

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Lesson 14 w/Answers

Acts 16:20 - 17:34

Last week, we looked at Acts Chapter 15 through Chapter 16 verse 19. We are now approximately twenty years removed from Christ's ascension into heaven, and the Apostles and Disciples of Christ continue to struggle with major doctrinal issues that will shape the church for centuries to come. Two lessons ago, we saw Peter realize for the first time that the gospel was not meant just for the Jews but also for the Gentiles. We also saw the church at Antioch commission Paul and Barnabas to go and spread that message during what is known today as Paul's First Missionary Journey.

When Paul and Barnabas return, they spend a long time at Antioch telling the church there about all of the miracles and life-changing things that they saw God do among the Gentiles. Chapter 15 picked up that narrative with the dilemma that addressed the question: Do you also need to be circumcised to be saved? More importantly do you need to be Jew in order to be saved? In other words, once you accept Christ, are you then required to become circumcised and come under the Law of Moses?

After a lengthy discussion before the council at Jerusalem they realized, that people are saved through grace and not because of an act or something that they do. This message was sent back to the church at Antioch, and being encouraged by the council in Jerusalem to continue their work, Paul set out on his Second Missionary Journey. While they are at Philippi, he and Silas are arrested and thrown in jail for casting out a demon from a fortune teller. This lesson picks up the story from there.

For this study, let's read the remaining verses in Chapter 16 and also Chapter 17 then answer the following questions:

1. What happened to Paul and Silas in Chapter 16 verses 20-23?
 - a. ANSWER: They were severely beaten and flogged.
2. Following what happened to them in verses 22- 23, what remarkable thing do we find Paul and Silas doing in verse 25?
 - a. ANSWER: Singing praises to God and praying so loudly that the other prisoners could hear them.
3. When the jailer sees that God has answered their prayers, he asks the question that mankind has been asking down through the ages, "What must I do to be saved?" How do Paul and Silas answer him, in verse 31?
 - a. ANSWER: Believe in the Lord Jesus
4. When Paul and Silas arrive in Thessalonica, what does it say in Acts 17:1-2 that they did first, and why?
 - a. ANSWER: They went to the Synagogue, because that was their custom; this was Paul's standard approach to beginning a new work - start with the Jews in the local synagogue.
5. In Thessalonica, did Paul just make a token attempt to preach the Gospel to the Jews in the synagogue before being rejected and shifting his focus to preaching to the Gentiles?
 - a. ANSWER: No. He reasoned with the Jews for three weeks before going to the Gentiles.
6. What was Paul's approach with the Jews? How did he tell them about Christ?
 - a. ANSWER: Paul would prove to them, using their own scriptures, that Jesus was the promised Messiah, and that salvation comes only through believing in Him.
7. Besides a number of the Jews in the synagogue, who else heard Paul during these three weeks and believed?
 - a. ANSWER: God-fearing Greeks and many prominent women.
8. As was the case in every town that Paul preached the gospel in, the unbelieving Jews raised up a mob against them and drove them out of town (in this case, to Berea). In Acts 17:10-14, we read of Paul's and Silas' visit to Berea. What made the Synagogue at Berea stand out from all the other synagogues that they would visit? (Acts 17:11)
 - a. ANSWER: The Bereans earnestly studied the scriptures to see if what Paul was saying was true, and as a result many believed.

9. Looking back on what that we have read regarding all of the stops on both of Paul's trips so far, what do you think of the comment that what is required of us to be saved is "blind faith"? In contrast, what do we see in every instance where people received the gospel message and were saved? Was their faith "blind"?
 - a. ANSWER: No; Paul explained and reasoned with everyone regarding why it was that he knew for a certainty that Jesus was the promised Messiah.
 10. What does Peter tell us about our faith? Is it blind? See 1 Peter 3:15 and 2 Peter 1:16-21.
 - a. ANSWER: No; he tells us our faith has a reason, and we should be aware of it. We should place our faith in the accuracy and God inspired words of scripture, and we should have a reason we can share with others about our faith.
 11. What did Paul do when he went to Athens, and why? (Acts 17:16-17)
 - a. ANSWER: He was grieved by all the idol worship, so he once again he went to the Synagogue and reasoned first with the Jews before going into the marketplace and reasoning with the Greek unbelievers.
 12. Paul's debate in the remaining verses of Chapter 17 with the Greeks on Mars Hill is well known. What principles for reaching the lost can we see Paul developing in his Mars Hill discourse?
 - a. ANSWER 1: He spent time with them;
 - b. ANSWER 2: He learned about their culture and beliefs and brought the Gospel to them on an intellectual plane that they would understand;
 - c. ANSWER 3: He reasoned with them; he didn't shove the Gospel down their throats nor force his will upon them. He allowed them to make an educated choice, not one based on emotion or coercion.
 - d. ANSWER 4: He did not water down the Gospel so he would be more-easily accepted by the unbelievers.
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In summary, we see that Paul spent considerable time trying to reason with both the Jews and the Gentiles and explaining to them why he knew for a certainty that Jesus was the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament. The Messiah, the Christ, was indeed Jesus; and it was only through Him that mankind could find salvation.

We also see that Paul did not water down the truth nor the Gospel message. He knew how to meet people where they lived, and on an intellectual plane equal to their own, with a logical and well-thought-out defense of his faith (just as Peter commands us to do).

We can learn much from Paul regarding how to share the Gospel with others. Let's pray that God will reveal these lessons to us and empower us to continue to let others know about Jesus.

Have a great week everyone!

In Christ,

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