

2020-2021 Bible Study

#13

12/15/20

Current Bible Study

12/8/20

Administrative Information

- The Bible Study Class will be presented via Zoom every Tuesday morning from **9:30 A.M. until 10:30 A.M.** beginning **September 15, 2020** and ending **May 11, 2021** except for the following Tuesdays related to a holiday:
 - Nov 24, 2020 – Thanksgiving Week
 - **Dec 22, 2020 – Christmas Week**
 - **Dec 29, 2020 - New Year's Week**
 - Mar 30, 2021 – Holy Week
- The same class will be given via Zoon every Tuesday evening from **7:30 P.M. until 8:30 P.M.**
- Contact info: email: biblestudy@straymonds.org ; Tel: (703) 644-5873
- Inclement weather decisions will be **based on Fairfax County Public School announcements (once we are back in the classroom)**

Review of Last Week

- Last week, we saw Paul and Barnabas speak to the synagogue at Antioch in Presidia, and eventually being forced to flee the region to Iconium
- There, after some success, they were again forced to flee for their lives to the next town of Lystra
- After healing a lame man, the people of Lystra thought they were Greek gods and wanted to worship them
- Once the Jews from Antioch arrived, they eventually got the people to stone Paul and leave him for dead
- This caused the two missionaries to move on to Derby
- After establishing a church in Derby, they decided to return to Antioch in Syria by revisiting each of the churches they had established on the way in
- Upon arrival, at Antioch in Syria, they reported on their successful mission
- Some Christians from Jerusalem (who were Pharisees) arrived and challenged the idea that one could become a Christian without becoming a Jew first

Review of Last Week (Cont)

- The church sent them to Jerusalem to seek guidance from the Apostles
- This led to the Council of Jerusalem, under the leadership of James, the Bishop of Jerusalem who concluded from the Holiness Code how to resolve this issue
- The council developed a letter listing the following four areas that Gentiles had to do in order to become a Christian to include avoiding
 - Meat offered in sacrifice to a pagan god
 - Blood
 - Strangled animals
 - Porneia
- We ended with Paul and Silas returning to Antioch to present the letter

Acts 16

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 and then on to Corinth
 - Winter 50 51 Paul writes the letter to the Thessalonians

Early Christian Time Line (Cont)

- Paul then traveled to ***Thessalonica*** where he set up a church (Acts 17:1-9)
- He was run out of ***Thessalonica*** after a period of between **3 and 6 months** but before he completed his catechesis (Acts 17:10)
- He arrived in ***Beroea*** where he was again forced to flee by sea leaving Silas and Timothy
- Paul arrived in ***Athens*** where:
 - He sent for Timothy and Silas
 - His message was mocked and rejected by the Athenians primarily because he proclaimed that **Jesus was raised from the dead** (Acts 17:16)

Early Christian Time Line (Cont)

- Paul moved on to the **Corinth** where :(Acts 18:1-11)
 - He met Aquila and Priscilla who had arrived from Rome
 - Silas and Timothy arrived from *Macedonia* but were sent back to *Thessalonica* by Paul to check on the Church
 - Upon their return to **Corinth**, Silas and Timothy told Paul that the **Thessalonians** had some questions concerning **death and the second coming of Christ** (more details in 1st Thess 4:13)

Early Christian Time Line (Cont)

- Paul continued to preach in ***Corinth*** for a period of **18 months**
 - First he was expelled from the synagogue
 - Then he converted the ruler of the synagogue and his family
- Paul wrote the two **Letters to the Thessalonians** (51 A.D.)

Acts 16

- **Acts 16:1-3** *“And he came also to Derbe and to Lystra,...for they all knew his father was Greek”*
 - A “believer” means a “Christian”
 - *Galatia* is the Roman province where these four churches were located
 - Antioch in Pisidia
 - Iconium
 - Lystra
 - Derbe
 - “We” here indicates that Luke was with Paul on this journey
 - We know this because Luke was the author of this text and he was a companion of Paul on much of this journey

Acts 16 (Cont)

- **Acts 16:11-15** *“Setting sail therefore from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, from there to Philippi, ...prevailed upon us”*
 - As we will see later, Paul will also send a letter to the Christians at *Philippi*, even though their Jewish community was not large enough to have a synagogue
 - Paul looked around the community and found the local Jewish neighborhood and discovered where they gathered to pray outside the city
 - He found them on the Sabbath praying by the river
 - After preaching the “gospel” to them, he baptized Lydia and her household (that would have included her husband, children, servants, and perhaps grandparents as well)
 - At that time, there was no distinction based on age for Baptism
 - Such a distinction did not enter into the Church until the Protestant Reformation via the Anabaptist *Zwingli* (who proposed that one was not to be baptized until he was old enough to make a profession of faith to Jesus)
 - Until this time, the church always baptized entire families including babies

Acts 16 (Cont)

- **Acts 16:16-29** *“As we were going to the place of prayer, we met a slave girl who had a spirit of divination...fell down before Paul and Silas”*
 - Paul rebukes and calls out this unclean spirit
 - He did this because the demon was preaching what seemed like a positive message about *Paul* (but what would have happened to that girl after they left town and the demon began preaching other things)?
 - Once they did this, the girl’s owners realized that their source of income was gone
 - So, they had *Paul* and *Silas* thrown into prison
 - While they were praying in prison at night, the prison shook, their chains were released, and the jailer thought that all the prisoners had escaped so he decided to kill himself
 - *Paul* stops him by telling him that they were all still there

Acts 16 (Cont)

- **Acts 16:30-31** *“and brought them out and said, ‘Men, what must I do to be saved?...and you will be saved, you and your household’”*
 - We hear that on the next morning, Paul and Silas are about to be released when Paul announced that he was a Roman citizen
 - This caused fear among the people of Philippi because this was a Roman colony providing all citizens certain rights
 - They were required to be very careful what they did to Roman citizens who came to their city

Acts 16 (Cont)

- As we remember, *Paul* was born in *Tarsus* where the people were also given Roman citizenship
- This meant that both *Philippi* and *Tarsus* were given special rights and privileges by the Roman Empire as they were large and very wealthy cities in the region who could have become centers of rebellion had they not been so honored
- The leadership, therefore, made apologies to *Paul* and *Silas* before they left
- We will see *Paul* use his Roman citizen card again later on

Acts 17

Acts 17

- **Acts 17:1-5** “Now when they had passed through *Amphipolis and Apollonia they came to Thessalonica,....seeking to bring them out to the people*”
 - The word “week” here refers to the “Sabbath”
 - This meant that he went to the Jewish synagogue every Sabbath where he explained the need for the Christ to suffer and rise from the dead
 - This was a problem for the Jews in the synagogue who, when they asked where this messiah was, they heard that he was dead!
 - The Jews could not understand why the Messiah would have died as he was supposed to remain forever

Acts 17 (Cont)

- *Paul* explained that after He was killed, He rose from the dead
- He suggested that they could be understood by looking at the **Suffering Servant Psalm in Isaiah 53**
- The Gentiles in this audience had a different problem which we will discuss in detail when we get to *Paul's Letter to the Corinthians*

Acts 17 (Cont)

- **Acts 17:6-9** *“And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brethren before the city authorities,...they let them go”*
 - The word “world” here means the Roman Empire
 - They believed that *Paul* and *Barnabas* had turned the world upside down as they were acting against the decrees of *Caesar* by saying that Jesus was another king when they identified Him as the Christ

Acts 17 (Cont)

- **Acts 17:10-15** *“The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Beroea;...and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed”*
 - *Paul* moves on from *Thessalonica* to *Beroea*
 - Then, he suddenly got into a boat and sailed to Athens
 - Meanwhile, the Jews from Thessalonica find out that he went to *Beroea*, they traveled there and stirred up the crowds to oppose Paul
 - He then fled to *Athens* leaving *Silas* and *Timothy* behind

Acts 17 (Cont)

- **Acts 17:16-30** *“Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens,...all men everywhere repent”*
 - *Paul* showed up in *Athens* and began speaking in fluent Greek
 - The local philosophers asked who is this impressive new teacher and where did he study?
 - *Paul* began teaching in the middle of the *Areopagus* to the very pious people of *Athens* about his discovery of a temple to the unknown god
 - He told them that Jesus Christ was this god and they seemed interested until he related that Jesus was risen from the dead

Acts 17 (Cont)

- **Acts 17:31-34** *“because he as fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness...But some men joined him and believed among them was Dionysius and others with them”*
 - The stumbling block for the Jew was the fact that the Messiah died and for the Gentile that He rose from the dead
 - Remember that for the Gentile, the purpose of death was to release the spiritual soul from the material body (Plato said that: “the body was the tomb of the soul”)
 - The material body and the material earth were understood to be evil
 - They would never have wanted for the soul to be reunited with the body in resurrection

Acts 17 (Cont)

- Both of these issues made it difficult to preach the gospel
- Father said that for the Gentile of that day would have believed that eternal salvation began at the moment of death if one had the right knowledge and knew the right secrets (*Gnosticism*), and your spirit would float off into the clouds and be with your spiritual parents who were the spirit gods
- It is critical to understand this dilemma as it impacts on the number of times this issue is discussed in the New Testament concerning the emphasis on the bodily resurrection of Jesus

Acts 17 (Cont)

- This will come up in Luke and John's gospels which were preached primarily for Gentile audience
- Father reminded us that Luke was preaching his gospel to the churches that Paul will be establishing
- Luke talks about things that happened to Jesus after his resurrection to include his eating and Thomas' wanting to touch his wounds (as a means of explanation to the Gentiles about Jesus' bodily resurrection with a real body)

Acts 18

Acts 18

- **Acts 18:1-5** “*After this he left Athens and went to Corinth...*”
 - When Paul got to *Corinth* he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath and began to explain to the Jews what he was doing there
 - Shortly thereafter *Silas* and *Timothy* arrived
 - The Jews rejected his message and so he shook out his garment and moved on to the Gentiles
 - He met a Jew who lived next door to the synagogue and who along with his family accepted his message and was baptized
 - Father said that at this time we believe that *Paul* wrote his two letters to the *Thessalonians*
 - And, for this reason, will move to a review of his letters
 - In the introduction to these two *Pauline* letters, we will see all that he has just told us about

Acts 18 (Cont)

- Father pointed out that *Paul's* letters can be divided into two groups: his community letters and his personal letters
- Both categories are listed in the Bible from the longest to the shortest
- Since **1st and 2nd Thessalonians** are the shortest of his community letters, they will be listed last even though they were the first ones to be written
- This often confuses many people reading through the Bible without an understanding of the historical context