

## Study Notes and Questions for Acts 17 (Part 1) :1-15

- What is going on in these verses?
- **Study Note: Thessalonica** was a port city, the seat of Roman government in the province of Macedonia, and therefore the largest city in the province. It was a free city, governed by an assembly of citizens in the Greek tradition, rather than by aristocrats in the Roman style (the crowd of 17:5 is the “**demos**” in Greek, from which we get the word *democracy*, “rule by the people”).
- **Study Note:** The ESV translation “turned the world upside down” could be taken as unintentional praise, but the accusers were in fact charging the Christians with subversion and sedition (see 17:7). At that time (about AD 50), the Romans were having trouble with Jews all over the Empire. In Judea, Jewish terrorists were assassinating Jews who collaborated with Rome, and there were numerous messianic groups in other provinces. Uproar in the Jewish community had already led Emperor Claudius to expel all Jews from Rome in AD 49 (see 18:2). Back in AD 41, Claudius had to quell riots between Greeks and Jews in Alexandria. Neither the Romans nor the Thessalonians were equipped to distinguish Paul’s messianic preaching from other Jewish doctrines, so they lumped the Christians together with other Jewish troublemakers.
- Jesus told a parable about four kinds of soil, comparing people who respond to the gospel in different ways to different kinds of soil. How do the Thessalonians and Bereans illustrate this parable?
- Why was Paul’s message about a suffering Messiah hard for Jews to accept?
- How did the Jews in Thessalonica react when people started coming to faith in Jesus?
- Why were Paul and Silas led out of the city at night?
- Why was the Bereans’ reaction the best way to deal with new and provocative teaching?
- How can you imitate the Bereans’ response?
- Do you ever wonder why Paul went first to the Jews in each city? Does it sometimes seem as if he could have saved himself some trouble if he had just gone to the Gentiles first? Why do you think he did things the way he did? (Compare Paul’s custom to a statement he made in Acts 13:46.)
- What can Christians do today to be more effective in turning the world upside down?
- What do you feel was the most important reminder or lesson in this study?