

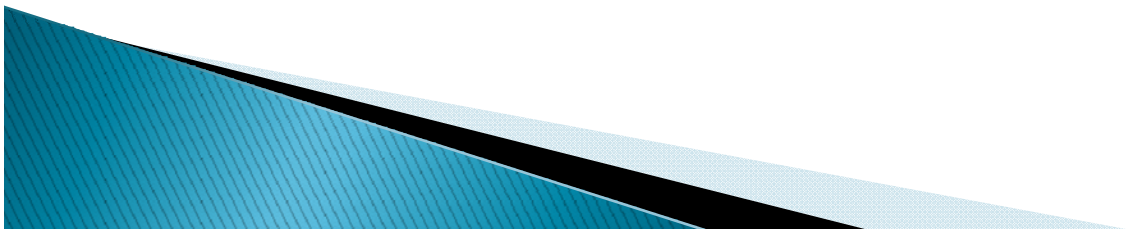


THE HOLY BOOK OF ACTS

Chapter 17

H.G. Bishop Youssef

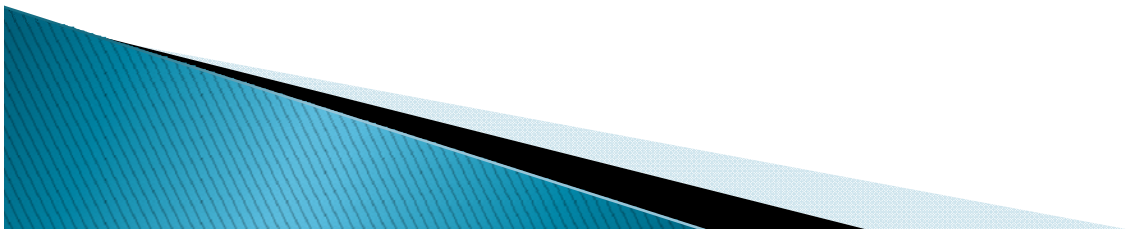
Bishop, Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern US



Introduction

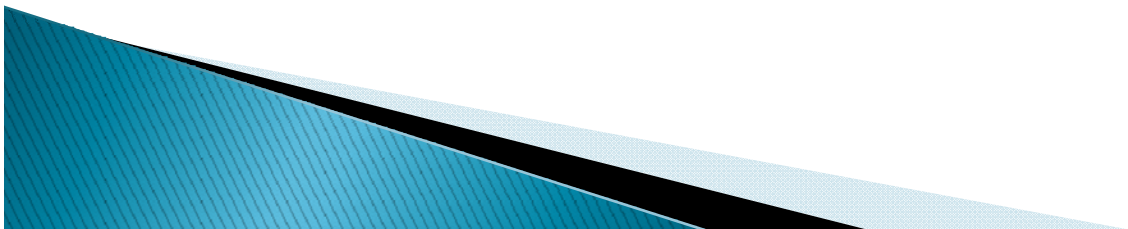
In This Chapter We Will Study:

- St.'s Paul preaching in Thessalonica and Berea, and how it was received
- St. Paul's preaching in Athens and how he found a common ground from which to teach the Gospel of Christ in an idolatrous city



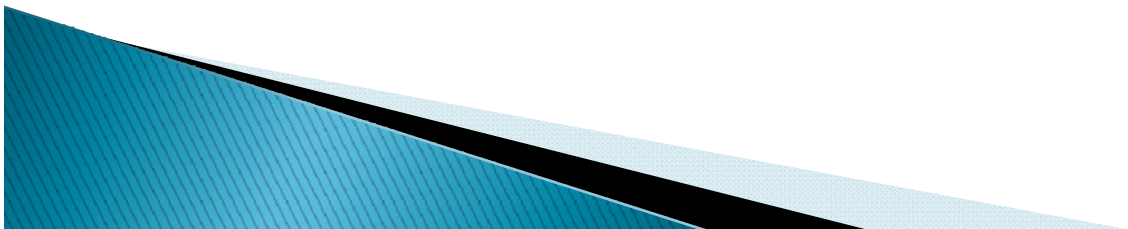
Preaching Christ at Thessalonica (Acts 17: 1-4)

- Passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they arrive in Thessalonica
- Amphipolis was the capital of the eastern province of Macedonia. It was originally a colony of the Athenians, but under the Romans it was made the capital of that part of Macedonia
- Apollonia was another city of Macedonia, between Amphipolis and Thessalonica
- Thessalonica was a celebrated city of Macedonia, situated on what was called the Thermaic Gulf



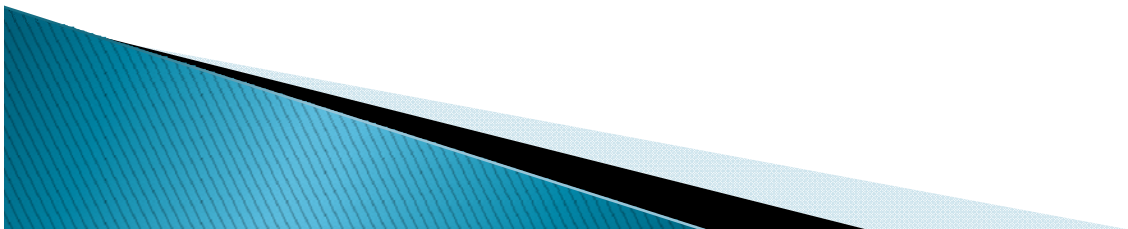
Preaching Christ at Thessalonica (Acts 17: 1-4)

- St. Paul visits the synagogue and reason with the Jews for three weeks
- He constantly offered salvation first to the Jews; and for this purpose attended their Sabbath-days' meetings at their synagogues
- He showed from the Old Testament that the promised Messiah should die, and rise again, that Jesus complied with these conditions, and hence must be the Christ
- Three Sabbaths indicates how long he continued to argue in the synagogue, not how long he remained here



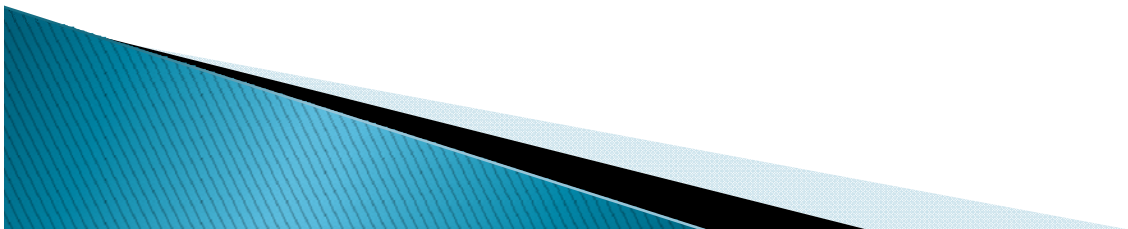
Preaching Christ at Thessalonica (Acts 17: 1-4)

- Some of the Jews who heard in the synagogue were persuaded
- Also some of the religious Gentiles who had departed from heathenism, attended the synagogue, but had not been circumcised
- Some of leading women who join St. Paul and St. Silas were also persuaded
- The result of these labors was the establishment of a flourishing church, the existence of which called out the two letters to the Thessalonians



Assault on Jason's House(Acts 17:5-9)

- Envious Jews use evil men from the marketplace to gather a mob
- As usual, a part believed and the others were filled with hatred
- They set the city in an uproar, and attack Jason's house
- Jason appears to have been a relative of Paul, and for this reason it was probable that he lodged with him, Romans 16:21
- Unable to find St. Paul, they drag Jason and others before the rulers of the city
- “These that have turned the world upside down” is a strong tribute to the revolutionizing power of the new faith
- It did change the world



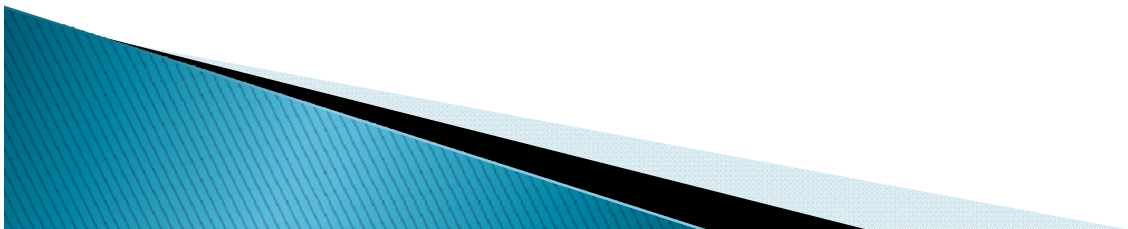
Assault on Jason's House(Acts 17:5-9)

- Accusing them of turning the city upside down, disobeying Caesar, claiming Jesus as king
- Persecutors always strive to affect the lives of the objects of their hatred, by accusing them of plots against the state
- A false charge, but the one most likely to secure the attention of the magistrates
- The apostles proclaimed Jesus as king - that is true; but never once insinuated that his kingdom was of this world
- The reverse they always maintained
- The rulers take security from Jason and the others that there would be nothing done contrary to the laws of the empire before letting them go



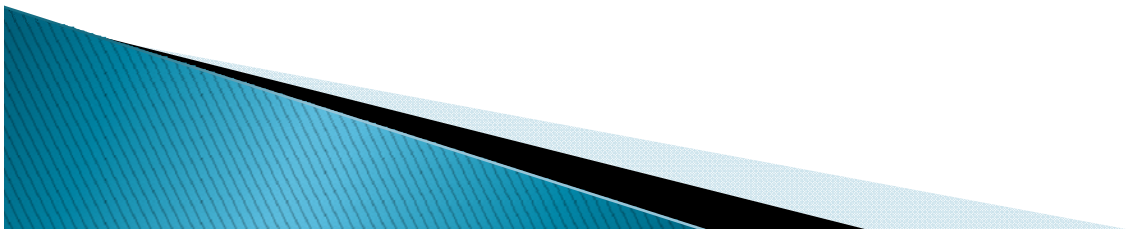
Ministering at Berea (Acts 17:10-15)

- Sent by night, for their safety, to Berea, St. Paul and St. Silas go to the synagogue
- Berea was another city of Macedonia, on the same gulf with Thessalonica
- The Jews are more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica
- The Jews in Berea applied seriously to the study of the word preached unto them
- They not only heard St. Paul preach on the Sabbath, but daily searched the Scriptures, and compared what they read with the facts related to them



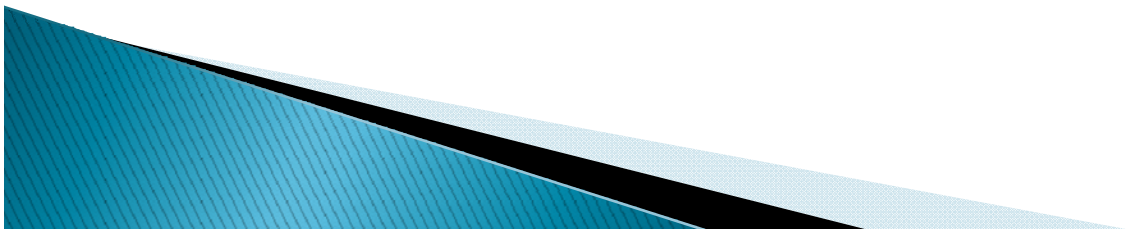
Ministering at Berea (Acts 17:10-15)

- Many Jews believe, also Greeks, prominent women as well as men
- This would be the natural result
- Hearing of their success, Jews from Thessalonica come and stir up the crowds
- Their inveterate hatred pursued him
- When they began to stir up a disturbance at Berea, as St. Paul was the chief object of hatred, it was thought best for him to leave, but Silas and Timothy were left to continue the work



Ministering at Berea (Acts 17:10-15)

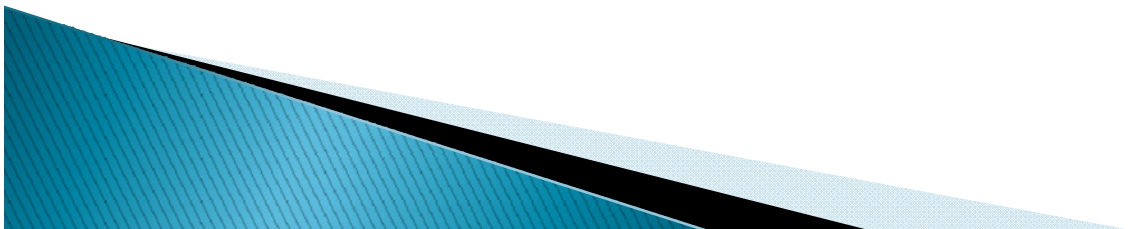
- St. Paul is immediately sent away to the sea, while St. Silas and St. Timothy remain
- Whether he did, or went to Athens by land, is not stated
- The journey by land was about 250 miles
- The sea voyage would be a much quicker route
- St. Paul arrives in Athens, sends word for St. Silas and St. Timothy to come



The Philosophers at Athens

(Acts 17:16-21)

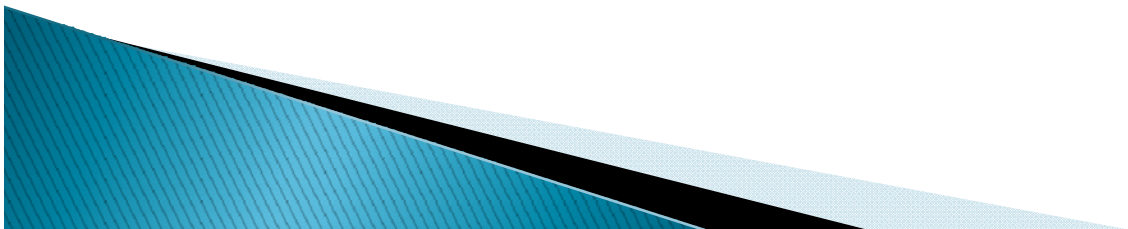
- While waiting, Paul's spirit is provoked by the idolatry in the city
- At first he seems to have intended to await the arrival of Timothy and Silas before he start his work, but his spirit was too much stirred
- There were more idols in Athens than in all the rest of Greece combined
- He reasons with Jews and Gentile worshippers in the synagogue, and with people in the Marketplace
- There was in Athens one great market place, or public square
- The porches around it were favorite places for discussion



The Philosophers at Athens

(Acts 17:16-21)

- Epicurean and Stoic philosophers hear him preach about Jesus and the resurrection
- Athens was distinguished, among all the cities of Greece and the world, for the cultivation of a subtle and refined philosophy
- This was their boast, and the object of their constant search and study, 1 Corinthians 1:22
- Two of the philosophical schools then prevalent in Athens
- The first held that the gods were careless about human affairs, and that a man's best course was to get as much pleasure out of life as possible
- With them pleasure was the chief good



The Philosophers at Athens

(Acts 17:16-21)

- The Stoics were fatalists, believers in a sort of pantheism, and insisted on self-righteousness
- Epicurus was the founder of the first sect; Zeno, of the second
- Areopagus is a Greek term for Mars' hill
- The hill was a place of assembly
- There the supreme court of Athens met
- There the courts that sat concerning religious matters convened
- The associations had something to do, probably, with St. Paul being taken here to speak, though the meeting was informal and not official
- The hill is about fifty feet high, and was then surrounded by the most glorious works of art in Athens



The Philosophers at Athens

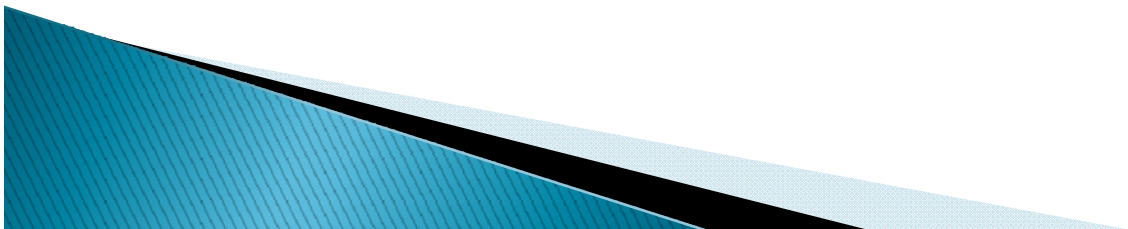
(Acts 17:16-21)

- The doctrine of the apostles was different from any they had ever heard: it was wholly spiritual and divine; thus it was strange
- As it spoke much of the exaltation and glory of Jesus Christ, they supposed him to be a setter forth of strange gods: and, therefore, on the authority of the laws, which forbade the introduction of any new deities, or modes of worship, he was called before the Areopagus
- It was harmony with the spirit of the city that he should be called on to speak to gratify the curiosity of the populace
- As Athens was renowned for its wisdom and learning, it became a place of public resort for philosophers and students from different parts of the then civilized world



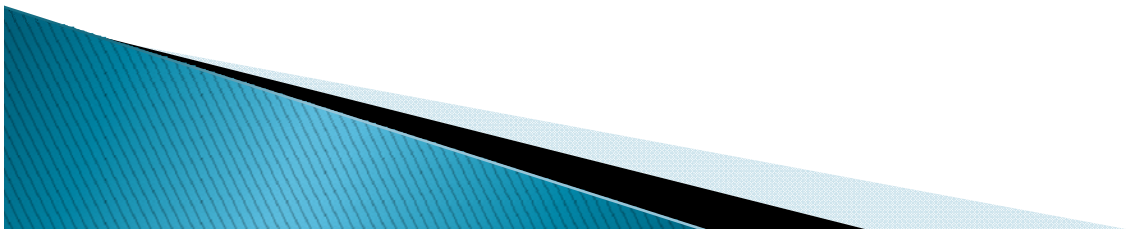
Addressing the Areopagus (Acts 17:22-34)

- St. Paul preaches to the men of Athens
- Mentioning their spirituality
- Especially the altar inscribed "To The Unknown God"
- The introduction of St. Paul has always been regarded as a masterpiece of skill
- He does not say, "In all things you are too superstitious", but that "you are very religious"
- His remark is a compliment, and he confirms it by a statement that he had found an altar to the unknown God



Addressing the Areopagus (Acts 17:22-34)

- Besides thousands of altars and statues of deities whom they named, this altar was dedicated to the Unknown, as if to some deity whose presence they felt, but whom they did not comprehend
- St. Paul proclaims this God they do not know as the Creator who made the world and all things
- This God could not be confined within temples made with hands, as he was the Lord or governor of heaven and earth



Addressing the Areopagus (Acts 17:22-34)

- By fair consequence, the gods whom they worshipped, which were shut up in their temples could not be this God; and they must be less than the places in which they were contained
- This was a strong, decisive stroke against the whole system of the Grecian idolatry
- As if He needed any thing, or required to be represented under a particular form or attitude; nor has he required victims for his support; for it is impossible that he should need any thing who himself gives being, form, and life, to all creatures
- God gives life, because he is the fountain of it
- The apostle sees this life stream of the whole human race to be one, flowing from one source
- Who has determined the nations appointed times and dwelling boundaries



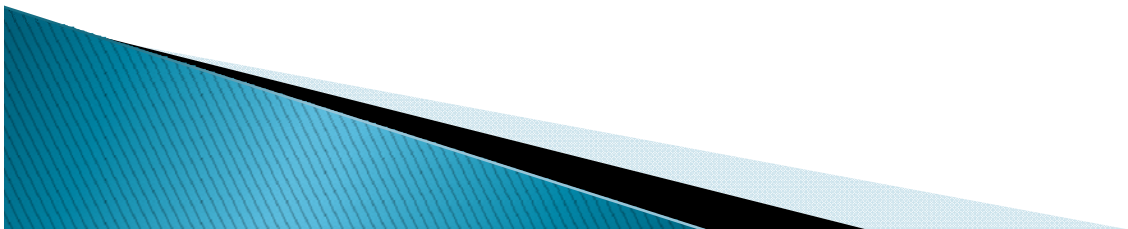
Addressing the Areopagus (Acts 17:22-34)

- The apostle here opposes both Stoical Fate and Epicurean Chance, ascribing the periods and localities in which men and nations flourish to the sovereign will and prearrangements of a living God
- Who does things so that men might seek for Him, grope for Him, and find Him
- Who is not far from anyone, for in Him we live, move, and exist, even as some of their own poets have said, "We are also His offspring"
- Aratus, who wrote about 200 years before
- Also Cleanthes, in his Hymn to Jupiter
- He is the very source of our existence
- God is the living, immanent Principle of all these in men



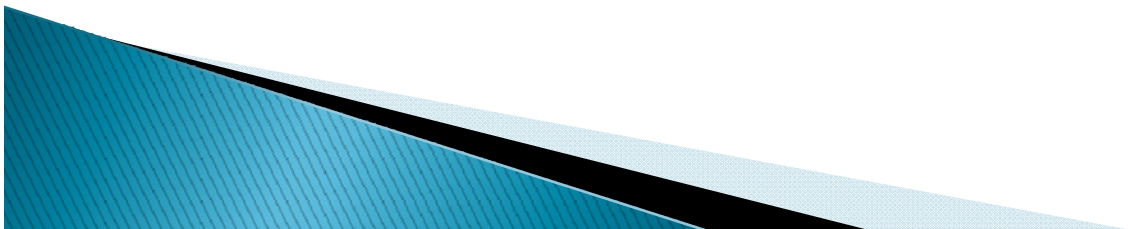
Addressing the Areopagus (Acts 17:22-34)

- Who is not an idol, shaped by art and man's devising
- This inference of the apostle was very strong and conclusive
- We are formed by God; since we are like him, living and intelligent beings; since we are more excellent in our nature than the most precious and ingenious works of art, it is absurd to suppose that the original source of our existence can be like gold, and silver, and stone
- Man himself is far more excellent than an image of wood and stone; how much more excellent still must be the great Fountain and Source of all our wisdom and intelligence
- St. Paul proclaims that God now commands all men everywhere to repent



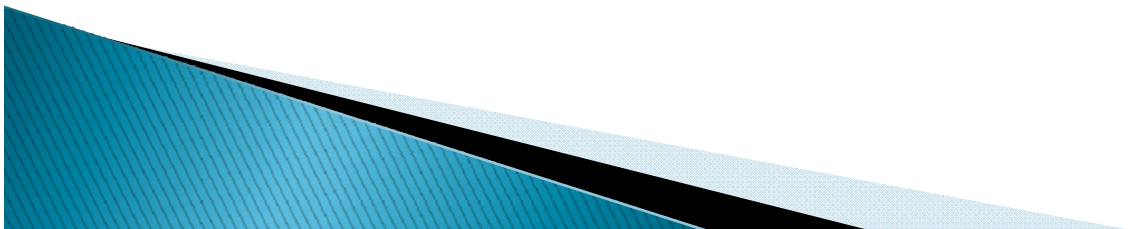
Addressing the Areopagus (Acts 17:22-34)

- Even though He may have overlooked their ignorance in times past
- God has appointed a Day of Judgment
- This call to repentance is urged because God hath appointed a day, the day of coming judgment, when the world will be judged though he has not revealed this time to man
- He will judge the world in righteousness by a Man He has ordained
- He has given proof of this judgment by raising Him from the dead
- St. Paul undoubtedly had not finished his discourse



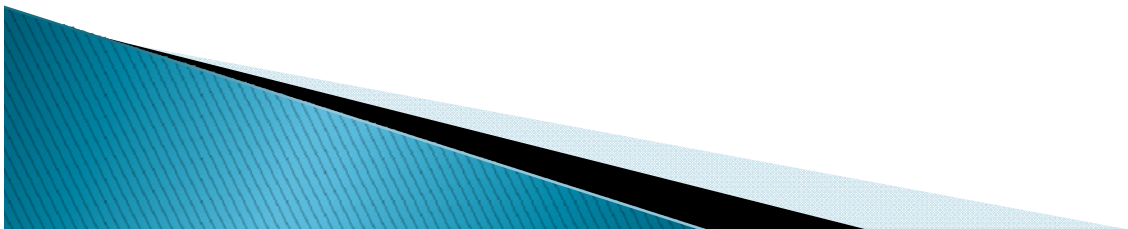
Addressing the Areopagus (Acts 17:22-34)

- It is likely that he was about to have proclaimed salvation through Christ crucified
- But, on hearing of the resurrection of the body, the assembly instantly broke up
- The Epicureans mocking began to laugh
- The Stoics saying they would take another opportunity to hear him on that subject
- And thus the assembly became dissolved before the apostle had time to finish his discourse, or to draw all the conclusions he had designed from the premises he had laid down
- St. Stephen's discourse was interrupted in a similar manner, Acts 7:54




Addressing the Areopagus (Acts 17:22-34)

- St. Paul left
- Whether he would have opened, to any extent, the Gospel scheme in this address, if he had not been interrupted, or whether he reserved this for exposition afterwards to earnest inquirers, we cannot tell
- His labors were not without results
- One of the judges of the court of the Areopagus, the judges which were chosen from the noblest men of the city, Dionysius, was converted, along with others

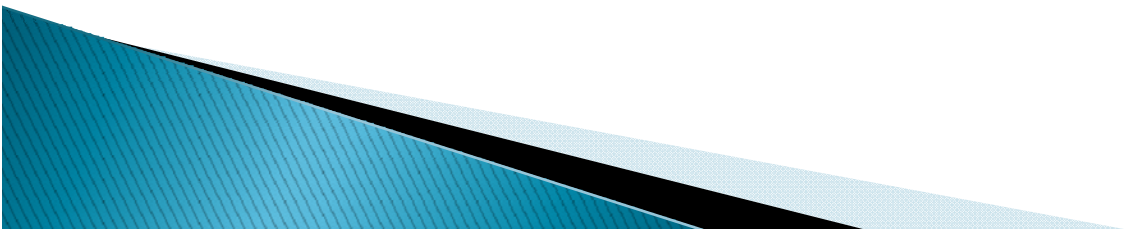


Conclusion

- What was St. Paul's main preoccupation in the Synagogue?
 - What happened to those who studied the Word?
 - What did the Jewish leaders do as a result of their jealousy?
 - Whose house was attacked by a mob in Thessalonica?
 - a. Lydia's
 - b. Jason's
 - c. Silas'
 - Who stirred up trouble for St. Paul in Berea?
- 

Conclusion

- Why was St. Paul's spirit provoked in Athens?
- Who challenged St. Paul? What did they do?
- What seven things did St. Paul first declare about God to them?
- In Thessalonica, Paul reasoned from the scriptures. In Athens he reasons but does not use the scriptures. Why?
- Instead, how does he reason with the Athenians?



Conclusion

- Reading vv. 26-29, how does St. Paul reason that God is not like one of their idols?
- St. Paul goes on to say that God will no longer overlook this ignorance. Instead, what does God command all people everywhere to do?
- In chapter 17, St. Paul has visited Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens. Each city presented him with a different challenge. How were St. Paul's presentations of the gospel different?

