

Dr. Craig Keener, Acts, Session 17

Acts 16-17

Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Keener, Acts, Session 17, Acts 16-17, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Craig Keener's lecture analyzes Acts 16-17, focusing on Paul's arrest and subsequent events in Philippi and Thessalonica. **The lecture examines** the legal charges against Paul, including the accusation of spreading unlawful customs and proclaiming another king, highlighting the cultural and political context of Roman rule. **Keener explores** the details of Paul's imprisonment, beatings, and miraculous release, along with the conversion of the Philippian jailer. **He also discusses** the significance of Paul's Roman citizenship and its role in the events, offering both arguments for and against its validity. Finally, the lecture traces Paul's journey to Thessalonica and the ensuing challenges he faces there.

**2. 17 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Keener, Acts, Session 17 – Double click icon to play in
Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL]
Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament →
Gospels – Acts → Acts).**



**Keener_Acts_Session
17.mp3**

3. Briefing Document

Briefing Doc: Paul's Ministry in Philippi and Thessalonica (Acts 16-17)

Source: Dr. Craig Keener, Acts, Lecture 17, Acts 16-17

Main Themes:

- **The Power of the Gospel:** Despite facing opposition, imprisonment, and persecution, Paul and his companions persevere in spreading the message of Jesus Christ. They demonstrate remarkable faith and resilience, even choosing to remain in Philippi despite an opportunity to escape.
- **The Importance of Roman Citizenship:** Paul's Roman citizenship plays a pivotal role in protecting him and Silas from further harm and securing a degree of legal protection for the nascent Christian communities.
- **The Challenges of Early Christian Mission:** Cultural clashes, xenophobia, and accusations of treason against Rome are major obstacles Paul encounters in his mission. He skillfully navigates these challenges, utilizing his understanding of Roman law and Jewish customs.

Key Ideas/Facts:

Philippi:

- **Liberation and Opposition:** Paul liberates a slave girl possessed by a spirit, but her owners, deprived of profit, retaliate by accusing Paul and Silas of promoting unlawful customs.
- "The charge that they're going to raise against them... legally, you damaged our property."
- **Exploiting Anti-Judaism:** The accusers leverage prevalent anti-Semitism, particularly in Roman Philippi, to incite the crowd and magistrates against Paul and Silas.
- "Philippi was a Roman colony, and... Romans' main complaint about Jews was that they were converting people."
- **Imprisonment and Divine Intervention:** Paul and Silas are imprisoned and placed in stocks, but an earthquake miraculously breaks their bonds and opens the prison doors.

- **The Jailer's Conversion:** The jailer, fearing execution for the prisoners' escape, is about to commit suicide when Paul stops him and shares the gospel. The jailer and his household are baptized.
- "Paul exhorts him not to. Wait, don't do that. We're all here." "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you'll be saved, the true Lord, the true kurios."
- **Roman Citizenship as Protection:** Paul reveals his Roman citizenship, exposing the illegality of his treatment. The magistrates apologize and release Paul and Silas, but ultimately expel them.
- "The officials were unaware... they had actually beaten Roman citizens... Paul has the upper hand."

Thessalonica:

- **Ministry in the Synagogue:** Paul preaches in the Thessalonian synagogue for three weeks (likely longer in the city), attracting converts but also facing strong opposition.
- "He probably spent even longer ministering in Thessalonica... he received support from Philippi."
- **Mobs and Accusations of Treason:** Opponents stir up a mob, accusing Paul and Silas of promoting another king (Jesus) and thereby challenging Caesar's authority.
- "Proclaiming another king was considered treason against the majesty of the emperor."
- **Jason's Protection:** Unable to find Paul, the mob drags his host, Jason, before the city officials (Polytarchs), who require him to post bond to ensure peace.
- **Flight to Berea:** Paul and Silas are sent away secretly to Berea to avoid further conflict and protect the new believers in Thessalonica.

Key Quotes:

- "The people don't know that these are both Jews and Romans. Sometimes you have situations like that today when people just assume something about someone."

- "Christian theology, following much of Jewish theology...has historically rejected suicide. And Christian theology has done so very strongly, saying only God has the right to take life."
- "They needed to help secure the future safety of the fledgling Christian community, and this would put them in at least a somewhat better situation."
- "The gospel's opponents misunderstand here no less than do the Stoics and Epicureans in chapter 17, verse 18, when they think Paul is preaching strange gods."

Key Takeaways:

Paul's experiences in Philippi and Thessalonica highlight the early challenges and triumphs of the Christian mission. Despite opposition and danger, the message of Jesus spreads, demonstrating the power of faith and the enduring impact of the gospel. Paul's skillful use of his Roman citizenship and his strategic responses to persecution contribute to the growth and stability of the early church.

4. Acts Study Guide: Session 17, Acts 16 -17

Acts 16-17 Study Guide

Key Terms Glossary

Spirit In the ancient world, a spirit associated with divination and prophecy; named for the Delphic oracle in Greek mythology. In Acts 16, it's used to describe the spirit possessing a slave girl exploited by her owners for fortune-telling.

Strategoi The Greek term for Roman magistrates, specifically the duoviri, the two highest-ranking Roman officials in a colony like Philippi. Equivalent to the Latin praetor. **Agora** A central public space in ancient Greek cities. In Philippi, the central agora functioned as a Roman forum and was the location of trials.

Via Egnatia A major Roman road that stretched across the Balkan Peninsula, connecting Rome to Byzantium (Constantinople). Paul and Silas traveled along this road during their missionary journeys in Acts 16-17.

Coercitio A legal term for beating used in Roman courts to extract information or confessions from individuals, especially those of lower social standing.

Lictors Roman officials who served as attendants to magistrates and carried bundles of rods (fasces) as symbols of their authority. These rods could be used for corporal punishment, including the beating of non-citizens.

Stocks A device used for physical restraint, typically consisting of a wooden frame with holes for securing a person's ankles and/or wrists. Used as punishment and to prevent escape, often causing pain and discomfort.

Kurios A Greek term meaning "lord" or "master." Used as a title of respect when addressing someone directly (like "Sir") and also as a divine title for Jesus, emphasizing his authority and Lordship.

Impluvium A shallow rectangular pool located in the atrium (central hall) of a Roman house, designed to collect rainwater from the compluvium (opening in the roof).

Trinomena The three-part naming convention used by Roman citizens, consisting of the praenomen (personal name), nomen (clan name), and cognomen (family or distinguishing name). For example, Gaius Julius

Caesar. Polyarchs The specific term for city officials in Thessalonica, indicating a system of government where power was shared among multiple individuals. This term, attested archaeologically, highlights Luke's accuracy in describing local administrative structures.

Demos A Greek term referring to "the people," specifically the citizen body of a city-state or region. In Thessalonica, the demos had judicial powers and could be assembled to hear legal cases.

Quiz

1. What was the primary reason the owners of the slave girl were upset with Paul and Silas? (Acts 16:16-19)
2. How did the charges against Paul and Silas in Philippi reflect common anti-Judaism in the Roman world? (Acts 16:20-21)
3. Describe the conditions and treatment experienced by Paul and Silas in the Philippian prison. (Acts 16:23-24)
4. What was the significance of Paul and Silas singing hymns at midnight in prison? (Acts 16:25)
5. How did the jailer's question, "What must I do to be saved?" reflect different concerns compared to similar questions asked earlier in Luke-Acts? (Acts 16:30)
6. Why did the jailer washing Paul and Silas' wounds and then baptizing them hold symbolic significance? (Acts 16:33-34)
7. What risks did the jailer take in providing hospitality to Paul and Silas? (Acts 16:34)
8. How did Paul and Silas use their Roman citizenship to their advantage in Philippi? (Acts 16:37-39)
9. Why did the magistrates in Philippi urge Paul and Silas to leave the city? (Acts 16:39)
10. How did the charges against Paul and Silas in Thessalonica escalate the situation and force them to flee? (Acts 17:6-9)

Short Answer Quiz Answer Key

1. The owners were upset because Paul had cast out the spirit of divination from their slave girl, preventing them from profiting from her fortune-telling abilities.
2. The charge that Paul and Silas, being Jews, were teaching customs unlawful for Romans tapped into widespread xenophobia and suspicion towards Jews, often accused of proselytizing and undermining Roman authority.
3. They were placed in the inner prison, a dark and filthy cell, their feet secured in stocks, likely experiencing pain and discomfort from their prior beating.
4. This act of praise amidst suffering demonstrated their unwavering faith and trust in God's sovereignty, even in the face of adversity. It echoed Psalm 119:61-62, which speaks of praising God at midnight during persecution.
5. Unlike earlier instances where the question focused on achieving righteousness or joining the Messianic movement, the jailer's question came from a place of fear and desperation after witnessing a supernatural event. His concern was personal salvation in the face of possible judgment.
6. The washing of wounds symbolized physical healing and cleansing, while baptism represented spiritual cleansing and entry into the Christian community, showcasing the holistic transformation offered through faith in Jesus.
7. By providing food, shelter, and baptism to known prisoners accused of disturbing the peace, the jailer risked facing legal repercussions and social ostracism, highlighting his newfound faith's transformative power.
8. By revealing their citizenship after the unlawful beating, Paul and Silas exposed the magistrates' illegal actions, forcing them to apologize and release them to avoid further legal consequences and potential damage to Philippi's status.
9. Fearing potential repercussions for violating the rights of Roman citizens, the magistrates sought to quickly and quietly resolve the situation by urging Paul and Silas to leave, hoping to avoid further scrutiny and unrest.
10. The accusation that Paul and Silas were proclaiming another king, Jesus, was construed as treason against the Roman Emperor. This serious charge inflamed the mob and prompted the authorities to demand security from their host, Jason, forcing the missionaries to flee for their safety and to protect the new believers.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the role of divine intervention in Paul and Silas' experiences in Philippi. How do these events demonstrate God's power and purpose in their ministry?
2. Compare and contrast the responses of the Philippian jailer and the Thessalonian authorities to Paul and Silas' message. What factors might have contributed to their different reactions?
3. Discuss the significance of Paul and Silas' Roman citizenship in Acts 16. How did they utilize their status, and what does this reveal about their understanding of their mission and responsibilities?
4. Explain how the accusations against Paul and Silas in both Philippi and Thessalonica reflect the challenges and misconceptions early Christians faced in spreading the gospel within the Roman Empire.
5. Analyze the significance of hospitality and generosity in Acts 16-17. How do these acts demonstrate the values of the early Christian community and contribute to the advancement of the gospel?

5. FAQs on Keener, Acts, Session 17, Acts 16-17 Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ about Paul's Ministry in Philippi and Thessalonica (Acts 16-17)

1. What led to Paul and Silas's arrest in Philippi?

Paul cast out a demon from a slave girl who had been used for fortune-telling. Her owners, angered by the loss of income, dragged Paul and Silas to the Roman magistrates in the marketplace, accusing them of promoting unlawful customs for Romans. This charge played on common anti-Jewish sentiments and xenophobia, particularly strong in the Roman colony of Philippi.

2. What was the nature of Paul and Silas's punishment in Philippi?

They were publicly stripped, beaten with rods, and thrown into the inner prison—a dark and filthy place. Their feet were secured in stocks, adding to their suffering. This punishment was meant to be both physically painful and deeply humiliating.

3. How did Paul and Silas respond to their imprisonment?

At midnight, they prayed and sang hymns, praising God despite their circumstances. This act of faith was accompanied by a miraculous earthquake that broke their chains and opened the prison doors.

4. What was significant about the Philippian jailer's conversion?

Terrified by the earthquake and assuming the prisoners had escaped, the jailer was about to commit suicide. Paul stopped him and, in response to the jailer's question, "What must I do to be saved?", proclaimed, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved." The jailer and his entire household were baptized that night, demonstrating the transformative power of faith. His willingness to risk his own safety by caring for Paul and Silas further highlighted his newfound faith.

5. Why were Paul and Silas released from prison in Philippi?

The next morning, the magistrates, possibly influenced by the earthquake or by behind-the-scenes intervention from Lydia, sent word for their release. However, Paul revealed that he and Silas were Roman citizens, a status that forbade their mistreatment without a trial. This revelation put the magistrates in a difficult position, and they ultimately pleaded with Paul and Silas to leave the city.

6. What challenges did Paul face in Thessalonica?

Paul preached in the synagogue for three weeks, but faced opposition from some Jews who, feeling threatened by his message, stirred up a mob and accused him of treason. They claimed Paul was proclaiming another king—Jesus—which was seen as a challenge to the Roman Emperor's authority.

7. What happened to Paul and Silas after the accusations in Thessalonica?

Unable to find Paul and Silas, the mob brought Jason, who had hosted them, before the city officials (the politarchs). Jason was required to post a bond to ensure peace, and Paul and Silas were sent away for their safety by the believers.

8. How did Paul's experiences in Philippi and Thessalonica demonstrate the challenges of early Christian mission work?

These accounts show how the early Christians faced opposition from both social prejudices and political anxieties. The spread of the gospel was often met with hostility, requiring courage and resilience from those who proclaimed it. Despite these challenges, the stories also highlight the transformative power of faith, leading to conversions like the jailer's and the growth of the early church.