

First Things First

The Gospel in Motion

Acts 17:1-9

As Paul and Silas enter Thessalonica, they go to the synagogue – traditionally their first stop in the towns they visit on their missionary journeys. Their message, proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah who suffered and rose again, invites both Jews and Gentiles into this extended story of the faithfulness of the God of Israel. However, many in the crowd are not persuaded, and angrily accuse them of upsetting the political and civil order, contrary to the decrees of the emperor.

*** Why do you think the opposition responds with jealousy and anger instead of honest debate?**

*** Have you ever seen a disagreement shift from the real issue to something else? What is revealed here about the deeper conflict?**

The accusation against Paul and Silas is that they are “turning the world upside down” in proclaiming another king—Jesus. This is not just a spiritual claim but a deeply political one, challenging ultimate allegiance to Caesar. The kingdom of God reorders our understanding of power, loyalty, and purpose as much today as it did in the days of early Christianity.

*** What does it mean to say that Jesus is “another king,” and how would that have challenged the Roman world?**

*** In what ways do you see modern Christians struggle with divided loyalties between Jesus and cultural or political systems?**

The early Christians were accused of turning the world upside down—but in reality, they were helping set it right by living under the rule of the true King, Jesus. As we behold Christ, we are invited into that same disruptive, beautiful work—placing Jesus above all and pouring out our lives for the sake of the world.

*** How have you seen the world turned “upside down” by those who pour themselves out for the sake of the world?**

*** What might it look like for your life to reflect the “upside-down” values of God’s kingdom in a practical way?**

