

Acts 18

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Catholic Bible Study (Cont)

- **Catholics see the Bible as the:**

- Divine Word (*Debar* – Gn 1/*Logos* – Jn 1) as revealed to man
- The “Truth” of God
- Divine love story
- Wisdom (Sophia) of God
- God’s Revelation history
- God’s Salvation history
- The Word made flesh (incarnation)
- **Book for the Liturgy**

Catholic Bible Study Criteria (Cont)*

- God has chosen to reveal Himself:
 - From within the Trinity
 - In His truth - *veritas*
- There are many ways to study sacred scripture
 - Looking at the scripture through the lens of history is just one of them
- As Catholics we are guided in scripture study by **paragraph 101-141 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church***
- New *Compendium of the CCC* summarizes these paragraphs by asking and answering the following questions:

Catholic Bible Study Criteria (Cont)

- Why and in what way is the divine revelation transmitted?
 - Christ commanded that the apostles to “Go forth and teach the gospel to all nations”
- What is Apostolic Tradition ?
 - The transmitted message of Christ by means of preaching, bearing witness, institutions, worship and inspired writings
- In what ways does Apostolic Tradition occur?
 - Through the living transmission of the word of God and Sacred Scriptures which is the same proclamation in written form

Catholic Bible Study Criteria (Cont)

- What is Sacred Tradition and its the relationship to Sacred Scripture?
 - Both are bound closely together and communicate one with the other as they flow out of the same well-spring
- To whom is the deposit of faith entrusted?
 - The Apostles - who then entrusted the deposit of faith through their successors to the whole Church
- To whom is given the task of authentically interpreting the deposit of faith?
 - The living teaching office of the Church alone, that is the successors of Peter, the Bishop of Rome, and to the bishops in communion with him (the *Magesterium*)

Catholic Bible Study Criteria (Cont)

- What is the relationship between Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium?
 - They are so closely united with each other that one of them cannot stand without the others
- Why does Sacred Scripture teach the truth?
 - Because God is its author

Catholic Bible Study Criteria (Cont)*

- **How, as Catholics, are the Sacred Scripture to be read?**
 - Inspired and infallible
 - Containing three criteria for its interpretation
 - Content and unity of whole Scripture
 - Living tradition of the whole Church as interpreted by the *Magisterium*
 - Analogy of Faith – the coherence of truth & faith within the plan of revelation - one truth cannot contradict another
 - Possessing **four senses of Scripture**
 - **Literal** – who, what, when, where, how
 - **Allegorical** – as related to Jesus
 - **Moral** – a related to our moral lives
 - **Anagogical** – as related to leading us to heaven
 - Christocentric – all is centered on Christ

Catholic Bible Study Criteria (Cont)

- What is the Canon of Scripture?
 - The complete list of the sacred writings which the Church had come to recognize through Apostolic Tradition
- What is the importance of the Old Testament for Christians?
 - They are the true word of God written to prepare for the coming of Christ as Savior of the universe
- What importance does the New Testament have for Christians?
 - It conveys to us the ultimate truth of divine Revelation

Catholic Bible Study Criteria (Cont)

- What is the unity that exists between the Old and New Testaments?
 - Scripture is one insofar as the Word of God is one
- What role does Sacred Scripture play in the life of the Church?
 - **It gives support and vigor to the life of the Church**
- How does the Church interpret and transmit these teaching?
 - Via her theological documents*

The Bible

- The Word of God (Catholic edition of the Bible – 73 Books
 - OT – The Greek *Septuagint* - 46 books
 - Pentateuch – 5
 - Historical – 16
 - Wisdom – 7
 - Prophets – 18
 - NT – 27 books
 - Gospels – 4
 - Acts of the Apostles – 1
 - Epistles – 21
 - Revelation - 1

The Bible (Cont)

- Everyone should read the bible as a source of nourishment for the soul
- God inspired the writers to write what He wanted but let them use their unique style
- Every word is inspired by the Holy Spirit
- There are no contradictions in the scriptures
- There are many translations and versions of the Bible

Early Christian Time Line

- **0-6 AD Birth of Jesus the Christ**
- **1-5 Saul's birth**
- **30-33 Christ is crucified, raised and ascends into Heaven**
- **33 Pentecost**
- **33 Stephen is martyred**
- **33-34 Saul's conversion on the Road to Damascus**
- **34-36 Saul's sojourn in Arabia**
- **36-37 Saul's return journey to Jerusalem**
- **37-42 Saul in Tarsus**

Early Christian Time Line (Cont)

- 41-44 Herod Agrippa I reigns
- 42 Paul in Antioch
- 44 Famine in Jerusalem
- **45-49 Paul's 1st missionary journey**
 - *Spring of 45 they sail for Cyprus*
 - *Fall of 45 they sail for Asia Minor and arrive at Antioch of Pisidia*
 - *Fall of 46 they arrive at Iconian*
 - *They may have remained 1 year in Derbe before returning to Antioch in Syria*
 - *48 was their triumphal journey to Jerusalem*
 - *49 was the Council of Jerusalem*
- 50 Council of Jerusalem

Early Christian Time Line (Cont)

- **49-52 Paul's 2nd missionary journey**
 - **Autumn 49 Paul leaves Antioch and moves through the Churches of Galatia**
 - **Spring 50 Paul in Thessalonica**
 - **51 Paul arrives in Beroea**
 - **March 51 Paul arrives in Athens**
 - **Winter 50 51 Paul writes the letter to the Thessalonians**

Review of Acts 17

- **Acts 17** began with Paul, Silas and Timothy arriving at Thessalonica
- After some success (3 Sabbaths in the Synagogue and perhaps 3 to 6 months in the city) they were forced to flee after the Jewish leaders beat Paul's friend Jason in the street when they could not find and persecute Paul
- Paul arrived in *Beroea* and went into the synagogue where the Jews were a bit more receptive
- Most likely Paul justified the accounts about Jesus to the fulfilment of **Is 53** "one of the suffering servant psalms"

Review of Acts 17 (Cont)

- Soon the hostile Jews from Thessalonica found out that Paul had gone to *Beroea* so they came there and stirred up a new mob in an effort to kill Paul
- Again Paul is forced to flee, this time by boat to Athens
- Paul left Silas and Timothy in *Boreoa* to continue the work, but as soon as he arrived in Athens he sent for them
- Meanwhile Paul walked around Athens preaching the gospel and eventually was invited to speak at the *Areopagus (theater)*

Review of Acts 17 (Cont)

- Paul saw the *Athenians* as living in the darkness (without the light of the Torah) so he presented a very thoughtful and methodical explanation of natural law and Greek philosophy to them
- His audience listened patiently until the very end when Paul began to speak of the **resurrection of Christ from the dead**
- At that point they either walked away or made fun of him so he moved on to *Corinth*

Acts 18

- **Acts 18:1-3** *“After this he left Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, lately come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them; and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them, and they worked, for by trade they were tentmakers ”*
 - **Corinth** was the capital city and commercial center of southern Greece
 - Here Paul met Aquila, a fellow tent maker, and his wife Priscilla who had been expelled from Rome along with all of the Jews (51 or 52) by order of the Roman Emperor Claudius (41-54 A.D.)

Acts 18 (Cont)

- **Acts 18: 4** *“And he argued in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Greeks”*
 - As was his custom, Paul worked during the week as a tentmaker and then went on the Sabbath to the synagogue to converse with both Jews and Greeks concerning the truth of the gospel
 - Greeks again may refer to God-fearers

Acts 18 (Cont)

- **Acts 18:5** *“When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with preaching, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus.”*
 - It would appear that Paul’s pattern changed with the arrival of these two disciples for after their arrival Paul was able to occupy himself totally with preaching the word
 - To the Jews the idea of a Messiah would have made sense
 - However, this concept would have made little sense to the Gentiles who did not know the Jewish scriptures (Old Testament)

Acts 18 (Cont)

- **Acts 18:6** *“And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, ‘Your blood be upon your heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.’”*
 - It was the Jewish listeners who contradicted and insulted him
 - So, in accordance with Jesus’ instructions to shake the dust from your feet when you are rejected (**Lk 10:10-11**), Paul tells the Jews that he bears no responsibility for their failure to respond to God’s word

Acts 18 (Cont)

- **Acts 18:7** *“And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titus Justus, a worshiper of God; his house was next door to the synagogue.”*
 - *Titus* was a Gentile who revered the God of Israel but had not become a Jew
 - Thus, Paul again turned to the Gentiles after he had been rejected by the Jews of that city
 - Conveniently, *Titus’* house was located next to the synagogue which permitted his message to be heard in the synagogue

Acts 18 (Cont)

- **Acts 18:8** *“Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with all his household; and many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.”*
 - *Crispus* and *Titus* were among the first of many Corinthians who believed and were baptized in *Corinth*
 - Paul will lay a strong foundation for the church in *Corinth* to whom he will later write two letters

Acts 18 (Cont)

- **Acts 18:9-10** *“And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, ‘Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man shall attack you or harm you; for I have many people in this city.*
 - Here Paul experienced another vision like the one in *Troas* but this time it was from the Lord Jesus himself reassuring Paul of his mission
 - Experiencing so much rejection by his own people, Paul must have needed this encouragement to continue to witness

Acts 18 (Cont)

- **Acts 18:11** *“And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.”*
 - Paul remained in **Corinth** for **a year and a half** preaching and teaching the word of God, the good news of salvation in Christ and the whole life that goes with it
 - This amount of time was needed to attract a significant number of new believers

Acts 18 (Cont)

- **Remember** that Paul was quietly and quickly moved out of *Thessalonica* in the middle of the night to *Beroea* by the Christians after Jason, his host had been beaten by a mob led by the Jewish leaders (**Acts 17:6-10**)
- Some speculate that, based on the flourishing state of the *Thessalonian* church at the time of these Epistles, Paul spent between **three and six months** converting a great number of Gentiles and setting up a system of Church government at *Thessalonica*
- Paul was then forced to leave *Beroea* for *Athens* but at that time he left Silas and Timothy there to continue the work

Acts 18 (Cont)

- At this point (**Acts 18:5**) *Silas* and *Timothy* joined Paul from *Macedonia* and told him that the Christians were persevering in faith and charity, though they were being harassed by the non-believers
- Shortly thereafter Paul sent them back to *Thessalonica* to check on the progress being made by the *Thessalonian* Church
- It is hard to determine how many times *Silas* and *Timothy* went back and forth to *Thessalonica* or exactly when the letters were written
- At some point they told Paul that the *Thessalonians* had some **questions** concerning **death and the second coming of Christ (1 Thess 4:13)** which was addressed in more details in the second letter to the *Thessalonians*

Acts 18 (Cont)

- **Acts 18:12-13** *“But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack upon Paul and brought him before the tribunal, saying, ‘This man is persuading men to worship God contrary to the Law.’”*
 - This incident before the proconsul Gallio provided important evidence for the dating of Paul’s ministry (the riot occurred between 51 or 52 A.D.)
 - The bringing of Paul before the Roman proconsul is similar to the Jewish leaders bringing Jesus before the Roman governor Pilate
 - These leaders used ambiguous language “contrary to the law” as it could be understood to be about either Jewish or Roman law

Acts 18 (Cont)

- **Acts 18:14-15** *“But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, ‘If it were a matter of wrongdoing or vicious crime, I should have reason to bear with you, O Jews; but since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves; I refuse to be a judge of these things.’”*
 - Gallio saw through their plot and declared it to be about Jewish doctrine which was irrelevant to the secular Roman court
 - Gallio is one of several Roman official cited by Luke who attested to the innocence of Jesus or his disciples to include:
 - Pilate
 - The centurion at the cross

Acts 18 (Cont)

- **Acts 18:16-17** *“And he drove them from the tribunal. And they all seized Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to this.”*
 - The Jewish response to Gallio’s rejection of their cause is puzzling
 - The Jews seized Sosthenes, the synagogue official and beat him
 - The mob may have been frustrated with him as the leader of their failed attempt to have Paul convicted by Gallio

Acts 18 (Cont)

- More likely he had become an influential Christian and the Jews turned on him when they cannot get at Paul
- Either way they interpret Gallio's laissez-faire attitude as license to beat him since this is an intermural Jewish matter
- This is similar to the Jews turning on Jason in Thessalonica when they could not find Paul

Acts 18 (Cont)

- **Acts 18:18** *“After this Paul stayed many days longer, and then took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila.*
 - After ministering to the Church in *Corinth* for quite some time, Paul bids farewell to the community and sets sail for the church at *Antioch*
 - Priscilla and Aquila accompany him on the first leg of his return but Silas and Timothy seem not to do so

Transition to Thessalonians

- Why would the *Thessalonians* have these questions about the death and second coming of Christ?
- Why does it look like Paul was consumed with “**eschatology**” which is **the study of 'end things'**, whether the end of an individual life, the end of the age, the end of the world and the nature of the Kingdom of God
 - Remember that Paul was chased out of *Thessalonica* and later from *Beroea*?
 - When attempting to teach new followers about Christianity and the faith at whatever level, the last thing one would talk about is the “second coming of Christ”

Transition to Thessalonians (Cont)

- One would not go into a market place and walk up to a pagan and say that Jesus was about to “come back from the dead” because they would have no idea what you were talking about
- The idea of a “second coming” would be totally irrelevant until a person knew about his first coming and everything that had gone on before
- Now let’s look at the historical context of the letter to the Thessalonians

Transition to Thessalonians (Cont)

- In order to explain Jesus' first coming one had to explain why he came to begin with
- To do this you would go back to the Old Testament and start with the book of Genesis then work your way through all of salvation history
- When we look at the Catechism of the Catholic Church the last thing discussed in the idea of Jesus coming back (the 2nd coming)
 - Paul must deal with eschatology in these letters because he was chased out of town and never had the opportunity to finish teaching and explaining this part of the message
 - Most likely it was one of the last things he had just begun to talk about before he was chased out of the city

Transition to Thessalonians (Cont)

- The people that heard about this were probably fascinated but Paul did not have time to fill in all the details concerning how it was going to work

An Overview of Paul's Epistles

- Before we look at the letters to the Thessalonians, let's look at an overview of Paul's letters in general
- His Epistles are listed in the Bible beginning with the longest and ending with the shortest because that is the way they were used in the lectionary of the early church
 - *This lectionary was divided into the Gospel Book and the Epistle Book*
- His 14 Epistles are divided into two groups:
 - 9 Community Epistles
 - 5 Personal Epistles (including Hebrews)

An Overview of Paul's Epistles (Cont)

- Typically, Paul's letters:
 - Began with his name
 - Included who was traveling with him
 - Identified the Church to whom the letter was written
 - Contained the phrase "in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"
 - Included the statement containing the words "by grace" and "peace"
 - Often contained a "blessing" followed by a "thanksgiving section"
 - Finally, included a theological section as the heart of the letter

1st Thessalonians

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An overview of Paul's letters to the Thessalonians

- It is believed that Paul wrote the 1st Letter to the Thessalonians during the winter of 50-51 A.D.
- Most likely he wrote the 2nd Letter to the Thessalonians a few months later

1st Thessalonians

- **1st Thess 1:1** *“Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace”*
 - Paul introduces this letter with the first two parts of the Trinity
 - At this point we have not had the Council of Nicaea or any of the other early Councils of the Church dealing with the Trinity
 - These Thessalonians have also not been exposed to the words at the end of Matthew’s gospel where he presents the concept of “the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”
 - Here Paul calls “God” (Theos) and he refers to Jesus as Lord (Kyrios)
 - It is believed that the early church baptized using the Trinitarian formula

1st Thessalonians (Cont)

- *Paul wants to demonstrate that Jesus was God by referring to him as Lord (Kyrios) which was a term used in the Septuagint for God (usually in all caps)*
- *We will find over and over Paul referring to Jesus as Lord in his writings*
- *Thus, in both the Jewish and Christian context “Kyrios” will become synonymous with God*

1st Thessalonians (Cont)

- **1st Thess 1:2-3** *“We give thanks to God always for you all, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.”*
 - Here and in the verses that follow, we will see an example of the pattern discussed above that Paul will use in all his letters
 - This is typical of the “thanksgiving section” where he butters them up a little bit with, “I pray for you all the time”
 - This is a bit of “hyperbole”

1st Thessalonians (Cont)

- *Understanding this is important for when we get to Romans, which is a place he has never visited, he will start with a long buttering up session before he tells them that he thinks that they should do some things in a different way than they were doing them*
- *So he uses this technique to build a relationship with them*
- Look at how he says “and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ”
 - *In his thanksgiving section you will often see where Paul is going with his letter*
 - *For here he will be discussing “hope in the Lord’s return”*

1st Thessalonians (Cont)

- **1st Thess 1:4-7** *“For we know, brethren beloved by God, that he has chosen you; for our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. And you became imitators of us and of the Lord for you received the word much affliction, with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit; so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.”*
 - Macedonia is North where the Thessalonians live, while Achaia is in the South where Ephesus is located and where he is writing from
 - He is saying that people all over Greece have heard about the Thessalonians
 - Paul is saying that by their persecutions they have become imitators of them (Paul, Silas and Timothy) who were also persecuted as they became examples to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia

1st Thessalonians (Cont)

- **1st Thess 1:8** *“for not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything.”*
 - Paul continues his praise by stating that he and his fellow preachers did not even have to mention the Thessalonians by name because they were so well-known
 - It is important to understand how often Paul uses hyperbole without being insincere

1st Thessalonians (Cont)

- His hope is that by buttering them up they will listen to him
- Thus, he is being honest and sincere but he is using hyperbole in a very natural way just like any of us would do when writing a letter to someone
- This should help us to see that these were real letters written by a real guy (Paul) to real people he knew

1st Thessalonians (Cont)

- **1st Thess 1:9-10** *“For they themselves report concerning us with a welcome we had among you, and how you turn to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”*
 - Here Paul hints as to where he is going to go
 - Many times in his epistles Paul will, after the thanksgiving section, do some practical stuff before he going into the deeper theology
 - Sometimes he will even give a little history

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