

# In Thessalonica / In Berea



## Ice-Breaker

What has been your most exciting experience in a crowd? Your scariest experience?



## Scripture Passage

Acts 17:1-15

**17** When they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. <sup>2</sup>As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, <sup>3</sup>explaining and proving that the Christ<sup>a</sup> had to suffer and rise from the dead. "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ,<sup>b</sup>" he said. <sup>4</sup>Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women.

<sup>5</sup>But the Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd.<sup>c</sup> <sup>6</sup>But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other brothers before the city officials, shouting: "These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, <sup>7</sup>and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus." <sup>8</sup>When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil. <sup>9</sup>Then they made Jason and the others post bond and let them go.

<sup>10</sup>As soon as it was night, the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. <sup>11</sup>Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. <sup>12</sup>Many of the Jews believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men.

<sup>13</sup>When the Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word of God at Berea, they went there too, agitating the crowds and stirring them up. <sup>14</sup>The brothers immediately sent Paul to the coast, but Silas and Timothy stayed at Berea. <sup>15</sup>The men who escorted Paul brought him to Athens and then left with instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible.

a [3] Or Messiah

b [3] Or Messiah

c [5] Or the assembly of the people



## Bible Study

1. Thessalonica was a wealthy trading city on a major road from the Adriatic Sea to the Black Sea (see map in Introduction to Acts). How is Paul received (see 1 Thessalonians 1:4-10; 3:1-4)?

2. What accusations has Paul encountered so far (vv. 5-7; also 16:20-21)? What lies behind these accusations?

3. Since his conversion, this is the sixth time Paul has been forced by persecution to leave an area. How would you view your mission if that happened to you? How does your response compare with Paul's (see 1 Thessalonians 2:1-6)?

4. Compared with the Thessalonians (vv. 2-4), how do the Bereans receive the Gospel (vv. 11-12)?
5. How is Paul's teaching on the diversity of gifts (1 Corinthians 12) illustrated here in the functions of Paul, Silas and Timothy?

## Reference Notes

**17:1 *there was a Jewish synagogue.*** Unlike at Philippi, there was a large enough Jewish population at Thessalonica to have a synagogue and considerable influence in the city.

**17:2 *on three Sabbath days.*** While Paul may have been prevented from preaching in the synagogue after three weeks, it is likely that his stay in Thessalonica was longer than that. His letters indicate that it was long enough for him to have had to work for his living (1 Thessalonians 2:9), to receive a gift from the church at Philippi (Philippians 4:16), and to see some missionary work reach out to neighboring cities (1 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

**17:4 *prominent women.*** The Greek phrase behind this can be translated as it appears here or as "the wives of prominent men." In either case, the Gospel was influencing the highest ranks of society.

**17:5** Whereas in Philippi it was economic interest that motivated the opposition to Paul and Silas, here it was the jealousy of the Jews; who may have envied Paul's success in converting Gentiles that had for so long resisted Jewish attempts at proselytizing. ***Jason's house.*** This was the place where Paul and Silas were lodging. ***the crowd.*** This should be translated "the assembly," referring to the citizen's assembly where charges could be made.

**17:7** In Philippi, the slave owners' anger over their economic loss was masked by a charge of public disturbance; here, the Jews' jealousy is masked by a charge of sedition against Caesar. The basis for this charge undoubtedly lay in the Gospel's declaration that people are to declare their allegiance to Jesus, the King of God's kingdom.

**17:9 *post bond.*** Since Paul himself could not be brought before the officials, they simply insisted that Jason post a bond, assuring them that he would no longer be a host to Paul so that he would have to leave the city.

**17:10-13** Paul and Silas proceeded to Berea, 45 miles to the southeast. Whereas the Jews in Thessalonica responded to Paul's message with jealousy, those in Berea explored what he said through their own reflection upon the Old Testament. This led to a favorable response by many.

**17:11 *noble.*** The Roman historian Livy described Berea as a "noble town" (Williams).

**17:14-15** For his own protection, Paul was escorted to the nearby coast from where he sailed to Athens, about 170 miles to the south. Silas and Timothy stayed behind, perhaps to make sure the church was not swayed by the false charges against Paul.

## Caring Time

1. Whether Jesus or Caesar was Lord became a real issue for Christians. When has your faith in Christ led to conflict with other authorities claiming your loyalty?

2. In terms of time, consistency, and intensity, how would you rate your Bible study? Is it at all like the Bereans?