

When Jesus is King

Text: Acts 16:35-Acts 17:9

Acts 17:6b: "...These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." This phrase from our text summarizes the result of the report found in the next verse, Acts 17:7b: "...saying that there is another king, one Jesus." Paul, Silas, Luke and Timothy are now well into the Paul's second missionary journey. We left off in our *Life of Paul*, with the famous conversion of the Philippian jailor in Philippi. The spiritual conquest of Europe has begun. It started with a ladies' prayer meeting interrupted by our evangelistic team by the riverside. Lydia, an industrious and influential woman became the first convert into this glorious new life. Christianity was not, nor has it ever been merely a nominal change. Our Lord's forerunner, John the Baptist announced, "...Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). Then after Christ's baptism and temptation in the wilderness with face-to-face spiritual combat with Satan, the Savior began His ministry with these words recorded in Matthew 4:16, 17: "The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The Lord Jesus explained to the inquiring Nicodemus that this kingdom requires a personal entry. John 3:3: "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Every kingdom has a king; Christianity is no exception. Without hesitation or apology, the King whom we now worship, adore and serve is Jesus. In this first "port of entry" into Europe, Paul writes to these converters a reminder in Philippians 3:20: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." Our word translated "conversation," is taken from the Greek word *politeuma* which means a community, i.e., citizenship within a commonwealth governed by laws. It is from this root word that we derive our English word "politic." In the "body politic" of Christianity, we use a better term: "the Body of Christ." Christ is the Head. Our rule is love; our lifestyle of the true Christian is moral, just and merciful. Galatians 6:15: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." When Jesus is King, we change as well as the environment in which we live and minister. Titus 2:11, 12: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

I. THE RIGHTS

Acts 16:35-40. God wants us to "seize the day." The magistrates allowed the mob rule to take over and then commanded that Paul and Silas be beaten and thrust into the inner prison within confining stocks. After the earthquake and conversion of the jailor, the magistrates sent word to Paul and Silas that they could go free. Paul informed the sergeants that they were Roman citizens and demanded their rights since they were publicly maligned and abused. The magistrates must come personally and publicly release them. The magistrates did so and requested that Paul and his team leave Philippi, which they did. But first, they demanded their rights. They seized the day. This was a great precedent for Christian ministry. We should work within the civil laws of the

land as best we can (Romans 13:1) and demand our rights to propagate the Gospel and love according to our convictions when needed. To quote a line from The Winslow Boy, "Let right be done!" In the half-century battle for the rights of the unborn, it has been the consistent Christian witness that seized the day. In my opinion, the greatest piece of literature found in the American canon is the Second Inaugural Address by President Lincoln. The opening phrase of the final sentence begins with these powerful words, "With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right..." Tenacity to do the right as God reveals the right to us may be optional for the unbeliever, but for the Christian, it is imperative.

II. THE AWAKENING

Acts 17:1-4

After passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia the team arrives in Thessalonica and evangelization begins in the synagogue.

A. The Reasoning

Acts 17:1, 2. This was Paul's manner. He knew the Jews believed the Scriptures, so that is where he begins and continues for three sabbath days, laboring in the Word of God. Psalm 119:130: "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."

B. The Revelation

Acts 17:3. Paul's goal is to allow the Scriptures to reveal the Person of Jesus Christ to the unbelieving.

I Corinthians 2:2: "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

C. The Results

Acts 17:4. Thank God, some believed. To the polytheistic Greek, this was inviting news, i.e., there is only one God and He took the penalty for our sins and relationship with Him means forgiveness for sin. Forgiveness among the Thessalonians was so important. The society in this area of the world was steeped in the sensual worship of Apollo and Aphrodite (I Thessalonians 4:3-5). As is often the case, women often lead the way in growth.

III. THE OPPOSITION

Acts 17:5-9

A. The Reaction of the Unbelieving

Acts 17:5. There is an unusual word used defining the response of the unbelieving Jews, it is the word "envy." The Pharisees were not isolated in Jerusalem; they had made it all the way to Europe. And here they stubbornly refused to accept the true Messiah for the false messiah of their own minds and making. They were full of envy, I would surmise, because they saw the joy that the believers had and they did not have. They were envious of the peace that passes all understanding. How much better life would have been for them if they had come into the kingdom and known our King!

B. The Reason for the Upheaval

Acts 17:6, 7. The accusation of the unwilling unbelievers was that there is another King and this King is turning the world upside down. The enemies of the cross are no more understanding than Pilate was when Jesus explained in John 18:36: "...My

kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.” Yes, the world is being overturned, but not with the might or power of man and his weaponry. I Corinthians 2:4: “And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” Zechariah 4:6b: “...Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.”

C. The Ruler's Decision

Acts 17:8, 9. What is comparable to our modern “posting bond,” the rulers took security of Jason and released him and those who had gathered at his house. The rulers' power to arrest or release was not ultimately in their hands. God had more work for the missionary team and God will not allow man to restrict His Word. The Bible says in II Timothy 2:9, “Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound.” In Jeremiah 36, King Jehoiakim did not like the Scripture given by God to Jeremiah, so Jeremiah 36:23 ensued: “And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he [Jehoiakim] cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth.” But alas, God gets the last word. Jeremiah 36:32: “Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words.” The Word of God cannot be bound, broken or burned. I Peter 1:24, 25: “For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.” Ecclesiastes 8:4: “Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What doest thou?” How much more is this true of the Word of the King of Kings?

Conclusion:

Because we are citizens of the Kingdom of God and Christ is our king, we have the authority spoken of in Romans 5:17: “For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.”

-Pastor Pope-