

'Acts' - Extra Teaching Points #22

Acts 16:25-17:9 (NASB)

Acts 16:25-34 (NASB)

But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; ²⁶ and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. ²⁷ When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!" ²⁹ And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas, ³⁰ and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹ They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." ³² And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. ³³ And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. ³⁴ And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.

Q: What is the Jailer really asking Paul and Silas? Is he asking them how not to go to Hell?

- The ancient Greek world had a very vague idea about the afterlife; as such Heaven and Hell weren't really an issue. So, I doubt that was what was on the jailer's mind!
- Earthquakes were not unheard of, so he wouldn't have had a reason to think something supernatural had just happened.
- However, losing your prisoners was punishable by torture and death.
- I think he was asking, "What can I do to get out of this mess?"

Q: If he's not asking about how to be saved from Hell, then why do they answer him the way they do?

- They aren't really changing the subject so much, as just deepening it!
- They answered his question from their Christian worldview, which sees the entire world being in a huge mess,

(like today), as opposed to the way the world can and will be because of Jesus' Lordship.

- The world is the way it is now because of sin... there are earthquakes, crime, corruption, death, and destruction.
 - But the way out of this messed up world is Jesus, who is setting the world right ([Rev 21:5](#); [Romans 8:19-22](#); [1Cor 15:25-26](#); [Matt 19:28](#)).
- In other words, they answered his specific question about what's going to happen to him, now that the jail has been opened on his watch, and the bigger question underneath it: How can he be freed from a world where earthquakes tear things up, and people kill you for things that aren't your fault?

Q: If this is how Paul and Silas present the gospel to this jailer, how is that different from the way the gospel is typically presented today?

- What they preached wasn't about getting in touch with your spirituality, committing yourself to a lifestyle of going to church and doing good things, or even about believing certain doctrines about how God deals with sin.
- What they preached was about recognizing that Jesus is Lord, and pledging your allegiance to Him!

Q: Why were the jailer and his household baptized immediately?

- Baptism is how people pledge their allegiance to Jesus as Lord ([1Peter 3:21](#); [Titus 3:5](#), [Acts 2:38](#); [Romans 6:1-8](#)). Why would they wait to be under His authority and on His side?

Q: Is there anything else Luke might want us to notice about this earthquake?

- Paul and Silas had to go through it too!
 - God's messengers were not protected from the suffering that came from challenging the powers that be, (politics, money, and religious forces), and neither will we be!

Acts 16:35-40 (NASB)

*Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their policemen, saying, "Release those men." ³⁶ And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The chief magistrates have sent to release you. Therefore come out now and go in peace." ³⁷ But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly?" **2***

No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out.” ³⁸ *The policemen reported these words to the chief magistrates. **They were afraid when they heard that they were Romans,*** ³⁹ *and they came and appealed to them, and when they had brought them out, they kept begging them to leave the city.* ⁴⁰ *They went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.*

Q: Why were the police and chief magistrates afraid when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens?

- Being a Roman citizen carried with it certain rights that Government officials could not violate without severe consequences!

Q: Why does Luke tell us how Paul demanded and received a public apology... and left town only when he was good and ready?

- He probably wants his readers to know **God is not mocked**, ([Gal. 6:7](#)), and **His servants will be vindicated**; sometimes sooner, (as in this instance), but definitely later ([Romans 8:18](#); [Col 3:4](#); [2Thess 1:7](#)).

Acts 17:1-9 (NASB)

Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. ² *And according to Paul’s custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,* ³ *explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ.”* ⁴ *And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women.* ⁵ *But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people.* ⁶ *When they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have upset the world have come here also;”* ⁷ *and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.”* ⁸ *They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things.* ⁹ *And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them.*

Q: What was Paul’s message, and how did he convince people it was true?

- Paul’s message was that Jesus is the Christ, and that His crucifixion and resurrection from the dead was always God’s plan!
- He proved it by reasoning from the scriptures—the Old Testament!

Extra Info on the Scriptures:

Q: What are “the scriptures” that are inspired by God?

- The Old Testament

The New Testament never makes the claim that it is inspired scripture. It may be, but it never makes that claim. The closest that any verse comes to making that claim is [2Peter 3:15-16](#):

“Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. ¹⁶ He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.”

Q: So if the New Testament isn’t necessarily ‘inspired scripture’, is it reliable and authoritative?

- Absolutely!!
- It is eyewitness testimony and teaching from Jesus’ hand-picked disciples!

Q: So how important is it that Christians know the Old Testament today?

- [2Tim 3:16-17](#) *“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”*
- The Old Testament was what the early church used for training in righteousness and being equipped for every good work. Surely we need to know the Old Testament for the same reasons!

Q: What is so startling about Luke's recording that the Christians were claiming there is another King—Jesus?

- Christianity was never intended to peacefully encourage people to be good citizens living a higher ethic and doing works of charity.
 - Claiming another King is counter-cultural, and in many places it is subversive!
 - In the 1st century, claiming another King would have sounded like people were planning another civil war to oust the Emperor; which, by the way, happened three times within 20 years after the work of Paul and Silas in Thessalonica!
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Follow Up Assignment

Q: When you meet people who are looking for a way out of the mess they are in, what do you tell them?

- How is it the same or different from what Paul said to the Philippian jailer?

Q: Is there a "Philippian jailer" you need to be talking to?

- What "earthquake" is God letting you experience so that you can talk to him or her?

Q: Are you really preaching Jesus as King, or have you changed the message?

- What does your life say about who Jesus is?