

I. Paul and Silas in Thessalonica (1-9)

Thessalonica (Modern Salonika) was approximately 100-miles from Philippi on the Via Egnatia.

It was Paul's custom to visit the Synagogue when going to a new city

- *Salamis (13:5)
- *Antioch (13:14)
- *Iconium (14:1)
- *Thessalonica (17:1)
- *Berea (17:10)
- *Athens (17:16-17)
- *Ephesus (19:1,8)

a. Faithfulness (1-3)

Paul supported himself via manual labor:
*1Th 2:9
*2Th 3:7-10

¹Now when *they* had passed through **Amphipolis** and **Apollonia**, they came to **Thessalonica**, where there was a *synagogue of the Jews*. "We" passages pause until return to Philippi in 20:5.

²And **Paul** went in, *as was his custom*, and on three Sabbath days he **reasoned** with them from the Scriptures, **explaining** and **proving** that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I **proclaim** to you, is the Christ."

⁴And some of them were *persuaded* and joined **Paul** and **Silas**, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women.

⁵But the *Jews were jealous*, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of **Jason**, seeking to bring them out to the crowd.

⁶And when they could not find them, they dragged **Jason** and some of the brothers before the *city authorities*, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also,

⁷and **Jason** has received them, and *they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar*, saying that *there is another king, Jesus*."

⁸And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things.

⁹And when they had *taken money* as security from **Jason** and the rest, they let them go. 1Th 2:17

¹⁰The brothers *immediately* sent **Paul** and **Silas** away by night to **Berea**, and when they arrived *they went into the Jewish synagogue*.

¹¹Now these Jews 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*.

¹²Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.

¹³But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by **Paul** at **Berea** also, they came there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds.

¹⁴Then the brothers *immediately* sent Paul off on his way to the sea, but *Silas and Timothy remained there*.

¹⁵Those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens, and after receiving a command for **Silas** and **Timothy** to come to him as soon as possible, they departed.

¹⁶Now while Paul was waiting for them at **Athens**, his spirit was provoked within him as *he saw that the city was full of idols*.

¹⁷So he *reasoned in the synagogue* with the Jews and the devout persons, and *in the marketplace every day* with those who happened to be there.

City Authorities

Literally, "the politarchs"; the very name given to the magistrates of Thessalonica in an inscription on a still remaining arch of the city

Taken Money

Probably making them deposit a money pledge that the preachers should not again endanger the public peace.

Berea

Approximately 50-miles southwest of Thessalonica

Athens

Approximately 250-miles from Berea

Angry Jews

Just like in...
*Antioch (13:45)
*Iconium (14:2)
*Lystra (14:19)

Clever accusation, but not their primary concern

II. Paul and Silas in Berea (10-15)

a. Openness (10-12)

b. Opposition (13-14)

III. Paul in Athens (16-34)

Epicurean

This was one of the most popular systems of thought at this time. It asserted that there was no connection between humans and the divine and that physical connections were all people had. This belief led to the desire to experience a peaceful life with the fullness of physical pleasures.

Paul's Sermon on Mars' Hill (22-31)

a. Power (22-26)

"made the world and everything in it"

-Psa 19:1-2
-Mat 8:23-27
-Rom 1:20
-Col 1:16-17

b. Presence (27-28)

"He is actually not far from each one of us, for 'In him we live and move and have our being'"

-1Ki 8:27
-1Pe 3:8

c. Pronouncement (29-31)

"He commands all people everywhere to repent"

-Luke 24:47

¹⁸Some of the **Epicurean** and **Stoic** philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, "What does this *babbling* wish to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.

¹⁹And they took him and brought him to the **Areopagus**, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?"

²⁰For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean."

²¹Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in *nothing except telling or hearing something new*. <- i.e. babbling (see v. 18)

²²So Paul, standing in the midst of the **Areopagus**, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious.

²³For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, '*To the unknown god.*' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.

²⁴The *God who made the world and everything in it*, being Lord of heaven and earth, *does not live in temples made by man*,
²⁵nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

²⁶And he *made from one man every nation of mankind* to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place,

²⁷that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. *Yet he is actually not far from each one of us*,

²⁸for " '*In him we live and move and have our being*'; as even some of your own poets have said, " '*For we are indeed his offspring.*'"

²⁹Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.

³⁰The times of ignorance God overlooked, but *now he commands all people everywhere to repent*,

³¹because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

³²Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "*We will hear you again about this.*"

³³So Paul went out from their midst.

³⁴But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were **Dionysius** the Areopagite and a woman named **Damaris** and others with them.

Stoicism

Another popular system of thought during Paul's time. It argues that deities do exist and creation results from their power. It argues against the passions of life because the physical order was a reflection of the divine. Death reunited a person with the impersonal divine maker.

Areopagus (Mars' Hill)

A low hill in Athens, northwest of the acropolis. The hill had stone seats for the council that met there.

Thessalonica

Thirty-three miles southwest of Philippi was Amphipolis, the capital of the northern district of Macedonia between 167–146 B.C. Situated on the east bank of the Strymon River, it straddled the Via Egnatia. But though it was larger and more important than Philippi, Paul and his companions “passed through” it. As they continued west-southwest on the Via Egnatia, they also passed through Apollonia some twenty-seven miles beyond Amphipolis. Their desire was to reach Thessalonica, the capital of the province of Macedonia and the largest and most prosperous city of all in Macedonia, which lay another forty miles southwest of Apollonia.

Thessalonica (modern Salonika) was strategically located on the Thermaic Gulf. It too straddled the Via Egnatia. It linked the rich agricultural plains of the Macedonian interior with the land and sea routes to the east. Cicero described it as “situated in the bosom of our domain” (*Pro Plancio* 41). It was probably founded by Cassander in 315 B.C. and named for his wife, the daughter of Philip II (cf. Strabo *Geography* 7.21), though other traditions trace its foundation to Philip himself and say it was named either for his daughter or in honor of his victory over the Thessalonians. When Rome conquered Macedonia in 167 B.C., Thessalonica became the capital of the second of the four administrative districts of the province. Then with the reorganization of Macedonia into one province in 142 B.C., Thessalonica became its capital. In the second civil war it sided with Mark Antony and Octavian (later Augustus) against Cassius and Brutus, and because of its loyalty it was declared a free city in 42 B.C. (cf. Plutarch *Brutus* 46).

As a large city of perhaps two hundred thousand, and one that dominated Macedonian government and commerce, Thessalonica naturally attracted diverse groups of people including a substantial Jewish contingent (1 Thess 2:14–16). Paul seems to have looked on it as the strategic center for the spread of the gospel throughout the Balkan peninsula (1 Thess 1:7–8). Therefore Paul and Silas—though doubtless in some pain from their recent beating and time in the stocks—pushed on resolutely the hundred miles from Philippi to Thessalonica.¹

Paul’s Visit to Synagogues

Acts 13:5 (ESV)

⁵ When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them.

Acts 13:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. And on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down.

¹ Longenecker, R. N. (1981). The Acts of the Apostles. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: John and Acts* (Vol. 9, p. 468). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

Acts 14:1 (ESV)

¹ Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed.

Acts 17:1 (ESV)

¹ Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

Acts 17:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue.

Acts 17:16-17 (ESV)

¹⁶ Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.

Acts 19:1-10 (ESV)

¹ And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. ² And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." ³ And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism." ⁴ And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." ⁵ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. ⁷ There were about twelve men in all. ⁸ And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. ⁹ But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

Paul's Manual Labor

1 Thessalonians 2:9 (ESV)

⁹ For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil: we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

2 Thessalonians 3:7–10 (ESV)

⁷ For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, ⁸ nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil

and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you.⁹ It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate.¹⁰ For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.

Angry Jews

Acts 13:45 (ESV)

⁴⁵ But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him.

Acts 14:2 (ESV)

² But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers.

Acts 14:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.

Sent Away from Thessalonica

1 Thessalonians 2:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face,

Berea

Beroea (be-ree'uh; kjv: 'Berea'), a Macedonian city located twenty-four miles inland from the Aegean Sea in the plain below Mt. Bermion. Springs in the area gave the city its name, 'place of many waters.' After leaving Thessalonica during the second journey, Paul and Silas probably traveled the main east-west Roman road, the Egnatian Way, to Beroea, where the people were receptive to Paul's message and escorted him safely to Athens (Acts 17:10-15). El-Bireh in Palestine is sometimes referred to as Berea (1 Macc. 9:4).²

Athens

Athens, the capital of the ancient Greek province of Attica (2 Macc. 9:15; Acts 17:15-18; 18:1; 1 Thess. 3:1). The name 'Athens' antedates the arrival of the Indo-European peoples in Greece (ca. 2000 B.C.). The city stands on a site that has been continuously inhabited since the fourth millennium B.C. In Mycenaean times (ca. 1300-1225 B.C.) it

² Achtemeier, P. J., Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature. (1985). In *Harper's Bible dictionary*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

was a fortified citadel with a palace and cult sanctuary to Eros/Aphrodite. What would later become the agora was at that time a burial site.

The Classical Period: The glory of classical Athens belongs to the fifth century B.C. Tribute money from the vast Athenian empire and its commerce paid for the beautiful buildings erected on the acropolis (454-414 B.C.). The Parthenon, whose marble friezes are now displayed in the British Museum, was built in honor of the goddess Athena. Its architects had mastered the details of perspective and curvature so that they could make its rows of columns appear straight even when viewed along the building's longitudinal axis. The figures sculpted for the processional frieze are completely finished on all sides as though they were to have been viewed straight on and not from 39 feet below. Some four hundred people and two hundred animals are shown participating in the Panathenaic procession, which brought the goddess a new sacred robe every fourth year. The great statue of Athena is known to us from copies. Clothed in a gold robe, the goddess had ivory limbs and an ivory face. She wore gold earrings, necklace, and bracelet, and a military helmet with the sphinx and winged Pegasoi. One hand held a spear. Her shield portrayed the gods and giants. The sacred snake, Erichthonius, was entwined around her left leg while her right hand held an image of a winged victory.

The Hephaisteion temple overlooking the agora is the most perfectly preserved temple of the era. The Erechtheum, built on the site of the Mycenaean palace, was begun in 421 B.C. but interrupted by the Peloponnesian War in 415 B.C. and not resumed until 409 B.C. It was thought to stand on a holy spot where Poseidon had stuck his trident in the ground and Athena had caused the sacred olive tree to spring up. Its innovative caryatid porch had the six maidens, all different, supporting the roof. Hadrian had a complete copy made for his villa at Tivoli.

This period also saw considerable building in the agora, including a prison, a council house, a building for semipublic meetings, and several colonnaded porches (*stoa*), the Painted Stoa, the Stoa of Zeus, and the long double-aisled stoa to the south. The theater of Dionysus was built on the south slope of the acropolis during the fourth century B.C. The theater as seen today comes from the last part of that century. It seated between fourteen and seventeen thousand. The scene building may have had a temporary stage. The permanent stage was added during the Hellenistic period. The Romans added a marble barrier around the orchestra to protect spectators at beast fights and gladiator shows. In the second century B.C. the Stoa of Attalos, which has been reconstructed to house the agora museum, was built.

The Augustan Age and After: The Augustan age (31 B.C.-A.D. 14) saw a flurry of Roman building. Julius Caesar had planned a Roman forum for Athens. A small round temple to Rome and the emperor Augustus modeled after the Vesta in Rome was built on the acropolis east of the Parthenon. In the center of the old orchestra in the Greek agora Agrippa built an auditorium for about one thousand persons. The Romans also dismantled and brought to the agora a temple to Ares, which was built in fifth-century B.C. style.

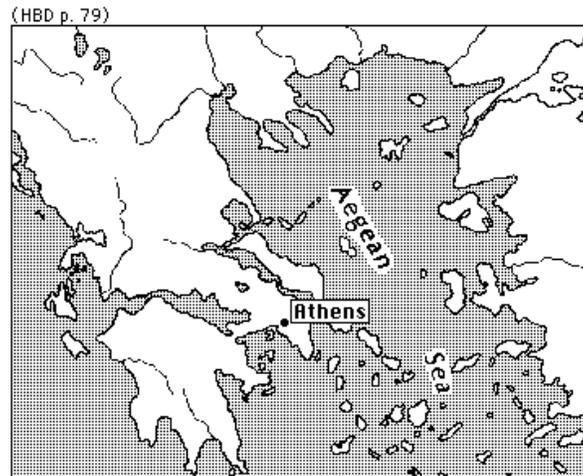
There is little evidence of any building in the agora during the first century A.D. By the second century, Athens was a university town. The inscription from an early second-century A.D. library reads, 'No books circulate. Open 6 A.M. to noon.' The middle of the

second century saw a new building spree under the emperor Hadrian (A.D. 117-138) including a huge temple to Olympian Zeus, a gymnasium, and a library north of the Roman agora. Agrippa's Odeon, used as a lecture hall, was remodeled in A.D. 150 to hold 500 persons and was decorated with pairs of statues representing the various philosophical schools in the city. **See also** Acropolis; Agora; Areopagus; Stoa; Theater.

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Epicureans

Epicureans (ep-i-kyuhr-ree'uhns), followers of the philosopher Epicurus (342-270 B.C.). Members of the Epicurean school of philosophy established in Athens are mentioned in Acts 17:18. Epicurean teaching was expounded in a lengthy poem by the first-century B.C. Latin writer Lucretius. Epicureans were often attacked as atheists, since they held that sense perception was the only basis for knowledge. Everything had come into being out of atoms and the void. A random 'swerve' in the path of the atoms caused the world to come into being and provided the material basis for free will, since no god had created or ruled over human beings, according to the Epicureans.

Epicureans argued against fear of death, since in their view death was merely the dissolution of the atoms entangled to make up the human, and against fear of the gods, who would enjoy their own blessedness without troublesome concern for human affairs. Free from these fears, they counseled, one should seek to live a peaceful life in which the body is free from pain and the mind peaceful and undisturbed. Consequently, one should choose a private life, pursuing this ideal in the pleasant company of friends.

³ Achtemeier, P. J., Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature. (1985). In *Harper's Bible dictionary*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Some Epicurean philosophers in Athens discussed Paul’s religious beliefs with him (Acts 17:18).⁴

Stoicism

Stoics (stoh’iks), members of a philosophical school founded in Athens by Zeno (335-263 B.C.). Although the scholars of the school developed theories of physics, cosmology, and logic, it was best known for its emphasis on moral conduct. The school was named for the ‘Painted Porch,’ a colonnade (Gk. *stoa*), in which it met at Athens. The Stoics held that the entire universe was a living creature animated by the divine Logos (reason or mind). This Logos was identified with Zeus. Every person was a slave of the ruling Logos.

Since the Logos pervaded everything, whatever happened in the universe was governed by this universal law of nature or providence. All human beings were brothers and sisters in this universal, living body. This imagery was well suited to the cosmopolitan empires of the period. Since everything that happens to people was determined, the only way in which individuals could control their lives was to control the passions governing how external events affected them. Control of oneself was the avenue by which humans showed their freedom and superiority to fortune.

In the turbulent world of Roman politics, many leading Romans found the Stoic philosophy a consolation and guide for life. One frequently faced sharp, sudden reversals of fortune that called for the resources of inner discipline expounded by the Stoics. One of the most famous Stoic teachers and writers of the first century, Epictetus, was a lame Phrygian from Hierapolis, who had been slave to Nero’s freedman Ephaphroditus. After gaining freedom, Epictetus lectured to large audiences that they should only be concerned about what was under their control. Another famous Stoic teacher was Nero’s tutor and advisor, Seneca, who retired from the court when Nero’s career turned bad and was later forced to commit suicide by the suspicious emperor. In the second century, the emperor Marcus Aurelius, who had studied Epictetus, recorded his meditations while in the field with the army. Stoicism did not hold out hope for life after death but sought to call people to identify with the divine reason immanent in the cosmos. Some Stoic philosophers in Athens discussed Paul’s religious views with him (Acts 17:18).⁵

Areopagus

AREOPAGUS—the Latin form of the Greek word rendered “Mars’ hill.” But it denotes also the council or court of justice which met in the open air on the hill. It was a rocky height to the west of the Acropolis at Athens, on the south-east summit of which the council was held which was constituted by Solon, and consisted of nine archons or chief

⁴ Achtemeier, P. J., Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature. (1985). In *Harper’s Bible dictionary*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

⁵ Achtemeier, P. J., Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature. (1985). In *Harper’s Bible dictionary*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

magistrates who were then in office, and the ex-archons of blameless life.

On this hill of Mars (Gr. Ares) Paul delivered his memorable address to the “men of Athens” (Acts 17:22–31).⁶

Areopagus (air’ee-ahp’uh-guhs; Gk., ‘hill of Ares’), a low hill in Athens northwest of the acropolis. The hill had stone seats for the council that met there, the origins of which went back to the advisory council of Athenian kings. Though the council’s political power had declined by the fifth century b.c., it retained jurisdiction over cases of homicide. Paul is said to have spoken on the Areopagus (Acts 17:19, 22) and converted a member of the council, Dionysius (Acts 17:34).⁷

Power

Psalm 19:1–2 (ESV)

¹ The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

² Day to day pours out speech,
and night to night reveals knowledge.

Matthew 8:23–27 (ESV)

²³ And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. ²⁴ And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. ²⁵ And they went and woke him, saying, “Save us, Lord; we are perishing.” ²⁶ And he said to them, **“Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?”** Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. ²⁷ And the men marveled, saying, “What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?”

Romans 1:20 (ESV)

²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

Colossians 1:16–17 (ESV)

¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

⁶ Easton, M. G. (1893). In *Easton’s Bible dictionary*. New York: Harper & Brothers.

⁷ Achtemeier, P. J., Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature. (1985). In *Harper’s Bible dictionary*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Presence

1 Kings 8:27 (ESV)

²⁷ "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!

1 Peter 3:8 (ESV)

⁸ Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

Pronouncement

Luke 24:47 (ESV)

⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.