

WESTERN WISDOM BIBLE STUDY

Corinne Heline

The Second Journey

(Continued)

Acts 17:1-12

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.

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;

Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.

And they troubled the people, and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.

And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.

And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither, went into the synagogue of the Jews.

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

Therefore many of them believed; also of honorable women which were Greeks, and of men, not few.

After the founding of the center or

church of the new faith in Thessalonica, and the tumult which this occasioned, Paul, in an endeavor to strengthen new converts, prepared for them his incomparable Epistles to the Thessalonians. The letters of Paul to the various churches have a deep and intense interest for modern disciples of mystic Christianity. Paul knew the churches to be centers for the dissemination of the Christian Mysteries — Mysteries which are lost to the modern church. Therefore, in his letters he points the way to these deeper truths which await revival and restoration by earnest spiritual seekers of our day.

Jason was the host of Paul and Silas. When they were accused of circulating vicious propaganda, Jason was arrested and forced to put up a bond to guarantee the behavior of himself and his guests. According to his custom, Paul worked in the city until the opposition became too violent; then, under cover of night, he departed. He reached Thessalonica early in the year 52 and left about the end of May, continuing on to Athens and Corinth.

In Europe Paul found a different world and different conditions.

Acts 17:16-21

Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.



Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babblersay? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.

And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?

For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.

(For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)

Paul went into Athens, the Oxford of the ancient world, bearing the glorious message of the One who is the resurrection and the life. No one was better suited than he, the Hebrew and Grecian scholar, to exhort the Athenians to a consideration of the Christ religion. He found a city filled with idols, and a people whose worship had become an empty ceremonial. The true life and power which animated the temples in the days of Athens' glory were gone; ritual only remained — a condition characteristic of the end of a cycle.

Acts 17:23-25, 28, 32-34

For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with the inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.

So Paul departed from among them.

Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed; among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

As an exponent of the inner development of Christianity, Paul was ever seeking to turn the attention of men inward. He sought to lead the curious, cynical, intellectually frivolous Athenian throng to an inner realization of the Christ in whom we live and move and have our being.

Such a departure in thought could only be received by the majority with mockery, disbelief and suspicion. Then, as always, only the few were soil for the new seed. Dionysius, a justice of the highest court, was one such; also the woman named Damaris and others who formed a nucleus for the new order. Again, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

(To be continued)