**Turning the World Upside Down**

*Acts 17:6*

**Introduction**

1. Paul and Silas preached Jesus to the Jews in the synagogue in Thessalonica – **Acts 17:1-4** – a few believed and joined them.
2. Others were enraged by the gospel – **Acts 17:5-9** – they could not find Paul and Silas, so they took Jason who housed them to the rulers of the city.
	1. **(v. 6)** – Accusation levied against Paul and Silas – they have turned the world upside down and are here doing the same.
	2. Trouble in other places followed Paul:
		1. First missionary journey – Antioch – **Acts 13:45, 50** – Jews jealous of gospel preached to Gentiles.
		2. Iconium – **Acts 14:2, 4** – attempt to stone them.
		3. Lystra – **Acts 14:19-20** – stoned and left for dead.
		4. Second missionary journey – Philippi – **Acts 16:20-24** – beaten and put in prison after casting out a spirit by which men made profit. (Another false accusation.)
		5. Paul’s reputation – **Acts 24:5** – plague, ringleader of a sect.
	3. Political – **(v. 7)** – reminiscent of charges against Jesus (**cf. Luke 23:2** – completely false)
	4. Turning world upside down – i.e. incendiary revolutionaries wreaking havoc on the Roman empire and undermining the Caesar.
3. While the accusation against Paul and Silas was false – they were not in rebellion to the Roman empire, and the troublemakers were those opposed to the gospel, not them – there is some truth to it.
	1. “In a sense, the charge that the missionaries are troubling the whole world is correct. The fact is that the gospel troubles, penetrates, and alters society in every part of the world.” (Hendriksen)
	2. “In one sense it is true that wherever the gospel comes in its power to any place, to any soul, it works such a change there, gives such a wide change to the stream, so directly contrary to what it was, that it may be said to turn the world upside down in that place, in that soul.” (Matthew Henry)
	3. “But, again, the charges were true in a far other sense than their bringers meant. For Christianity is revolutionary, and its very aim is to turn the world upside down, since the wrong side is uppermost at present, and Jesus, not Caesar, or any king or emperor or czar, is the true Lord and ruler of men. But the revolution which He makes is the revolution of individuals, turning them from darkness to light; for He moulds single souls first and society afterwards.” (Alexander MacLaren)
4. Those in the world are under the rule of Satan – **Ephesians 2:2; Acts 26:18; Colossians 1:13** – therefore, their minds are corrupted by lies – **John 8:44** (Father of lies)
5. The gospel truth alters their paradigm of thought, and completely shifts the way the world and life is to be perceived.
6. Those who come into contact with the gospel have their world turned upside down, truly right side up, and they can never be the same, whether they accept it or not.
7. Christians are the heralds of this life altering message, and the world needs to hear it.
8. Regarding Truth
9. What is truth? – Skeptics of Objective Truth
	1. Pilate’s question to Jesus – **John 18:37-38** – not sure of the tone, or context of his question regarding his own thoughts.
	2. However, the majority of the world today challenges the notion of a system of truth.
		1. Truth, they say, is relative.
		2. There is no absolute, objective truth.
	3. Consequences to this relative view of truth – the loss of any and all standards and consistency:
		1. Morality – such is made fluid, and up to each individual.
		2. Human biology – even gender is made fluid.
		3. Religion – there is no thought of a right or wrong religion. All are equal.
		4. Social interaction – the only stable standard is the insistence of tolerance sans tolerance of the intolerant.
		5. Etc.
	4. What is truth?
		1. “(a)(1): the body of real things, events, and facts; (2) the state of being the case.” (Webster)
		2. It is by its very definition objective.
		3. The claim – “truth is not objective, but subjective” – is itself a belief in an objective truth stated by that person.
		4. However, if such a statement, believed to be objectively true, is indeed true there is a contradiction.
		5. Without objectivity, there is nothing trustworthy about “truth.”
10. The Gospel Truth
	1. Jesus claimed to bear witness to the truth – **John 18:37**
	2. Jesus claimed to be the truth – **John 14:6**
		1. THE – definite article which narrows the thought.
		2. Not A truth – as though there are many.
		3. Not truth – as simply stating His current existence.
		4. But THE truth – marking not only the possession and origin of all truth, but Himself being the essence of truth.
		5. Jesus’ statement is in connection with His divine nature 🡪
	3. Truth comes from God:
		1. He is the “God of truth” – **Isaiah 65:16**
			1. His nature is incapable of untruth – **Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18**
		2. All things were made by God – **Hebrews 3:4** – thus, He is the only infallible source of information concerning all things, or, TRUTH.
		3. Truth is revealed by Him – **Psalm 19:1, 7, 9** (Judgments true) – revealed in nature, and His word.
11. This understanding of absolute objective truth brings about responsibility to the individual, and they will have to determine whether to find what is truth, or live a lie – **2 Thessalonians 2:9-12** – such has consequences.
12. Regarding Our Nature
13. The Naturalistic World View
	1. Naturalism – “the philosophical belief that everything arises from natural properties and causes, and supernatural or spiritual explanations are excluded or discounted” (New Oxford American Dictionary) (Evolution)
	2. Most noted naturalist – Charles Darwin – suggestion of macro-evolution, including humans from apes.
	3. Consequences:
		1. Human value is no more than any other animal, or even vegetation.
		2. Morality is unexplainable, and/or undiscernible if we’re consistent in our thinking.
		3. Explains – higher suicide among youth, mass killings, racial bias (the ultimate agenda behind Darwin’s, “The Descent of Man”), etc.
14. The Dual Nature of Man
	1. **Genesis 1:26; 2:7; Ecclesiastes 12:7** – Dust and spirit.
		1. This dual nature in stark contrast to that of the animal creation (purely part of the natural world).
		2. Elements will melt – **2 Peter 3:10** – i.e. the foundational elements of the physical universe, including all things that make up the human body – same as animals (**cf. Ecclesiastes 3:19-20** – physical existence is same – in material)
		3. If then, we remain when the elemental existence does not, should we not live differently in the world?
	2. Such knowledge completely alters our perception of value concerning ourselves – **Mark 8:36-37**
	3. Such knowledge requires an investigation into what it is that will not be destroyed in the end, and therefore what will last – **1 John 2:15-17; Matthew 6:19-21**
	4. This will fly in the face of physical preservation – **Mark 8:35**
	5. This will utterly change the way we view each other, and treat each other – **Luke 10:25-29, 36-37** (Good Samaritan – you are to be a neighbor to everyone – not same politics, religion, gender, race, etc.)
	6. This will utterly change the way we live period – we are amenable to God’s law in Christ **– Romans 2:16; Hebrews 9:27**
		1. Those who come to this knowledge in the gospel have their world turned upside down, because where they had no responsibility to anyone but themselves, now they are responsible for how they live before God.
15. Regarding Religion
16. Relativism in Religion (the concept of relative truth bleeding into religion)
	1. Many believe that there is not one correct religion.
	2. Many approach religions like a buffet and have many mixed views from different faiths.
	3. Some maintain that only “Christianity” is the true religion, but that the various denominations are a matter of inconsequence.
	4. Same problem with all of these thoughts – How can many differing thoughts, often contradictory and inherently exclusive regarding their unique claims, be equal, and lead to the same place? – Even the so-called “Christian” denominations – which all have conflicting doctrines.
17. Pure and Undefiled Religion
	1. The bible mentions a ***“pure and undefiled religion”*** – **James 1:27**
		1. This would imply that not all religions are such.
		2. **(v. 26)** – there is ***“useless”*** religion – ultimately pertaining to its origin – the man who refuses God’s wisdom by replying with an unbridled tongue.
		3. **Pure** – it lacks impurities, i.e. inconsistencies, fallacies, etc.
		4. **Undefiled** – it is perfect, flawless, timeless, etc.
		5. More than simply the two facets mentioned.
		6. What is this ***“pure and undefiled religion?”***
			1. **(v. 25)** – the law of liberty.
			2. **(v. 21)** – implanted word.
			3. **(vv. 19-20)** – that which produces “the righteousness of God”
			4. **(v. 18)** – word of truth.
	2. God is one – **Deuteronomy 6:4-5**
		1. Idea of multiple gods leads to multiple origin stories, conflicting moral principles, etc.
	3. There is only one way to God – **John 14:6** – Jesus
		1. Within Christ there is only one way – **1 Corinthians 1:10-13** – He is not divided.
		2. Any religion which serves any other God than that of the Bible is false.
		3. Any religion claiming to serve the God of the Bible who rejects Jesus is false.
		4. Any religion claiming to serve Jesus that does not adhere to His word entirely is false.
	4. This being the case places immense responsibility upon each person to find the correct, or ***“pure and undefiled religion.”***
	5. Anyone who finds themselves not part of that religion must decide whether they will stop being wrong, and follow what is right, or delude themselves and remain wrong – **James 1:23-24, 26** – practicing a “useless” religion.

**Conclusion**

1. We live in a world which is blinded by the lies of the god of this world.
2. The word of Christ is contrary to much of what the world believes, and how they live.
3. It is understandable then that there were those speaking of the gospel turning the world upside down.
4. Our beliefs which many view as radical and unreasonable are sound – **Acts 26:25** – not mad, but speak words of truth and reason.
5. It is our duty as Christians to turn the world upside down, i.e. truly right side up.