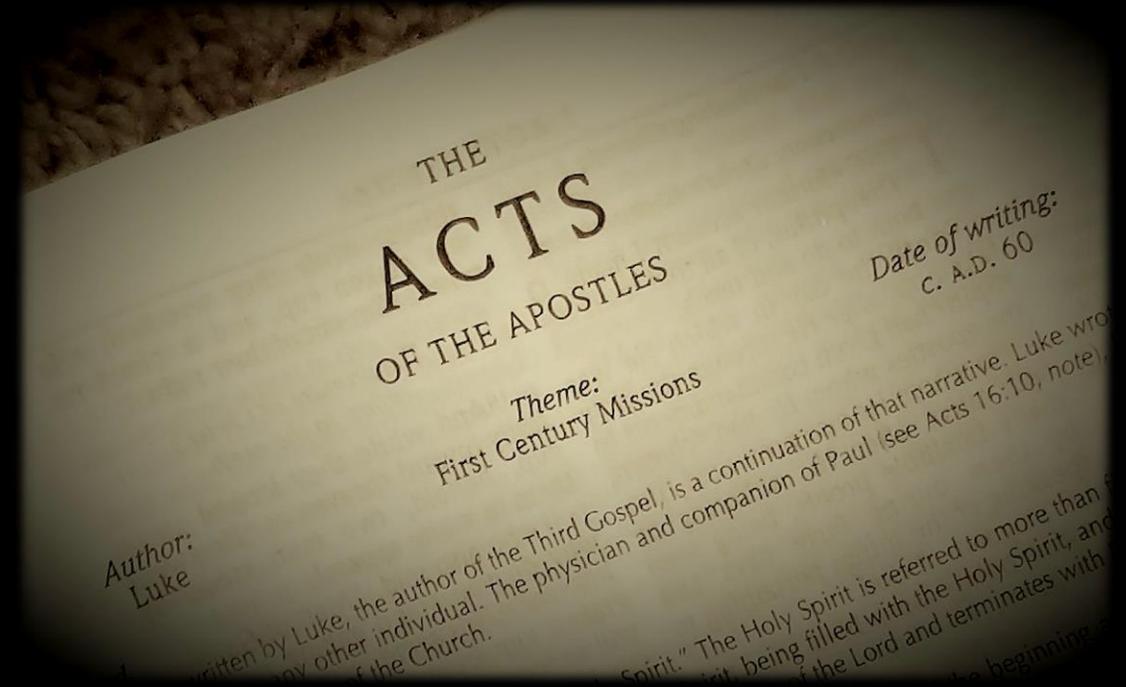


Verse by Verse

Acts 17



Previously in *Acts*

Previously in Acts

- The last chapter saw Paul and Silas returning to cities that Paul had been to before.
- While there, a young man, Timothy, joined their team.
- When they got to a place called Troas, Paul received a message in a dream to go over to Macedonia.
- The city they went to was Philippi, where their preaching received a mixed response.

Previously in Acts

- There were a number of very sincere converts.
- At the same time there was serious opposition.
- After a time in jail, which resulted in the jailer himself being converted, our team was asked to leave the city.

Acts 17 Introduction

Acts 17 Introduction

- The missionaries will continue their ministry in **Macedonia**, preaching in **Thessalonica** and **Berea**.
- Again, in both places, after seeing some conversions, the team will have to leave.
- Paul will then make his way to **Athens** where he proclaims Christ to the intellectual elite.

Acts 17 Key Verses

Acts 17 Key Verses

- Acts 17:11-12a (ESV)

¹¹ Now these Jews [in Berea] were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. ¹² Many of them therefore believed ...

Acts 17 Outline

Acts 17 Outline

1. In Thessalonica 17:1-9
2. In Berea 17:10-15
3. In Athens 17:16-21
4. At the Areopagus 17:22-34

1. In Thessalonica Acts 17:1-9

1. In Thessalonica Acts 17:1-9

- 17:1 Thessalonica is still a major city in Greece.
- 17:6, 8 city authorities This word *polytarches* was used almost exclusively in the region of Macedonia.
- Evidence shows that a group of *five politarchs* ruled the city of Thessalonica at the time Paul visited.

1. In Thessalonica Acts 17:1-9

- **17:2-3** The words Luke uses of Paul's ministry indicate a complex approach.
- He **reasoned with them** from the Scriptures.
- This involved **explaining and proving** that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead.
- Finally, Paul **proclaimed that "Jesus is the Christ"**

1. In Thessalonica Acts 17:1-9

- **17:2-3** All of this indicates more than just preaching the gospel.
- It is a ministry related to **apologetics** – or a logical, carefully thought through defense of the faith.

1. In Thessalonica Acts 17:1-9

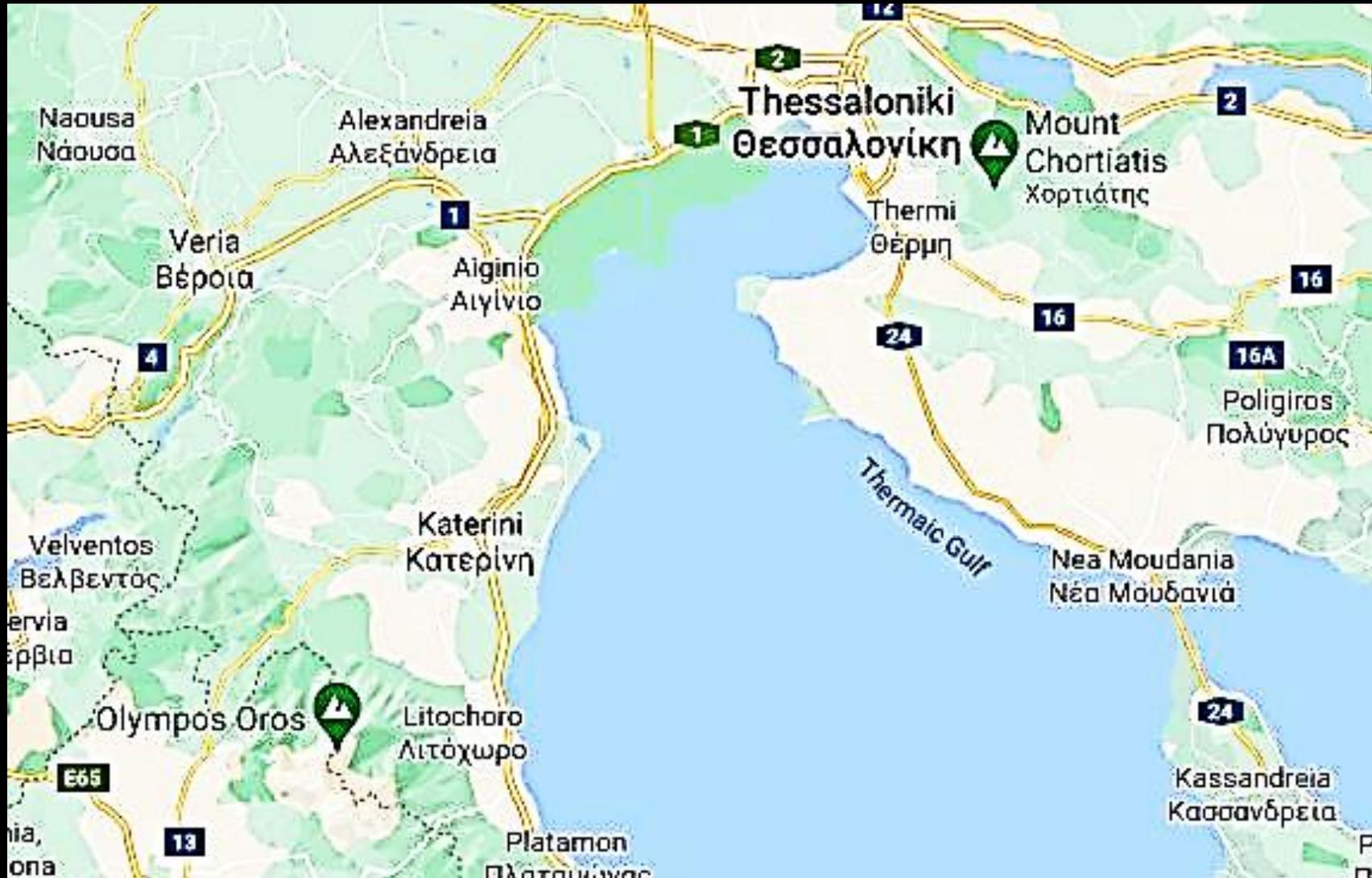
- **17:4** He also expected a response.
- It says that “some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas.”
- This means that some of his hearers truly believed.
- They expressed that faith by outwardly identifying as followers of Christ.
- We might say they joined the newly forming church.

1. In Thessalonica Acts 17:1-9

- **17:6** In the end, however, the team was denounced as “men who have turned the world upside down.”
- This was not a compliment.
- NASB men who have upset the world
- NIV men who have caused trouble all over the world
- This is still very often how Christians are perceived by those who reject the gospel – as troublemakers.

2. In Berea Acts 17:10-15

2. In Berea Acts 17:10-15



From
Google Maps

2. In Berea Acts 17:10-15

- **17:10** Our missionaries need to make another escape and continue their ministry in a new city.
- **17:11-12** The response here is initially positive as our key verses indicate.

2. In Berea Acts 17:10-15

- Acts 17:11-12a (ESV)

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2. In Berea Acts 17:10-15

- **17:11-12** Luke highlights the “leading women” (v.4) and “women of high standing” (v.12).
- The Christian faith appealed to both women and men.
- It also appealed to people across class lines – the poor or lower class and the upper classes.

2. In Berea Acts 17:10-15

- **17:13-15** But again, business as usual, Paul had to make an escape. This keeps happening.
- **Acts 9:23-25** (ESV)

²³ When many days had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him, ²⁴ but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night in order to kill him, ²⁵ but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket.

3. In Athens Acts 17:16-21

3. In Athens Acts 17:16-21



From
Google Maps

3. In Athens Acts 17:16-21

- **17:16** his spirit was provoked Paul was not a detached observer of the idolatry of Athens.
- He was distressed, bothered, troubled or irritated.
- The city was full of idols a unique word
- Bill Mounce defines it as *rife with idols, sunk in idolatry, grossly idolatrous.*

3. In Athens Acts 17:16-21

- 17:17 Again Paul took a multipronged approach.
- He reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons
- These would share his distaste for idolatry.

3. In Athens Acts 17:16-21

- **17:17** And in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.
- This is very much like **Aristotle** or **Socrates** who carried on their philosophical discussions in public places.
- Aristotle's *peripatetic* philosophy, is named for his alleged habit of walking around as he taught.
- **17:18** Paul encountered other schools of thought.

3. In Athens Acts 17:16-21

Epicureanism and Stoicism were two popular schools of philosophical thought. The former was founded by Epicurus, who did not believe in the afterlife and emphasized the pursuit of pleasure and freedom from pain ...

*– Tony Evans,
Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship*



3. In Athens Acts 17:16-21

... Founded by Zeno, Stoicism was pantheistic and emphasized the pursuit of virtue.

*– Tony Evans,
Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship*



3. In Athens Acts 17:16-21

- 17:19 this babblers Paul was probably at least as intelligent as they were, but this was Athens.
- Think of Oxford or Cambridge – or Boston in the USA.
- Foreign divinities ... Jesus and the resurrection
- Misunderstanding is often the response to the gospel when people first hear it – even very smart people.

3. In Athens Acts 17:16-21

- 17:20-21 I love these verses, especially v.21.
- For some people new ideas can be threatening.
- For others, anything new is perceived as creative, interesting and potentially trendy.
- That was Athens.
- Southern California might be the best example of this today - at least of places I am familiar with.

4. At the Areopagus Acts 17:22-34

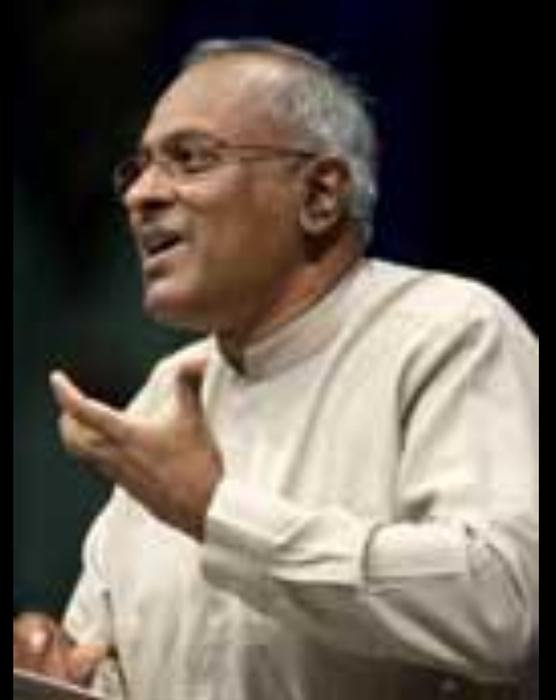
4. At the Areopagus Acts 17:22-34

- **17:22** the Areopagus – *Ares* is the Greek equivalent of the Roman god Mars. *Pagus* is Greek for hill.
- So Paul is now speaking at **Mars' Hill** as in the KJV.
- This ruling council of academics originally met on the hill, but the name stuck, even if they met elsewhere.

4. At the Areopagus **Acts 17:22-34**

Paul's speech before the Areopagus remains a model of sensitive but forthright confrontation of an intellectual audience with the claims of the gospel.

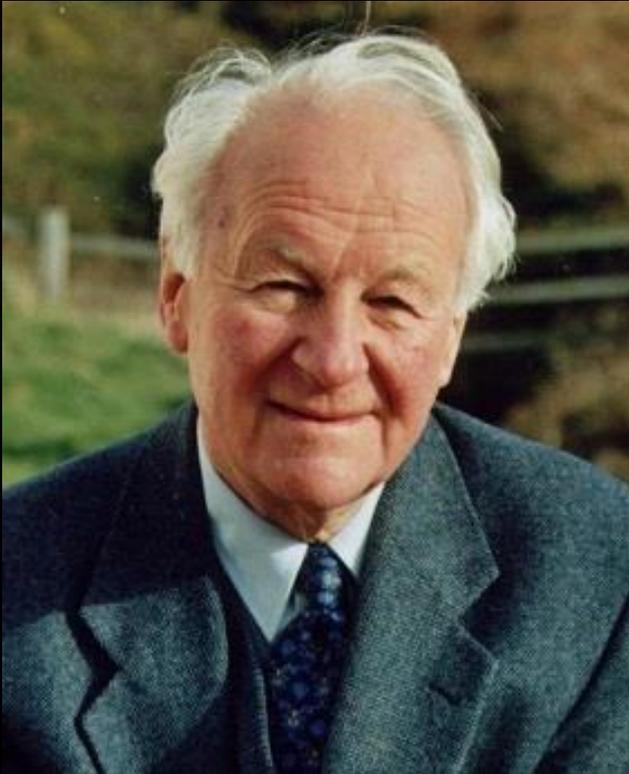
*– Ajith Fernando,
Youth for Christ, Sri Lanka*



4. At the Areopagus Acts 17:22-34

- 17:22-23 Paul built a bridge to his hearers.
- 17:24-25 An all-powerful Creator was not a typical belief of Greek pagans, regardless of the philosophy.
- 17:26 from one man every nation This puts us all on the same level and in the same big family.
- 17:31 And we are subject to the same future judgment, which God the Father has given to Christ.

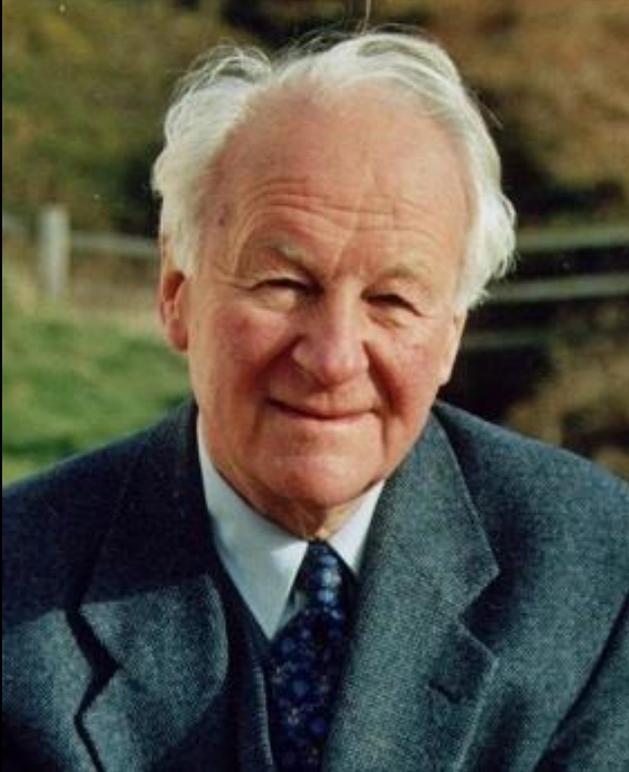
4. At the Areopagus Acts 17:22-34



Many people are rejecting our gospel today not because they perceive it to be false, but because they perceive it to be trivial. People are looking for an integrated world-view which makes sense of all their experience. We learn from Paul ...

*– John Stott (1921 – 2011),
All Souls Church, London*

4. At the Areopagus Acts 17:22-34



... that we cannot preach the gospel of Jesus without the doctrine of God, or the cross without the creation, or salvation without judgment. Today's world needs a bigger gospel ... what Paul later in Ephesus was to call 'the whole purpose [counsel] of God.'

*– John Stott (1921 – 2011),
All Souls Church, London*

4. At the Areopagus **Acts 17:22-34**

- In each and every setting, Paul used whatever method he could to reach his audience.
- He **used Scripture** to show Jesus was the Christ when in the synagogue with Jews and God-fearing Greeks.
- He **was never intimidated** by those who disagreed.
- At the same time, he was **respectful** while declaring the gospel as **truth to be believed**.

Acts 17 What We Just Read

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Acts 17 Key Points

Acts 17 Key Points

1. Paul did not simply preach at his audience, but was willing to dialogue with them.
2. At the same time, he was always trying to encourage a positive response from his hearers.
3. Like the Bereans, we should study the Scriptures diligently in order to know what we believe.
4. Like Paul, it is good to be distressed, bothered, troubled or irritated by sin and false ideas of God.

Acts 17 Key Points

5. Still, we must always be respectful when dealing with an audience that is ignorant of God's word.
6. We may have to build bridges from our biblical worldview to theirs to help them understand.
7. Finally, we know that Christ provides the answer for the problem of sin that is shared by all of humanity.

Acts 17 A Prayer

Acts 17 A Prayer

- Our Father in heaven,
- We thank you for the many examples in the book of Acts, and especially for the example of Paul.
- We pray that you would help us as Christians to adapt to this world in which we live while never compromising our faith.
- Give us wisdom to handle all the various situations where our faith may lead to disagreement.

Acts 17 A Prayer

- Finally, help us to know what to say and how best to say it whenever we have the opportunity to declare the truth of your word.
- Let us be faithful representatives of Jesus in each and every setting in which we find ourselves – and among all the different types of people we encounter.
- In Christ,
- Amen

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