

ST ARMANDS KEY LUTHERAN CHURCH
SARASOTA, FLORIDA

COME, JOIN THE CONVERSATION!
ON
THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Lesson Plan for Thursday – April 18, 2013
Resource Book – Kerygma Series - *“into the world”*
Chapter 12 – *“Paul Upsets the Empire”*

Our Objectives this session:

1. To identify cities visited by Paul during his second missionary journey and identify significant events that took place in those locations.
2. To cite forms of idolatry present in Athenian culture and forms of idolatry present in our contemporary culture.
3. To contrast Paul’s speech in Athens with the *“natural”* religion of his Greek listeners and identify ways that Christians today are still influenced by Greek philosophy.
4. To describe the relationships that existed among Christians as reported in Acts, and compare that to relationships among Christians today.
5. To differentiate between John’s baptism and Baptism in the Name of Jesus.

An Opening Moment of Devotion: *(Reflections on Psalm 19)*

Leader: “The heavens declare the glory of God,
ALL: and the firmament showeth his handiwork...”

The whole earth is God’s textbook.
From the edges of the atmosphere to the core of the planet,
The wonders of the world expand our understanding.
Rocks have no words, nor do cells have syllables,
yet their message can be read anywhere.

Even the fiery stars, racing through space, yield their secrets to those whose minds
are open to the mysteries of God’s universe.

An underlying harmony,

a delicate equilibrium built on the value of every living thing,
binds together past, present, and future.

There are no exceptions,
No one is above the universal law of interdependence.

Nothing stands alone.
Life dies and becomes new life.

Spirit and flesh are one.
My life is inextricably linked to yours,

and our common survival is tied to the trees and insects.
This is the beginning of wisdom.

It is better than wealth, more valuable than possessions.
Awareness of it will change you forever.

But we are too often deaf;
We close our ears to the voices of the winds and waves.

to the insights of the rocks and the plants.
**God, keep us from thinking we know it all –
an assembly of facts does not equal truth.
Human minds cannot encompass eternity.**

Keep us always open to wonder, to beauty, and to mystery,
Oh You, who are the greatest of mysteries.

MAJOR DESTINATIONS - SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY OF PAUL, SILAS and TIMOTHY

(suggest that you follow route on your personal map; this trip took between 24-36 months)

1. DESTINATION: TROAS (probably late spring/summer of 51AD)

IMPORTANT EVENT(s):

- a vision points to Macedonia
- Luke joins entourage (note especially vs. 10 = “we”)

ACTS 16 ⁶ *Paul and his companions traveled throughout the regions of Phrygia and Galatia because the Holy Spirit kept them from speaking the word in the province of Asia. ⁷ When they approached the province of Mysia, they tried to enter the province of Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus wouldn't let them. ⁸ Passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas instead. ⁹ A vision of a man from Macedonia came to Paul during the night. He stood urging Paul, “Come over to Macedonia and help us!” ¹⁰ Immediately after he saw the vision, we prepared to leave for the province of Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.*

2. DESTINATION: PHILIPPI

IMPORTANT EVENT(s):

- Lydia converted & her whole household baptized (*wealthy dealer in purple; early church leader*)
- Slave Girl cured of divination; Paul/Silas arrested & jailed; earthquake @ midnight
- Philippian Jailer & household converted and baptized

LYDIA – Acts 16:11-15, 40 ¹¹ We sailed from Troas straight for Samothrace and came to Neapolis the following day. ¹² From there we went to Philippi, a city of Macedonia's first district and a Roman colony. We stayed in that city several days. ¹³ On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the riverbank, where we thought there might be a place for prayer. We sat down and began to talk with the women who had gathered. ¹⁴ One of those women was Lydia, a Gentile God-worshipper from the city of Thyatira, a dealer in purple cloth. As she listened, the Lord enabled her to embrace Paul's message. ¹⁵ Once she and her household were baptized, she urged, "Now that you have decided that I am a believer in the Lord, come and stay in my house." And she persuaded us. - - - ⁴⁰ Paul and Silas left the prison and made their way to Lydia's house where they encouraged the brothers and sisters. Then they left Philippi.

THE SLAVE GIRL – Acts 16:16-24 ¹⁶ One day, when we were on the way to the place for prayer, we met a slave woman. She had a spirit that enabled her to predict the future. She made a lot of money for her owners through fortune-telling. ¹⁷ She began following Paul and us, shouting, "These people are servants of the Most High God! They are proclaiming a way of salvation to you!" ¹⁸ She did this for many days. This annoyed Paul so much that he finally turned and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to leave her!" It left her at that very moment. ¹⁹ Her owners realized that their hope for making money was gone. They grabbed Paul and Silas and dragged them before the officials in the city center. ²⁰ When her owners approached the legal authorities, they said, "These people are causing an uproar in our city. They are Jews ²¹ who promote customs that we Romans can't accept or practice." ²² The crowd joined in the attacks against Paul and Silas, so the authorities ordered that they be stripped of their clothes and beaten with a rod. ²³ When Paul and Silas had been severely beaten, the authorities threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to secure them with great care. ²⁴ When he received these instructions, he threw them into the innermost cell and secured their feet in stocks.

THE JAILER – Acts 16:25-34 ²⁵ Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ All at once there was such a violent earthquake that it shook the prison's foundations. The doors flew open and everyone's chains came loose. ²⁷ When the jailer awoke and saw the open doors of the prison, he thought the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword and was about to kill himself. ²⁸ But Paul shouted loudly, "Don't harm yourself! We're all here!"

²⁹ The jailer called for some lights, rushed in, and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ He led them outside and asked, "Honorable masters, what must I do to be rescued?"

³¹ They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your entire household." ³² They spoke the Lord's word to him and everyone else in his house. ³³ Right then, in the middle of the night, the jailer welcomed them and washed their wounds. He and everyone in his household were immediately baptized. ³⁴ He brought them into his home and gave them a meal. He was overjoyed because he and everyone in his household had come to believe in God.

3. DESTINATION: THESSALONICA (stay of 3 weeks duration)

IMPORTANT EVENT(s)

- Jewish unrest over teachings of Paul/Silas, which resulted in arrest of Jason

Acts 17: Paul and Silas journeyed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, then came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. ² As was Paul's custom, he entered the synagogue and for three Sabbaths interacted with them on the basis of the scriptures. ³ Through his interpretation of the scriptures, he demonstrated that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. He declared, "This Jesus whom I proclaim to you is the Christ." ⁴ Some were convinced and joined Paul and Silas, including a larger number of Greek God-worshippers and quite a few prominent women. ⁵ But the Jews became jealous and brought along some thugs who were hanging out in the marketplace. They formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They attacked Jason's house, intending to bring Paul and Silas before the people. ⁶ When they didn't find them, they dragged Jason and some believers before the city officials. They were shouting, "These people who have been disturbing the peace throughout the empire have also come here. ⁷ What is more, Jason has welcomed them into his home. Every one of them does what is contrary to Caesar's decrees by naming someone else as king: Jesus." ⁸ This provoked the crowd and the city officials even more. ⁹ After Jason and the others posted bail, they released them.

4. DESTINATION: BEROEA IMPORTANT EVENT(s)

- an unusual eagerness to accept Christian faith
- reputable Greek women and many Greek men believe
- Thessalonian Jews disturb the peace; Paul sent away while Silas & Timothy stay

¹⁰ As soon as it was dark, the brothers and sisters sent Paul and Silas on to Beroea. When they arrived, they went to the Jewish synagogue. ¹¹ The Beroean Jews were more honorable than those in Thessalonica. This was evident in the great eagerness with which they accepted the word and examined the scriptures each day to see whether Paul and Silas' teaching was true. ¹² Many came to believe, including a number of reputable Greek women and many Greek men. ¹³ The Jews from Thessalonica learned that Paul also proclaimed God's word in Beroea, so they went there too and were upsetting and disturbing the crowds. ¹⁴ The brothers and sisters sent Paul away to the seacoast at once, but Silas and Timothy remained at Beroea.

5. DESTINATION: ATHENS (possibly winter of 51-52 AD) IMPORTANT EVENT(s)

- a city flooded with idols
- encounter with Epicurean & Stoic philosophies
- speech on Mars Hill; proclamation of the resurrection from dead
- Dionysius and Damaris

¹⁵ Those who escorted Paul led him as far as Athens, then returned with instructions for Silas and Timothy to come to him as quickly as possible. ¹⁶ While Paul waited for them in Athens, he was deeply distressed to find that the city was flooded with idols. ¹⁷ He began to interact with the Jews and Gentile God-worshippers in the synagogue. He also addressed whoever happened to be in the marketplace each day. ¹⁸ Certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers engaged him in discussion too. Some said, "What an amateur! What's he trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods." (They said this because he was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.) ¹⁹ They took him into custody and brought him to the council on Mars Hill. "What is this new teaching? Can we learn what you are talking about?" ²⁰ You've told us some strange things and we want to know what they mean." (²¹ They said this because all Athenians as well as the

foreigners who live in Athens used to spend their time doing nothing but talking about or listening to the newest thing.)

²² Paul stood up in the middle of the council on Mars Hill and said, “People of Athens, I see that you are very religious in every way. ²³ As I was walking through town and carefully observing your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: ‘To an unknown God.’ What you worship as unknown, I now proclaim to you. ²⁴ God, who made the world and everything in it, is Lord of heaven and earth. He doesn’t live in temples made with human hands. ²⁵ Nor is God served by human hands, as though he needed something, since he is the one who gives life, breath, and everything else. ²⁶ From one person God created every human nation to live on the whole earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their lands. ²⁷ God made the nations so they would seek him, perhaps even reach out to him and find him. In fact, God isn’t far away from any of us. ²⁸ In God we live, move, and exist. As some of your own poets said, ‘We are his offspring.’

²⁹ “Therefore, as God’s offspring, we have no need to imagine that the divine being is like a gold, silver, or stone image made by human skill and thought. ³⁰ God overlooks ignorance of these things in times past, but now directs everyone everywhere to change their hearts and lives. ³¹ This is because God has set a day when he intends to judge the world justly by a man he has appointed. God has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”

³² When they heard about the resurrection from the dead, some began to ridicule Paul. However, others said, “We’ll hear from you about this again.” ³³ At that, Paul left the council. ³⁴ Some people joined him and came to believe, including Dionysius, a member of the council on Mars Hill, a woman named Damaris, and several others.

6. DESTINATION: CORINTH (probably from spring 52 AD to fall 53 AD)

IMPORTANT EVENTS:

- meeting Aquila & Priscilla;
- rejoined here by Silas & Timothy;
- 1st Thessalonians likely written from here; possibly also 2nd Thessalonians;
- no further mention of Silas traveling with Paul after this stop

ACTS 18 After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. ² There he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus. He had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul visited with them. ³ Because they practiced the same trade, he stayed and worked with them. They all worked with leather. ⁴ Every Sabbath he interacted with people in the synagogue, trying to convince both Jews and Greeks. ⁵ Once Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself fully to the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. ⁶ When they opposed and slandered him, he shook the dust from his clothes in protest and said to them, “You are responsible for your own fates! I’m innocent! From now on I’ll go to the Gentiles!” ⁷ He left the synagogue and went next door to the home of Titius Justus, a Gentile God-worshipper. ⁸ Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his entire household came to believe in the Lord. Many Corinthians believed and were baptized after listening to Paul.

7. DESTINATION: EPHESUS

IMPORTANT EVENTS:

- Aquila & Priscilla stay in Ephesus, would later meet Apollos there

¹⁸ *After Paul stayed in Corinth for some time, he said good-bye to the brothers and sisters. At the Corinthian seaport of Cenchræe he had his head shaved, since he had made a solemn promise. Then, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila, he sailed away to Syria. ¹⁹ After they arrived in Ephesus, he left Priscilla and Aquila and entered the synagogue and interacted with the Jews.*

8. DESTINATION: CAESAREA (home port)

IMPORTANT EVENTS:

- on to Jerusalem
- then to Antioch of Syria (spent winter of 53-54 AD there)
- end of 2nd missionary journey

IDOLATRY: OLD?...NEW?

A) OLD TESTAMENT VIEWS OF IDOLATRY:

1. Fetishism – the worship of trees, rivers, hills, stones, etc.
2. Nature Worship – the worship of the sun, moon and stars as supposed powers of nature
3. Hero Worship – the worship of deceased ancestors, heroes, etc.

Exodus 20:4-6 ⁴ *Do not make an idol for yourself—no form whatsoever—of anything in the sky above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth. ⁵ Do not bow down to them or worship them, because I, the LORD your God, am a passionate God. I punish children for their parents' sins even to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me. ⁶ But I am loyal and gracious to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.*

Isaiah 40:18-20 ¹⁸ *So to whom will you equate God; to what likeness will you compare him? ¹⁹ An idol? A craftsman pours it, a metalworker covers it with gold, and fashions silver chains. ²⁰ The one who sets up an image chooses wood that won't rot and then seeks a skilled artisan to set up an idol that won't move.*

Isaiah 44:9-20 ⁹ *Idol-makers are all as nothing; their playthings do no good. Their promoters neither see nor know anything, so they ought to be ashamed. ¹⁰ Who would form a god or cast an idol that does no good? ¹¹ All its worshippers will be ashamed, and its artisans, who are only human. They will all gather and stand, tremble and be ashamed together. ¹² A blacksmith with his tools works it over coals, and shapes it with hammers, and works it with his strong arm. He even becomes hungry and weak. If he didn't drink water, he'd pass out. ¹³ A carpenter stretches out a string, marks it out with a stylus, fashions it with carving tools, and marks it with a compass. He makes it into a human form, like a splendid human, to live in a temple. ¹⁴ He cuts down cedars for himself, or chooses a cypress or oak, selecting from all the trees of the forest. He plants a pine, and the rain makes it grow. ¹⁵ It becomes suitable to burn for humans, so he takes some of the wood and warms himself. He kindles fire and bakes bread. He fashions a god and worships it; he makes an idol and bows down to it. ¹⁶ Half of it he burns in the fire; on that half he roasts and eats meat, and he is satisfied. He warms himself and says,*

“Ah, I’m warm, watching the fire!”¹⁷ And the rest of it he makes into a god, into his idol, and he bows down, worships, and prays to it, saying, “Save me, for you are my god!”¹⁸ They don’t know or comprehend, for their eyes can’t see and their minds can’t comprehend.¹⁹ He doesn’t think, and has no knowledge or understanding to think: Half of it I burned in the fire, and I baked bread on its coals, and roasted meat and ate. Should I make the rest into something detestable? Should I bow down to a block of wood?²⁰ He’s feeding on ashes; his deluded mind has led him astray. He can’t save himself and say, “Isn’t this thing in my hand a lie?”

B) PAUL’S NEW TESTAMENT VIEW OF IDOLATRY:

1. a worship-like passion for things such as wealth, sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, greed (see Col. 3:5)
2. the absolutization of an idea; (Stoicism, Epicureanism, etc.)
 - a) what about Christianity would not be sensible to a Stoic?
 - b) what about Christianity would not be sensible to an Epicurean?
3. worship of the supreme emperor
4. worship of religious images (statues large {@ temples} and small {@home})

Acts 17:22-31 (note: see passage printed above in connection with Paul’s visit to Athens)

C) IDOLATRY TODAY:

1. Biblical scholar/commentator, William Willimon (pg. 144 of his comments on Acts) states: **“John Calvin once said that the human mind is a perpetual factory for idols!”** How relevant is that statement for 21st century Christians?
2. Where does idol worship exist today?
3. What forms does it take?
4. Who are the worshippers?
5. In what ways can a church become idolatrous?
6. Question of opinion: In your view is idolatry as wide-spread and virulent as in OT & NT times? What can the contemporary church do about it?
7. What are places of agreement/disagreement between Greek beliefs and Christian beliefs?
8. Consult your **Acts Resource Book** (pg. 97) for Dr. Carol Miller’s discussion of “natural religion” and “revealed religion.” Where do they part company?
9. Where is “natural religion” found in our contemporary religious beliefs and practices?

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CHRISTIANS and CONGREGATIONS

(an underlying theme in the accounts of Paul's 2nd Missionary Journey
is the "networking" existent among 1st century Christians)

1. **Thessalonica** – Jason hosts Paul & Silas
2. **Beroea** – Paul assured of safe passage out of area
3. **Corinth** – Paul resides with Aquilla & Priscilla; later housed by Titius Justus
4. **Ephesus** – Apollos encouraged by Christians there; they recommend him to disciples in Achaia

For further discussion: *(as time allows!)*

- a) How significant to you is your identity as a Christian?
- b) If you were stranded in a strange city, to whom would you go for help?
- c) How might today's churches be different if more Christians saw themselves called upon to help other Christians, regardless of race or nationality?
- d) In what ways does a network of Christians operate in the Sarasota community? In other communities where you may reside?

BAPTISM IN THE EARLY CHURCH and TODAY

1. The Baptism by John

First read: Mark 1:4-8 ⁴ *John was in the wilderness calling for people to be baptized to show that they were changing their hearts and lives and wanted God to forgive their sins. ⁵ Everyone in Judea and all the people of Jerusalem went out to the Jordan River and were being baptized by John as they confessed their sins. ⁶ John wore clothes made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ He announced, "One stronger than I am is coming after me. I'm not even worthy to bend over and loosen the strap of his sandals. ⁸ I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."*

Next read: Acts 18:24-28 ²⁴ *Meanwhile, a certain Jew named Apollos arrived in Ephesus. He was a native of Alexandria and was well-educated and effective in his use of the scriptures. ²⁵ He had been instructed in the way of the Lord and spoke as one stirred up by the Spirit. He taught accurately the things about Jesus, even though he was aware only of the baptism John proclaimed and practiced. ²⁶ He began speaking with confidence in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they received him into their circle of friends and explained to him God's way more accurately. ²⁷ When he wanted to travel to Achaia, the brothers and sisters encouraged him and wrote to the disciples so they would open their homes to him. Once he arrived, he was of great help to those who had come to believe through grace. ²⁸ He would vigorously defeat Jewish arguments in public debate, using the scriptures to prove that Jesus was the Christ.*

- a) What did baptism mean to those who came to John the Baptist?
- b) What was their response to that baptism?
- c) What was missing in Apollos' teaching and baptismal practice?

2. Baptism in the Name of Jesus

First read: Acts 2:37-41 ³⁷ *When the crowd heard this, they were deeply troubled. They said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"* ³⁸ *Peter replied, "Change your hearts and lives. Each of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* ³⁹ *This promise is for you, your children, and for all who are far away—as many as the Lord our God invites."* ⁴⁰ *With many other words he testified to them and encouraged them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation."* ⁴¹ *Those who accepted Peter's message were baptized. God brought about three thousand people into the community on that day.*

Next read: Acts 19:1-7 *While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul took a route through the interior and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples.* ² *He asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you came to believe?" They replied, "We've not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."* ³ *Then he said, "What baptism did you receive, then?" They answered, "John's baptism."* ⁴ *Paul explained, "John baptized with a baptism by which people showed they were changing their hearts and lives. It was a baptism that told people about the one who was coming after him. This is the one in whom they were to believe. This one is Jesus."* ⁵ *After they listened to Paul, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.* ⁶ *When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in other languages and prophesying.* ⁷ *Altogether, there were about twelve people.*

- a) What is your understanding of The Sacrament of Holy Baptism?
- b) How would you explain to an inquirer what it means to be baptized in the Name of Jesus?
- c) How is baptism by the Holy Spirit reflected in our church's practice of baptism?
- d) Is there a place in baptism for John's message of repentance? Why? Why not?

A TIME OF CLOSING DEVOTION: "Do Not Be Afraid" (a collage of psalms)

We hear your call, O God . . . but we are afraid.

Do not be silent, O God of my praise. For wicked and deceitful mouths are opened against me . . . in return for my love they accuse me, even while I make prayer for them. (Ps. 109: 1, 2a, 4)

It is too hard, what you ask.

Many fight against me. O most High, when I am afraid, I put all my trust in you.
(Ps. 56:2b)

I'm too scared to try. I don't want to get hurt!

In God, I trust; I am not afraid. What can a mere mortal do to me? (Ps. 56:11)

I have no idea how I could do what you want me to do.

But you, O Lord, are a shield around me, my glory, and the one who lifts up my head. (Ps. 3:3)

The odds are too great that I will fail. Help me, please!

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear; though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. (Ps. 46:1-3)

I will trust that you are with me. I will seek your guidance in doing what you ask. I can do it with your help.

They are not afraid of evil tidings; their hearts are firm, secure in the LORD, Their hearts are steady, they will not be afraid; in the end they will look in triumph on their foes. (Ps. 112:7-8)

Praise the Lord!

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever! (Ps. 118:1)

FOR NEXT WEEK: APRIL 25, 2013

READ: ACTS RESOURCE BOOK – Chapter 13 “*Riots and Encouragement*”

ACTS 19:21 – 23:11

SAKLC – ACTS BIBLE STUDY 2013.04.18 per hjm