

The Pronouncement

Upside Down

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This morning, I want to encourage you to open your Bibles to the book of Acts 17 and it is my privilege today to say that we have finally arrived, we have finally arrived in chapter 17 of the book of Acts. The journey is coming to a close. Now those of you that are guests and visitors this morning, you may be wondering why is it that the journey would come to an end when the book of Acts has a whole lot more material? Because as we've walked through the book of Acts, as we've studied the characters, as we've looked at the chronology, it's been more than just the facts and the figures. In fact, everything that we've studied this season has been around a verse that we're about to read here in chapter 17 where it says that they turned the world upside down. Today as we celebrate, there is a day that is coming where the Lord will shout with the voice of the archangel and those that are dead shall be raised, those that are alive shall be quickly changed. We long for that day. We sing about that day. We desire that day. But I've got a funny feeling that tomorrow morning the alarm clock is going to go off and you and I have got to navigate through the life that we have.

So today, those of you that are guests and visitors, welcome to the grand conclusion, so to speak, where we talk about what does it mean to turn the world upside down. Now let me give you a preview before we read this passage. We hear that phrase, "These are they that turned the world upside down," and we think great spiritual awakenings, we think revivals, we think "mass movements," but I want you to know this, that before we read this passage, what we see here in chapter 17 happened in a local city. It happened in a small community and the accusation is that these that have turned the world upside down have come here as well. And so when we read these words today, even though we would long for a spiritual awakening, we would long for a global revival, when we talk about the world being turned upside down, let's think about your home, your house, your family, your business, your school. How about we start there today because here in chapter 17 it was a local community that made the declaration that what's happening in other places is now happening here.

Beginning in verse 1 of chapter 17 it says,

1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: 2 And Paul, as

his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, 3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. 4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. 5 But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. 6 And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; 7 Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.

What a declaration that these that have turned the whole world upside down have come here as well. How does this get implemented into our homes? How does this get implemented into our communities? How do we, as a family of faith, see these verses lived out in our lives?

Let's begin with this fact, that what you see happening here in chapter 17 as we've seen in the entirety of the book of Acts, it's very purposeful. It did not just happen by happenstance. It didn't just occur just because. Notice what it says in verse 2, it says Paul and as his manner was, he went in unto them. Do you notice that methodology there? It was very purposeful that when this story begins, whom we know as the Apostle Paul was going about doing what he normally did. There wasn't a "change of plans." It wasn't that somehow, somehow he had altered his course of living. Why is this so critical? Because this very day if the Lord is calling you for your home to be turned upside down, for your school to be turned upside down, for your team to be turned upside down, for whatever it is, we often fall in this trap, "Well, it can be turned upside down if I had a different position, if I had a different job, or maybe my life looked a little bit different." In fact, it reminds me, 1 Corinthians 7, these early believers were struggling with their newfound faith and the Apostle Paul comes in and says, "Hey, just because the Lord is moving now doesn't mean you change the 'environment' that you're in." In fact, in Ephesians 4 it says the Lord has called some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, some to be pastors, and some to be teachers. It's a great word but then you get to verse 12 of chapter 4 and it says, "for the perfecting of the saints and the work of the ministry." Today, do not fall into the trap that if the Lord wants to turn my life upside down, then I need to change locations, I need to change jobs, I need to change this. He knows exactly who you are, where you are, and where he can find you tomorrow morning when the alarm clock goes off.

So he was just doing as he normally would, so whether that's the office, classroom, wherever it may be, notice that the purposeful methodology is not where you want to be or feel like you should be but where you are right now. Then there's the message. Notice what it says here in verse 2, it says as his manner was, he went unto them. For three sabbath days he reasoned with them out of the scriptures. What does that mean "to reason

with them"? Well, what it means is that he dialoged, he conversed, but notice what the subject matter was: the scriptures, what the Bible said. And don't get me wrong, the issues of the day are valuable and they are important but when it says he reasoned with the scriptures, it says he basically kept returning to them. No matter what the subject matter of the day was, no matter what the issue of the day, they continued to return, to reason means, "Well, we can talk about subject A but we're gonna get back to the Bible. We're gonna talk about subject B but we're gonna get back to the Bible." In fact, this morning, I thought we'd have a little bit of fun. How can I illustrate what this means that no matter what the issue, no matter what the subject, they kept returning to the scriptures?

So today, I've got a little math assignment for us. This is the first week of school so it just seems to reason that we need to do some math, okay? All right, now, here's the deal. Let me go ahead and suggest in advance that if you're going to do this by memory, you need to just use a small number. Now some of you who want a challenge, get out a calculator but you have to remember the first number you utilized, all right? So here we go. Let's do a little assignment together. Pick a number, any number, doesn't matter how small, how big. It doesn't matter, pick a number. Whatever that number is, add 7 to it. Okay, so if you picked 1, you'd now have 8. Take that new number and multiply it by 2. Once you've multiplied it by 2, subtract 4. Once you've subtracted 4, divide it by 2. And then subtract your original number. Now if my memory is correct and you did this correctly, everybody came up with 5, didn't you? I know some of you are thinking, "No, there's no way that works." Okay, go ahead and do it again. It's okay. Pick any number you want. In fact, get your calculator out and put two commas in it. I don't care, but you've got to remember what the first number is. It doesn't matter what number you use, you can start with 1, you can start with 1.3 billion, it doesn't matter. When you do that mathematical equation, it always brings you to the number 5.

You know, one thing that the church has learned throughout the years, it doesn't matter what the issue is, it doesn't matter what the latest crisis is, it doesn't matter what the global affairs are, every single concern and every single issue, they reasoned from the scriptures. And so no matter what befalls us today, what comes our way tomorrow, what we see is they were very purposeful not only in going about their lives where the Lord had them but every issue, they returned not to what the experts say, by the way, my father-in-law who's an attorney said an expert is just somebody who lives out of state that nobody knows, it doesn't matter what they might say, it's what do the scriptures say?

So they were very purposeful. They were also very persistent. Notice what it says here in verse 3, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. Now I want you to see the methodology that is utilized here. Now they've already established that the message is going to be rooted in scripture, right? They reasoned with them from the scripture. No matter what the concern, what the issue, no matter what the headlines read, we're going to come back to what the Bible says. Verse 3 they open and allege. In other words, they converse, they dialogue, they continue a conversation.

I want to illustrate this morning what this looked like in Acts 17 because I have a feeling that it's very different in our world today and it may be one of the many reasons why our world is not turning upside down with the gospel. I want to use the illustration of a bridge. I want you to imagine as bridge would be that you have that which is an impasse. You have one side and then a chasm, and another side with a bridge that connects the two. And I want to use that illustration in regards to our world today, particularly in light of Acts 17. There are those that are being addressed here in Acts 17 that are believers in Jesus Christ. There are those that understand that they have an inherent sin problem, they are naturally rebellious against God, and they've come to an understanding that the wages of their sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord, and they have called upon Jesus to save them. Now that's one side of this chasm. The other side is everybody else, everybody who has a false faith, everybody who has no faith, everybody who just wants to live life as they so choose.

So biblically speaking, when we get to Acts 17, there's two sides to the equation, there are those who the Bible calls saved and those that are not. Yet you and I know those of us who are saved, that there was a point we were on the other side. There was a point that we were walking in our sin. There was a point where we were living a life of disobedience and thanks to Jesus Christ we have been taken, or as Colossians 1 says, we have been translated from the kingdom of darkness unto the kingdom of light. But notice what it says in verse 3, it says they opened and alleged. In other words, those that were on the "saved side" were communicating with those that were lost their need to be saved.

Now when it says they opened and alleged, let me tell you what that does not mean. It does not mean that they screamed and yelled, "Hey, we're right and you're wrong!" Is that not our methodology oftentimes today? It doesn't matter if you're on social media, if you're out in the streets, it just seems that somehow, someway the church has adopted a methodology of putting it on posters, putting it on posts, screaming and yelling, "We're right, you're not!" Can I give you a secret? You're right and they're not but when's the last time that methodology ever worked?

I mean, let me illustrate it this way. We've all watched a debate, a presidential debate, maybe a world religions debate, when's the last time you watched a debate and you knew that you were interested in candidate A and 90 minutes later you said, "Well, I'm gonna switch to candidate B"? You don't, do you? In fact, what happens is you dig your heels in even deeper entrenched to what you've already thought. Why? Because in most debates, what do they do? They just yell at each other back and forth.

So what does it mean they opened and alleged? Can I tell you what their methodology was, that they met them on the bridge. They basically said, "Hey, friend, can we discuss this? Can we talk about this?" And sometimes that means listening to them yell and scream a little bit but rarely if ever have I met anybody who said, "Man, I became a believer in Jesus Christ because those guys yelled me into heaven." Usually it's because, "Man, I was cantankerous, I was stiff-necked, but they loved me anyway. They listened to me anyway, and it didn't matter what I came up with, they just kept opening and alleging that Jesus was the answer."

It's a different methodology, is it not? But notice the message in verse 3, that needs have suffered, risen again from the dead, that Jesus, whom I preached unto you, is Christ. We addressed this a little bit last week but find for me anywhere in verse 3 where they're addressing as the primary concern the social issues of the day. You find me anywhere where they're addressing the political upheavals, the economic disparity. You see, what they did is they opened and they alleged what? That Jesus need suffer. In other words, every time they conversed, every time they talked, they kept going back to the fact that humanity has a sin problem. Listen we can couch it anyway we want, we can make it any issue we want, but at the end of the day humanity has a rebellion problem that only Jesus can fix and that's what they talked about. They said, "I hear you, friend. I know you're bothered, I know you're struggling, I know you're heartbroken, but can I talk to you about what really needs to take place here? Jesus suffered for you." You see, Jesus Christ would have never gone to the cross if we didn't have a sin problem. Jesus Christ would have never endured the mockings and the beatings, the physical pain and punishment and ultimately death if according to verse 3 it wasn't necessary.

It was need be that he suffered, and then what does it say? That he rose from the grave. It's interesting that the persistent message here wasn't that the volume got louder, it wasn't that the poster got bigger, it wasn't that the social media posts came out more frequently, it's that they kept coming back to, "You've got a sin problem that only Jesus can fix. You've got a sin problem that only Jesus can fix." And the world was turned upside down because wherever they were, they just kept going back to the scripture and communicating that humanity has a sin problem that only Jesus can fix.

Now I realize all those other issues, they're vital, they're important, and they're out there, but none of them are near as important as our soul. None of them are as important of our eternal destination. And so maybe those issues that we, the "Christian community," are so passionate about, maybe those who we're frustrated with will finally listen to us once they "get saved," and screaming and yelling and putting posts, let me ask how is it working so far?

So they were purposeful, they were persistent, and then notice that they were pretty polarizing. Look what it says in verse 4, and some of them believed, consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few. So I want you to think about how polarizing that is. You would expect they go to the synagogue for three weeks. That's a place of worship for those with a Jewish background. It would make sense cerebrally that according to the book of Romans, those who have had the scriptures for thousands of years, the Jewish people, those who have heard the prophecies their whole life about a coming Messiah, it would make sense that they would be the ones that would respond most favorably. But that's not what we find. It says there's a few of those that believed but when you really get down to it, it was those Greeks, it was those heathens, it was those pagans, and a whole lot of women who came into the mix.

Why is that critical? Because when you look at not only Old Testament Judaism but most faiths and religious expressions, do you know what we love to do? We love to segment people into us and them. How many times have we said, "Well, I don't know about those people. Or how about these individuals. Or they're not a part of 'us.'" Can I tell you how polarizing the methodology was? Because when Paul and Silas went into this area, when Jason received them into his home, they made this revolutionary statement: it didn't matter where you came from, it didn't matter your background, it didn't matter your gender, everybody needs Jesus.

Isn't that funny? We live in a world today where everybody wants to put their arms around everybody regarding something and in Acts 17, that's exactly what they did. They said it doesn't matter your background, it doesn't matter your story, we've all got a sin problem that only Jesus can fix, and do you know what? That polarizes people. Do you know why? Because in most people's methodology, all they simply want to do is be in charge and be in control. They want to be the ones who call the shots and now all of a sudden that group who they thought they had control over, oh, they're believing and that group who they thought they had authority, they're believing, and pretty soon what did they say? "Man, these guys that have turned the whole world upside down, they've come to our city as well." You see, the polarization of Christianity should not be "it's us versus them," it should be the fact that it doesn't matter who you are, you need Jesus and once you're saved, you're his. And that, my friends, is a very polarizing methodology.

But think about the message for just a moment. Look when you get to verse 5, but the Jews which believed not, they moved with envy, they took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, they gathered a company, they set all of the city in an uproar and assaulted the house of Jason. Well, isn't that interesting how these guys respond. They are so frustrated with the message, they are so frustrated with what's happening, notice it says they went and got some lewd guys of "a baser sort." That's the Bible's way of saying these are not nice individuals. They basically went out and got some mercenaries, to be honest with you, and they said, "Okay, here's what we're gonna do. You're gonna go and pressure them." You see, the message was so polarizing it not only got personal but it got violent.

You know, we can use this as a barometer in our lives. Wherever you find yourself, whatever your occupation, wherever the Lord has you living life, if you keep coming back to the scriptures, if you keep addressing the issues of the day as I agree, there's a lot going on but at the end of the day our real problem is a sin problem that only Jesus can fix, can I go ahead and share with you a barometer? The lost world is not going to like it. The lost world is going to respond pretty much like they did here, they're gonna get ugly. And just like a barometer gives us a gauge of the pressure whether it be high or whether it be low, we can see our faithfulness.

You know, in conclusion I think it's really interesting that here in verse 5, 6, and 7, there's a guy that shows up. He's not one of the apostles. He's not listed among the 70 that went 2 x 2. He's not even listed as one of the 500 who saw Jesus raised from the dead. He's not mentioned as a deacon. He's not an elder in a local church. This guy named Jason just

shows up out of nowhere. Why is that important? Because when we think about the world turning upside down, wouldn't we think it would be Paul who they're focused on? Wouldn't it be Silas who they're focused on? Or what about some of the other names that are so well-known? And yet all of a sudden here's this guy, where did he come from? Why is he so important? It's because Jason not only welcomed the truth in his life, he refused to back down from it, and even in the face of a very polarizing methodology and message, he stood firm.

You know, this morning, we all come from respective homes, we all live in a respective community, we all have respective positions, jobs, appointments and such, and maybe today we need to take a lesson from Jason, an unknown maybe just like us. The world has no clue who we are but according to this passage, the world was turned upside down because he and the others kept going back to what does the Bible say? Kept going back to we've got a sin problem. And they did not give in, give out, or give up when the pressure got heated up. You see, when we talk about the world being turned upside down, this isn't just about global revival, though that would be wonderful, it's not just about spiritual awakening, which I hope and pray one day could occur in our lives, but it's about our homes, it's about our schools, it's about our communities, it's about where we live with purpose and persistence, and may we be a whole lot like Jason, a name that the world may not recognize but a name that will turn the world upside down.