

- B. The Resurrection is a bold declaration that the kingdoms and rulers of this world do not win!
 - i. The gospel does not call us to civil unrest, rebellion, or violence.
 - ii. The gospel speaks to those who live under the oppression of powerful people.

“According to the Bible, the kingdom of God and the nations of the earth embody radically different values and reflect radically different orders of reality. The kingdom of God relies on the power of self-giving love while nations—even so-called 'Christian' nations—rely on the power of coercion and the sword. For that reason, nations—even 'Christian' nations—inevitably go to war against their enemies while the kingdom of God has no [national] enemies at all. The kingdom of God is universal [without boundaries] and those who promote that kingdom care deeply for every human being in every corner of the globe, regardless of race or nationality.”¹

LIVE THE STORY

The Gospel is intended to be learned and lived in community. The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.

- Discuss the Craig Keener quote on pg. 1. Do you agree with it? If so, what does it mean for us? If not, why?
- Compare the charge against Paul and team in Philippi (Acts 16:20-21) with the charge in Thessalonica (17:6-7). How does the culture of the world they lived in inform these charges? Compare these charges to the things said about Jesus in Luke 23:2.
- Mixing worship and politics was common in the Roman empire. Evidently in Babylon also. But what about America? Do people in America mix worship and politics?
- How does the resurrection of Jesus Christ boldly declare that the rulers of this world will not win? How might this truth help inform how we present the gospel to the oppressed and those who suffer injustice?
- How does the gospel speak to the idea that “might makes right”?
- How do Paul's actions and teaching show us that civil unrest and violence are not in keeping with Christ's kingdom?

1 Richard T. Hughes, Christian America and the Kingdom of God (p. 3).

Dissident Disciples (Part 1) The Gospel Comes to Thessalonica Jerry Cisar — June 17, 2018

Text: Acts 17:1-10a

Introduction

Craig Keener: “The better we understand the circumstances a passage originally addressed, the more confidently we can reapply its message to appropriate circumstances today.”²

I. Thessalonica and Macedonia

- A. Thessalonica: Significance and Surroundings
 - i. Thessalonica was sizable (approx. 100,000), but its status was even greater than its size.
 - ii. Macedonia as a whole was much more Romanized than Asia minor.
 - a) Acts 16:20-24
 - b) On their journey to Thessalonica, they no doubt were still very sore from this beating.
 - iii. The journey to Thessalonica
 - a) An inscription that would have been prominent for all traveling through Amphipolis reads, “Imperator Caesar, God, Son of God, Augustus, Savior, and Builder of the City”.
 - b) The gospel Paul preached placed Jesus in direct opposition to Caesar in each of these titles.

2 NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible.

- iv. Thessalonica had tremendous favor from Rome.
 - a) A “free city”
 - b) This status was “granted only to people and cities which had displayed remarkable loyalty to the interests of the Roman people.”³

B. Emperor and Empire

- i. The Idolatry of Thessalonica
- ii. We will not bow down... even if!

II. Paul and His Message

A. Paul's stay in Thessalonica

- i. 1 Thessalonians 2:9
- ii. Philippians 4:15-16

B. Paul in the Jewish synagogue

“[Crucifixion] was reserved for those convicted (rightly or wrongly) of anti-Roman sentiment, of perverting the proper course of the Roman imperial order. Such people were the scum of Roman society.”⁴

- i. Crucifixion was a declaration of Rome's condemnation. Resurrection was a declaration that Rome's verdict has been overturned!
- ii. The word *gospel* has political implications.

³ 1 Thessalonians Baker Exegetical Commentary on the NT, p. 4.

⁴ Still and Longenecker, Thinking through Paul, (p 337).

- iii. Paul's message resonated with God-fearing gentiles, and prominent women, and a few of the Jews.

- a) But the rest of the Jews were jealous/envious.

➤ See Rom. 11:11.

- b) Rent-a-thugs

C. The Charge (17:6-8)

- i. Compare with the charge in Philippi.

- ii. Are they guilty?

➤ Luke 23:2

- iii. What causes such turmoil among the city leaders?

- a) Fear of Rome's wrath

- b) Desire for Rome's honor

An inscription found in the ruins of the ancient city “records how the Thessalonians honor Metellus, the Roman praetor who quelled the insurrection, identifying him as the city’s 'savior and benefactor'” (Weima, p. 3).

III. Paul and His Methods (17:10a)

A. Paul's response to accusation

- i. The Roman way to handle these charges is to preserve one's honor by meeting conflict head-on.

- ii. We do not answer evil with evil (1 Thess. 5:15).