

Paul brought the Good News of the kingdom of God to the Roman colony of Philippi. The Romans were ruled through a strict structure of authority which answered to Caesar. When Paul preached Jesus as the one true God and King, he directly challenged Caesar's power. Many of the people in Philippi preferred to trust in the power of Caesar and his government rather than following King Jesus, and so they had Paul and Silas jailed.

*How did God demonstrate His power exceeded the authority of Rome?*

It is easy to feel confident in a strong ruler who you can see and touch. But pledging our allegiance first and foremost to King Jesus changes everything. His reign eclipses all earthly power and authority. In Him there is no Jew or Greek, male or female, slave or free. We are all citizens of the kingdom and subjects of the King.

## WRAP-UP

Jesus is not seeking to be integrated into the world's culture. He is countercultural. Jesus is the one true risen God and King. There are no rules or laws we must follow that grant us access to His kingdom. It is given by grace through faith. There are no other gods, only worthless idols of our own making. And His authority far exceeds any man-made government. His followers are empowered by the Holy Spirit to be witnesses of Jesus, our God and King.

## Memory Verse

*23 So when we preach that Christ was crucified, the Jews are offended and the Gentiles say it's all nonsense. 24 But to those called by God to salvation, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. - 1 Corinthians 1:23-24 NLT*

## PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: \_\_\_\_\_

Pray for your group members' needs: \_\_\_\_\_

*Challenge- Paul spoke out in Athens because he was grieved by what he saw around him. What action will you take in response to what grieves you?*

# “Jesus, King of the World”

## Book of Acts – Week #15

## INTRODUCTION

In the latter part of the book of Acts the church takes the message of Jesus to the ends of the earth. But the message they brought was in stark contrast to the cultures they encountered. The kingdom of God had a king of its own; Jesus. And the rule of this king was an affront to the people of Greece and Rome. Jesus had not come to be incorporated into their culture but to replace it and be the one true risen God and king in their lives.

## Key Passage

### ACTS 13-17

## STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

### 1. First to the Jews, then Gentiles

*Acts 13:5, 14, 43 NLT - 5 There, in the town of Salamis, they went to the Jewish synagogues and preached the word of God. John Mark went with them as their assistant. ... 14 But Paul and Barnabas traveled inland to Antioch of Pisidia. On the Sabbath they went to the synagogue for the services. ... 43 Many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, and the two men urged them to continue to rely on the grace of God. Acts 14:1 NLT - 1 The same thing happened in Iconium. Paul and Barnabas went to the Jewish synagogue and preached with such power that a great number of both Jews and Greeks became believers.*

Paul's desire was to see the Jews find their Messiah. He was trained in the Hebrew scriptures and was able to show how Jesus was their promised Messiah. But Paul not only preached Jesus as the Savior of the Jews, he also showed that the scriptures prophesied a Savior to the Gentiles. *What was the response when Paul preached in the synagogues? What was the question that was raised when Gentiles became believers in the Jewish Messiah? (Acts 15:1)*

*Acts 15:1-2 NLT - 1 While Paul and Barnabas were at Antioch of Syria, some men from Judea arrived and began to teach the believers: "Unless you are circumcised as required by the law of Moses, you cannot be saved." 2 Paul and Barnabas disagreed with them, arguing vehemently. Finally, the church decided to send Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem, accompanied by some local believers, to talk to the apostles and elders about this question.*

This was a turning point in the faith. Were the followers of Jesus converting to Judaism and obliged to follow its rules?

*Why aren't those who follow Jesus required to follow the observances set forth in the Law of Moses, according to Peter (Acts 15:11)? How did his experience at Cornelius' home in Acts chapter 10 give Peter the answer to this question?*

*Acts 15:7-11 NLT - 7 At the meeting, after a long discussion, Peter stood and addressed them as follows: "Brothers, you all know that God chose me from among you some time ago to preach to the Gentiles so that they could hear the Good News and believe. 8 God knows people's hearts, and he confirmed that he accepts Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us. 9 He made no distinction between us and them, for he cleansed their hearts through faith. 10 So why are you now challenging God by burdening the Gentile believers with a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors were able to bear? 11 We believe that we are all saved the same way, by the undeserved grace of the Lord Jesus."*

*What makes salvation by grace difficult to accept? In what ways do we still challenge God by taking on ourselves a yoke He hasn't asked us to carry?*

## **2. Greek Culture offended**

As Paul's missionary journey took him among the Greeks, he found himself surrounded by the idols of a pagan religion. In fact, in Lystra, he and Barnabas were worshipped as they were mistaken for the Greek gods Zeus and Hermes.

The Greek culture not only worshiped a plethora of gods, they also debated and embraced competing philosophies. In Athens, Paul took his message to Mars Hill, a place of constant debating of various philosophies. When they heard Paul preaching Jesus' life, death and resurrection they called him a babbler; just another stranger with a foolish idea amongst the many they debated.

*Acts 17:16, 22-23 NLT - 16 While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply troubled by all the idols he saw everywhere in the city. ... 22 So Paul, standing before the council, addressed them as follows: "Men of Athens, I notice that you are very religious in every way, 23 for as I was walking along I saw your many shrines. And one of your altars had this inscription on it: 'To an Unknown God.' This God, whom you worship without knowing, is the one I'm telling you about.*

Paul had been deeply troubled by all the idols he saw in Athens. But when he spoke to the men of Athens, he displayed empathy for people who were seeking to worship God, but didn't know who He was.  
*paroxynō* – angry or provoked

*What idolatry in our culture has caused you grief or anger? How are we able to maintain our empathy for individuals when we are angry over their sin? What happens when we direct our anger at the individual rather than the sin?*

As Paul made God known to the Greeks, he explained specific truths of God which countered the Greek culture.

*Consider why the verses below were important to countering Greek culture. Now see if you can identify some truths that counter the beliefs in our modern culture. (There are many, just pick a couple.)*

*Acts 17:24-25 NLT - 24 "He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn't live in man-made temples, 25 and human hands can't serve his needs--for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need.*

## **3. Roman Authority offended**

*Acts 16:21, 23, 25-26 NLT - 21 "They [Paul and Silas] are teaching customs that are illegal for us Romans to practice." ... 23 They were severely beaten, and then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn't escape. ... 25 Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. 26 Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off!*