

The Upside-Up World

Acts 17:1-15

If you belong to Jesus...

Acts 17:6 (ESV): “And when [the mob] could not find [Paul and Silas], they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, *‘These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also.’*” I like this translation the best. It’s hyperbole. The leaders of the mob are exaggerating. But to them, *it feels like* they have “turned the world upside down!”

There are only two human realms in the world of people. According to Colossians 1, human beings either belong to “the domain of darkness,” or to “the kingdom of God’s beloved Son.” We belong to the darkness or we belong to the light. There’s no middle ground in the Bible.

And **if you belong to Jesus**, then there will be some who do not belong to Jesus who will think you are **upside-down** in your thinking. And they may get really upset if you invade their home with the gospel and cause a family member to be **turned upside-down** in Jesus, which in turn, from their perspective, turns their home **upside-down**.

But what’s the truth? The world of darkness is the world that’s turned upside-down. It’s only when we came to belong to Jesus that we were turned upside-_____. But don’t tell them that! They think they’re right, we’re wrong. And when we bring our gospel into their dark world, they get all bent out of shape, because, as Jesus said, “The light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works are evil... They hate the light” (John 3:19-20).

Today’s narrative is another episode in the life of Paul and his ministry team as **upside-up people in an upside-down world**.

As upside-up people in an upside-down world:

1. We have the _____ on the upside (1-4).

A synagogue provided the best place for sharing the gospel message—that Jesus suffered, died, and was resurrected in fulfillment of

Scripture—because the Jews believe in the inerrancy of the Bible, that it's without error. And with that belief, it *can be* _____ from the Bible that Jesus is the Messiah. So Paul's strategy is to prove to them from the OT that the Messiah must suffer and die.

There are four key words here:

Reasoned (2).

Explained (3).

Proved (3).

Proclaimed (3).

The apostle was so convincing in addressing their questions and doubts, *proving* that the Messiah *had to* die and be raised from the dead, that he broke through the lifelong indoctrination of what was not true, *so that even some of the Jews* were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, suddenly having **their upside-down world** turned **upside-up**.

There may be lots of obstacles because of lifelong false beliefs and biases, but *the gospel is provable because it's true!* But it's only provable, if you let God break through your doubts and questions, and believe the truth that can only be found on **the upside**.

2. We are _____-side-up people (5-9).

The charges are legit. From the upside-down world's perspective, the apostles *are* turning the world upside-down. This new faith in Jesus *is* extensively impacting the Roman world. And it's true, they are proclaiming that there is another king, King Jesus. Caesar was king, and to proclaim any other king was a capital offense. However, the apostles were talking about a different kind of king and kingdom. Their King and Kingdom is not a political-of-this-world kingdom.

According to Paul in 1 Thessalonians 1:8, the Word of God had gone forth from Thessalonica to *everywhere* in the province. From that strategic center, the gospel spread out in all directions! Why is that? Because **they and we are right-side-up people**. As long as we remain _____ to the Word of God, as long as remain strictly and truly biblical, **we are right-side-up**, and we are on God's side, and if God is for us, it doesn't matter who's against us.

Which begs the question, are we like Paul and Silas? Are *we true to the kingdom people*, like them? That depends on which kingdom you are expending your energy and effort to promote: **the political kingdom of this upside-down world**, or **the spiritual kingdom of heaven**.

3. We are a more _____-minded people (10-12).

The Jews of this synagogue begin where other Jews in other synagogues begin, with an undying faith in the reliability of the Word of God. The great difference between the Jews of Thessalonica and the Jews of Berea, the Bereans are more noble. They actually check out Paul's preaching against the backdrop of Scripture. Their eagerness to know the truth *is* _____ than their lifelong biases.

Only God knew that the Bereans would become *the model* for how to approach the Bible and study it. Richard Longenecker: "Luke gave the Jews at Berea *undying fame* by characterizing them as being *more noble* than the Thessalonian Jews because they tested the truth of Paul's message by the touchstone of Scripture rather than judging it by political and cultural considerations. So they examined the Scriptures daily to see whether what Paul proclaimed was really true, and many believed."

I have discovered that some unbelievers are much more noble-minded than other unbelievers. They're more tolerant of us believers, much more understanding, and accepting. But, on the other hand, there are believers in Jesus who *are not* as noble-minded as some of their brethren. They *don't receive* the word with all eagerness. They *don't examine* the Scriptures daily. They *won't take* the preached Word home with them today to really mull it over. They *won't allow* the Word to daily transform their lives. For them, **this upside-down world** is more of a priority than **the upside-up world of Jesus Christ**. One indicator of that: they read more about politics than they read the Bible.

Joe Carter's list of 21 idol-identifying questions to consider. Here's five:

1. Have you spent more _____ today thinking about the president than you have thinking about the creator of the universe? 2. Do I judge myself as having noble motives when it comes to politics, yet assume the worst about people on the other side of the political divide? 3. Have I become more obsessed with achieving a specific political outcome than I am about _____ people to Christ? 4. Based on my

thoughts and actions, does it seem as if I'm more concerned about the next four years than I am with eternity? 5. Do my concerns about possible political outcomes show that I may not truly _____ that God is sovereign over the nations, including this nation?

From **the upside-up world perspective**, are you more noble-minded, or less? Are you an idolater, in that **this upside-down world** is more of a priority than **the upside-up world of Jesus Christ**? As long as we remain true to the Word of God, as long as remain strictly and truly biblical, and search the Scriptures daily, we are more noble-minded, and are on **God's upside**, and He will be the priority of priorities in our lives.

4. We will be _____ by upside-down people (13-15).

Warren Wiersbe: "Satan also has his 'missionaries' and they are busy." We have millions of brothers and sisters in hostile territory around the world who have enemies and opposition just like this, if not worse. We are not yet there in America. But that doesn't mean we don't experience opposition from the evil one and his minions. It comes in a number of forms. Maybe it's _____...

This morning you need to decide:

How upside-up do you really _____ to become?

1 to 10: **1** being just a little up-side—enough to assure my fire insurance is secured. **10** being all the way upside-up, all the way biblically true, so heavenly minded that I am fully kingdom good! *This upside-down world behind me, the cross of Jesus Christ before me, no turning back.*