Luke was not on this phase of the journey. The Scripture notes they “passed through” Amphipolis and Apollonia on the way to Thessalonica. Each of these cities is approximately 30-35 miles apart. Presumably, Paul only overnights there. Thessalonica was the intended target due to its synagogue, which Paul had likely learned about in his travels. Paul’s custom was to give his kinsman the first opportunity to hear the gospel. (See 13:46.)

Paul reasoned with the Jews using a three-step process. He used the Scriptures the Jews revered to prove his first two points. First, he proved through the Prophets and the Law that the Christ (Messiah) had to suffer and die. Secondly, he explained the Christ had to rise from the dead. Finally, he relied upon personal testimony to explain that Jesus (whom he had met on the road to Damascus) was THE CHRIST!

Among others, Luke says *not a few* of the leading women were persuaded. Paul’s outreach on European soil began by reaching out to women in 16:13-14. His first convert in Europe was a woman named Lydia. Here in Thessalonica “leading women” are mentioned. In 17:12 we read of “Greek women of high standing.” Luke and the Holy Spirit are pointing out that women were strategically important, spiritually significant, and powerfully used by the Spirit of God to spread the gospel, overcoming cultural limitations of their day.

Once again jealousy overcame the Jews, and they manipulated the crowd to punish Paul and Silas, accusing them of turning the world upside down. Verse 6 says, “... they have come here *also*.” News of Paul’s activity and arrest in Philippi must have reached them. The accusation formulated by the *Jews* in Thessalonica was specific, “...they are acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king, Jesus.” In Philippi the *Gentile accusers’* claim was more general, “They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice.” Enemies of the gospel sought to create fear by claiming the current Roman world order was being threatened by a rival king seeking dominion. This resonated, as “the people and the city authorities were disturbed.”

The new brothers in Thessalonica got Paul and Silas out of harm’s way by sending them 50 miles away to Berea. The Bereans were more responsive to the gospel, with many Jews believing. These Jews received the Word *with eagerness* and *examined the Scriptures daily*. The living Word was affirmed by the written Word.

The Thessalonian Jews now picked up the persecution baton and began stirring up the Berean crowds. In haste, the “brothers” (other traveling companions, new Berean believers, or both) split off Paul from Silas and Timothy and sent Paul off, probably by boat, to Athens. His two companions remained in Berea to help the new believers get grounded in Christ.

Today Jesus and His followers are still looked at as threats to the current world leaders and the current world order. A campaign of fear is being promoted against the Jesus of the Bible and His followers. The accusation by the persecuting Jews in the book of Acts was accurate. The gospel message comes down to this choice – Who will be your king?