

## Acts Series 15 - "As The World Turns" - Acts 17:1-6

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### A. *Something's Wrong!*

1. Do you ever get the feeling that there's something not quite right with the world?
2. Do you ever listen to the news and hear a report about some new crime that makes you shake your head and say, "That's terrible"?
3. Has a co-worker or maybe a friend told you about something going on in their life and it makes you angry at the injustice they are being made to endure
4. And you say to yourself, "There is something seriously wrong here."

#### B. *Headlines*

1. Here's Thursday's local paper . . .
2. [Read headlines]
3. Something's not right here
4. But it isn't only you and I who feel this way
5. Recent polls show that the average person on the street and in the mall is becoming increasingly aware that things are out of control
  - a. there is a growing fear of violence and crime
  - b. trust in institutions like government and the police is rapidly eroding
  - c. there is a sense that corruption has infiltrated every level of society

#### C. *Today*

1. Indeed, something is wrong
2. And that is precisely what the Bible says is the case
3. But the world as we see and know it is not the way God created or intended the world to be
4. And today, we're going to see how He will correct it

### II. TEXT

#### A. *Vs. 1-4*

- {1} Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.
- {2} Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,
- {3} 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."
- {4} 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.
1. Paul & his small team of assistants made there way south along the main

- Roman Road from Philippi, 100 miles Thessalonica, a large and important city in Greece
2. When they arrived, the first thing Paul did was to go to the synagogue and begin to preach the gospel
  3. The response he received was pretty typical
    - a. a few of the Jews were converted
    - b. as well as a large number of the God-fearing Greeks
    - c. Luke tells us that there was also a large number of prominent women who believed
    - d. in every city and village of the Greek and Roman world there was a class of women who through whatever means had attained a level of influence and position
    - e. the reason Luke mentions them, not only here but in several other places in Acts, is because as he knew the early church had gained a reputation of being made up only of the uneducated, under-classes who were given to superstition
      - 1) the church was thought by many to be made up only of the poor and slaves
      - 2) and that people of honor shunned the church
    - f. Luke tells us that some of the educated and cultured women of the city were among Paul's first converts in Thessalonica, as well as in other cities
  4. Now, before we move on, there is something in vs. 2&3 that I can't leave without commenting on . . .
  5. Notice how Luke describes Paul's manner of teaching in Thessalonica

**{2} . . . for three Sabbaths [he] reasoned with them from the Scriptures,**

**{3} explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead**

6. He reasoned with them *from the scriptures*
  - a. do you realize that our faith is reasonable?
  - b. it isn't a blind leap in the dark
  - c. we don't check our brains at the door when we come to church or when we study the bible
  - d. no, our faith is reasonable - and imminently so
  - e. in Isaiah 1:18 God invites us and says, "Come now, let us reasons together you & I."
  - f. God wants us to use our minds as it relates to Him, not put them on the shelf
  - g. I have discovered that the more I study the bible, the more I see how great is the wisdom and greatness of God and the reasonableness of the Christian faith
  - h. the scriptures give us the best explanation for the creation of the universe and for explaining what is going on today
  - i. dozens and dozens of scientist and critics of the bible have set themselves to expose it as a fraud in the light of modern science
  - j. but time and again their attempts have failed – and not a few of them

- were converted after taking an honest look at the evidence
- k. if you're a skeptic and disinclined to believe the bible and reluctant to embrace Christ, I'd like to invite you to investigate more deeply
    - 1) we have nothing to hide
    - 2) and we aren't ashamed of anything you may find in scripture
    - 3) and you know what, you owe it to yourself to at least be an informed skeptic
    - 4) don't be like most people who reject Jesus without every having checked Him out
    - 5) if you're going to reject the gospel, at least know why
  - l. You see, I fell completely safe saying that because I am convinced that if you just give the bible a fair shake, you'll come to faith
  - m. and if you don't give the bible a chance, then come on, you aren't really interested in discovering truth
  - n. so Paul reasoned with them from the scriptures
7. But then it says that he also explained and demonstrated to them that Christ had to suffer
- a. these words "explained and demonstrated" are also important for us because it gives us a picture of how Paul taught the scriptures
  - b. in the KJV it says he "opened and alleged" rather than "explained and demonstrated"
  - c. the first word means to open up
    - 1) and the only other time it appears in the bible is in Luke 24
    - 2) when the two from Emmaus said to each other, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?"<sup>[1]</sup>
    - 3) Jesus had taken them on an extended study through the entire OT, showing how it was prophesied that the Messiah would suffer and die for the sins of the world
    - 4) He had simply opened the scriptures, from Genesis to Malachi
    - 5) and as He showed them how they all spoke of Him, their hearts were set ablaze with passion for God
  - d. Paul did the same thing in Thessalonica
    - 1) he opened the scriptures by focusing on Christ
  - e. all you bible students - pay close attention to this because it's of utmost importance
    - 1) notice when the scriptures were opened to people
    - 2) it was when Jesus was the focus
    - 3) as it says in Rev 19:10, the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy
    - 4) Jesus told the rabbis that their great error was in missing Him as the focus of scripture
    - 5) in John 5:39 we read "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me."
    - 6) the key to understanding the bible is to look for Jesus in it
    - 7) if you desire is merely to fill your head with trivia to win bible b's or

- do well in the Bible category on Jeopardy, you won't really be able to understand much of scripture
- 8) but if your desire is to know Jesus better, then the scriptures will open to you
  - 9) you home group leaders, and Sunday school teachers, whatever passage you are covering, make sure you are bringing your people to Jesus
  - 10) you bible students, when you come to a difficult passage, look for how it speaks of Jesus, and you will find it open to you
- f. this second word, "demonstrating" means to "lay before"
- 1) Paul opened the scriptures
  - 2) and then he showed it to them
  - 3) in other words, he laid it out plainly so they could see it for themselves!
  - 4) this is what we want our pastors and teachers to do
    - a) to open the scriptures, not commentaries or books of worldly wisdom
    - b) and present to us what is in the word of God so that we can see it for ourselves
  - 5) friends I am wary in the extreme of those who say they are getting private revelations from God and have a new message to share with the church
    - a) we see a constant parade of one after another of these men and women on so-called Christian TV
    - b) and it seems each one is trying to outdo the others with some new vision or dream or word from the Lord
  - 6) what I have appreciated about Pastor Chuck over all these years is that he simply opens and presents the scriptures
    - a) and in doing so he has equipped an army of young men and women who have gone out and planted somewhere between 1000 and 1200 churches internationally
    - b) Calvary Chapel is the fastest growing movement in church history
    - c) since 1991, 500 new churches have been planted in the US alone
    - d) but you know what is unique about the way Chuck teaches?
    - e) because he simply opens and presents them,
    - f) not only does he teach them, at the same time he is teaching how to study and teach
    - g) people that sit under Pastor Chuck ministry don't need to go to seminary
    - h) they are getting some of the best bible education and theological training there is when they go to church
8. Isn't it interesting - When Paul preached, he didn't talk about new revelations or visions
  9. No, he had something better to share - the scriptures!

## **B. Vs. 5-7**

**{5} 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.**

**{6} 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.**

**{7} "Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king; Jesus."**

1. Here comes the inevitable backlash to the bold and uncompromising proclamation of the word of God
2. While a few of the Jews became converts, the majority did not
3. And when they saw most of the God-fearing Greeks who had been part of their synagogue depart to follow Paul, they became envious
4. So they went to the marketplace where there were certain loiterers hanging around looking for trouble
5. The Jews stirred them up and they mobbed the house where Paul and his team were staying
6. But they weren't there
7. So they grabbed the owner and some of his friends and dragged them to the city magistrates
8. It is the charge they level against the Christians that I want us to focus on in the time that is left to us today
9. They said,

**"These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. . . . and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king; Jesus."**

10. What an interesting charge - that they had turned the world upside down
11. You see, while Paul was the first missionary to come to Thessalonica, word of the Christian movement had reached the city
12. In fact, Suetonius, the historian tells us that the movement had already spread to Rome by this time and that the Jews there had caused several riots in their opposition to the fledgling church
13. They became so violent, that Claudius the emperor grew tired and in frustration expelled all Jews from the city
14. This occurred in 49 AD, and may very well have been what the Jews in Thessalonica were referring to
15. But it was a false charge
  - a. for it wasn't the Christians who were disturbing the peace in Rome, or Thessalonica, or Philippi, or in any other place
  - b. it was the people who opposed the Christians who were the rabble rousers and rioters
16. And while the charge that the Christians were disturbing the peace was untrue, that they were turning the world upside down was truer than they knew
17. For that is precisely what the gospel does – it turns this world upside down
18. More precisely, it turns the world right side up
19. But from the perspective of those who have lived all their lives upside

- down, when the world is turned right side up, it looks like it's upside down
20. You see, when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden, the world was thrown upside down
    - a. where righteousness ruled, sin took over
    - b. where there was light, darkness came
    - c. where there was peace, war and conflict ensued
    - d. love was replaced by hate
    - e. joy, by sorrow
  21. And after generations of such, mankind began to think that this was the norm
    - a. that darkness was light
    - b. and sin was righteousness
  22. When Jesus came, the true light shone once again
  23. And He showed just how upside down this world is in His very first sermon

**{Mat 5:3} Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

**{4} Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.**

**{5} Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.**

**{6} Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.**

**{7} Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.**

**{8} Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.**

**{9} Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.**

**{10} Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

**{11} "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.**

**(Mat 5:38-41) "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' {39} "But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. {40} "If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. {41} "And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.**

**(Mat 5:43-44) "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' {44} "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,**

**(Mat 6:19-20) "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; {20} "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.**

### **C. A Revolution**

1. The mob accused the Christians of proclaiming another king - Jesus
2. And it is true that believers embrace Him as their sovereign
3. But they know that Jesus said His kingdom is not of this world
4. So they do not take up metal swords and battle their way to power
5. Nor do they form a new political party and revolt against the state

6. No, the Christian revolution is waged in hearts and minds not in streets and open fields of earthly battle
7. The throne our God occupies is here [point to heart], not in Sacramento, or Washington DC, or even Rome
8. Jesus turns this upside down world, right side up > but He does it one person at a time
9. And the weapons He uses are the Spirit and the Word
10. Friend - has your world been turned right side up?
11. One little boy remarked that the NT ends with Revolutions
12. Indeed, the gospel does bring a revolution
  - a. a revolution in thinking
    - 1) most of us once scoffed at the bible and Christians
    - 2) but now we love the word and the brethren
  - b. many of us once loved the bar and tavern; but now we can't pass one without loathing
  - c. many of us once hated the church, but now we can't wait for Sunday
  - d. a carnal movie or a lewd novel, were once sweet to our taste but now they turn our stomachs
  - e. once we cheated and lied, but now integrity is all important to us
  - f. some of us men came home at night drunk and mistreated our wives and children, and when they saw us coming, they ran away to hide / but now they come out to greet us and we sweep them up into our arms and feel their tender little lips on our cheeks
13. Oh, if this is turning the world upside down, then may the world know such turning
14. Friend - has your world turned?
15. Is Jesus indeed your king?

### **III. CONCLUSION**

#### **A. No Greater Revolution**

1. Of all the revolutions that history has witnessed, none has had a greater impact than the revolution of the gospel of Jesus Christ
2. Of all the armies that have ever marched, all the navies that have ever sailed, all the planes that have ever flown - none have influenced the world half so much as Jesus
3. Of all the would be tyrants who have set themselves on earthly thrones, none have had one tenth the number of men and women who would gladly give their lives in His service
4. Why?
5. Because Jesus first gave His life for them
6. And He rules by love, not force

#### **B. Finally**

1. Finally - don't you find these words to be challenging?
2. I mean - they accused Paul and his companions of turning the world upside

- down
3. There were probably 4, 5, maybe 6 people in the team
  4. But their enemies saw them as a dangerous threat to the status quo
  5. Do the critics of the church still hold us as dangerous
  6. Are the 60 churches in Oxnard being accused of turning even the city upside down, let alone the world?
  7. To our shame we'd have to say that no such charge has been laid at our door
  8. And yet, it is to this that we have been called by Jesus
  9. Mat 28:19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you."
  10. We are part of the quiet revolution of men's & women's hearts
  11. Let's be about our Father's business

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[1] Luke 24:32