

Acts 17:1-9

Introduction

Can you imagine a world where everybody just accepts authority?

I can see parent's eyes lighting up at the thought!

Other people are thinking how boring would TV and films be! The bad guys see the police lights behind them and pull over to the side of the road.

"Sorry officer I nearly didn't see you there! Please feel free to search the car, I must confess about the drugs hidden in the car and the weapons as well"

The reality is that all of us at times need persuading that following the right authority is a can be a good thing! How many of get a parking ticket fairly and say to the parking warden: "Fair point there, you got me legitimately, have a nice day and here's a few quid, have a drink on me."

In our sermon series "*postcards from Europe*" we are hearing all about the spread of the message about Jesus the King. The ultimate authority and the promised King from the OT!

But We are an age that doesn't appreciate authority as much!

We are more inclined to think about the horrible abuses of authority in our world. Authority doesn't always sound great to our ears

So how can we accept this message about this King called Jesus?

But especially this Sunday

Why would we and how can we persuade others about the message of this King! What will happen when we do?

Acts 17:1-9 will begin to show us

Firstly!

The art of gospel persuasion 17:1-4

Context v1 + 2a =

*V1 + 2: "When Paul and his companions had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. ² **As was his custom, Paul into the synagogue**, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scripture"*

As you read around Acts 17 you see that Paul takes the message of Jesus the King everywhere and to everyone!

Yet here he goes straight to the synagogue in Thessalonica! The place of Jewish worship!

The Jews knew the Old Testament (first half of the Bible) really well which made many promises that God would send a King/Messiah into the world.

Last week we were waiting at the bus stop in Dublin to get to the airport and rather than take the expensive option we got a local bus rather than the airport but. (To get more of a cultural experience/I'm a cheapskate).

On two occasions we missed the bus. It passed us by without stopping!

Paul didn't want the Jews to miss the bus! That is the long awaited King that history was waiting for!

He had already come, his name was Jesus! The message was spreading everywhere!

Paul writes in the NT letter to the Romans: *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile."*

SO here Paul is in the Jewish Synagogue of Thessalonica

But what exactly did he say to them!

Content v 2b =

"and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures"

That is Paul opened up the OT part of the Bible and taught the Jews from it!

If it's true that the OT makes these incredible predictions about the King the why not start there?

In fact the OT is the Kings book! It is all about Jesus and Paul knew that if he wanted to convince anybody about Jesus then the The Kings book was never a bad place to start.

He knew at least 3 things about it!

- *The Kings book is powerful* – All Scripture is God breathed (2 Tim 3:16). It's a book written by human hands but is inspired by the same voice that spoke all of creation into being! Is Gods book!
- *The King's book is real* – It is a book written in real time about real places and real people. It has history on its side. It stands up to scrutiny. Many people have done work showing the reliability of the Bible.
- In fact one great example is what Paul did in this synagogue! Paul showed the Jews how their book, the OT part of the Bible prophesised precise details about the King before the King had come. That's a great evidence for the reality and reliability of this book!
- *The Kings book is relevant* –

There is a problem here isn't there for us. We might say:

It is one thing for Paul to go into the synagogue and open up the scriptures with religious people but the people I meet and know, my friends and family don't accept the authority of this book!

Yet if you are confident the Bible is powerful, real and relevant you will know that Gods word has so much to say to everyone, religious or not.

The designer and creator of the universe has so much to say about E.g. Relationships, money, the right to life, security, anxiety, anger, forgiveness, and suffering.

One of my favourite stories that reminds me of the relevance of the Kings book is back when I was in sixth form college ...

I was just beginning to seriously follow Jesus and whilst perhaps not been the hardest worker at college I was for a period the most aggressive evangelist!

I got chatting to a friend of a friend. A girl who was bemoaning the state of her miserable romantic life after numerous boys behaving badly! She listened to some counsel I gave her and said. How do you know this stuff?

Without directly saying: "God told me so!", I explained that God laid out his plans for relationships in the Bible and the reason why everything I said made sense to her was because it was the wisdom of the creator. The Bible was relevant and this led onto a much clearer conversation about Jesus!

So Paul reasoned with them from the powerful, real and relevant scriptures and where did his reasoning take him?

To show them the great relevance this book had because this book reveals

Christ v3 =

As Paul reasoned from the Scriptures he took people to see Jesus Christ, the one we all need to see.

Paul was

"explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead." V3: "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah,

What was difficult for people of this time to understand was the nature of this King/Messiah/Christ.

The Jews expected a promised King but Paul specifically had to explain and prove that this King had to suffer and rise from the dead!!!

But how could he? This was Gods long awaited King and he was to suffer death on the cross? What kind of God would allow this to happen?

Yet this was God's plan.

The King who came to earth to reveal the truth about God to people was also the King who through his death would reconcile sinners to God!

So the art of gospel persuasion/evangelism is To show people Jesus

We have kept the UK's delivery services busy this week with lots of Summer activities happening. As these delivery men and women knock at the door what motivates them? It's ultimately their pay check.

What will motivate unpaid Christians to go and speak about Jesus this week in order to persuade others, in the Town Centre Mission or at work or in your families?

The reality that God sent his Messiah, his one and only Son into the world to not only reveal the full truth about God so that the guessing game to life's biggest questions is over but also to bridge the gap between sinners like us and this God not just now but for all eternity in the Gods perfect heavenly home.

Is that motivation enough?

Finally as we consider the art of gospel persuasion we realise we can have confidence as we go.

Confidence v4 =

"Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women."

How do we know gospel persuasion is going to work?

Firstly because the Bible tells us so and secondly because experience tells us so!

Do you see what happens! Many of those hearing this in the synagogue, not an entirely monochrome group, were persuaded that Jesus is King and they should therefore follow him!

Jews, God fearing Greeks and important women were persuaded.

At other points Paul would go and speak to those far away from Judeo – Christian worldview but what did it mean for the religious sat here in the synagogue to be persuaded?

Remember Copernicus?

He was the man made famous for realising that the Sun was at the centre of the universe!

For these people to be persuaded was for them to experience their own Copernican revolution! They were not at the centre of their universe but rather a new King was in town. His name was Jesus.

It is our confidence that as we preach the share the message about Jesus some, however few or many, will respond and decide to centre their lives round Jesus too.

Yet of course whenever there is a new King in Town not everyone appreciates their authority and those who submit to their authority.

This leads us too.

The consequence of gospel persuasion 17: 5-9

The motivation of the persecutors v5

But other Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city.

What is your expectation of what happens when you try and persuade others about Jesus?

It might not surprise you that the simple act of people choosing to follow Jesus as their king was enough to cause angst among some people! “Why you doing that?” “Joined the God Squad”

You might be surprised to see where the angst and trouble came from?

We are told it came from the religious. There were other Jews who didn’t like what was happening and they were motivated by Jealousy.

Some people make the accusation that religion only causes trouble in the world and does nothing good. You might look at these jealous Jews and think well here is your evidence. They actually start a riot in the city!

That is major trouble isn’t it. If you have seen the riots in Hong Kong recently they are motivated by completely different things but riots are rarely started over nothing!

What can you say to the accusation that religion only cause trouble?

1. The statement is ridiculous. Secular states have caused more deaths in the 20th Century than any other worldview!
2. Look at the motivation here.
They were jealous.

As people responded to the message about Jesus and became follows of Jesus the response was of course instinctive from others – Jealousy!

They move toward a gang like mentality.

This is our patch and we want to be the biggest gang in town. Not these new Christ followers!

There is no reasoned, rational argument involved. This Jealousy is common to the human heart not just the religious. As an overflow of sinful hearts these Jews are jealous and

They form an unlikely alliance!

The religious team up with the secular. “Bad characters” hired to cause trouble on behalf of the religious who wouldn’t wish to get their hands dirty in rioting but are happy for others to do their bidding!

It is a helpful reminder to us never to be naïve. Those who oppose the truth of the Jesus will A) Come in all shapes and sizes and B) show real hatred for what we believe!

So let’s see who exactly bears the brunt of this religious discrimination as we look at the

The “guilty” parties v6-7

6 But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other believers before the city officials, shouting: “These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, 7 and Jason has welcomed them into his house.

Who bears the brunt?

1. Its Paul isn’t it!

This evil Apostle who has banging the drum for Jesus. Persuading people of the historical reality of Jesus, of the identity of Jesus, of what he came to do. We are told “These men have caused trouble all over the world”.

It’s absolutely true. After the resurrection, these men, the Apostles began proclaiming the message about Jesus far and wide and the church grew incredibly quickly.

Something for sceptics to consider is why this message spread so quickly, If the resurrection was just a sham!

The claim that Jesus had come back to life was backed up by many and lives were lost defending the claim as people became martyrs.

So perhaps that is not so surprising that this jealous crowd came looking for Paul and his companions. “We must stop people converting to this madness”!

But notice who else bears the brunt!

Jason –

They can’t find Paul and Silas and the rest so they grabbed Jason and some others instead and haul them before the authorities.

Now this is as good an argument as you can get for NOT fence sitting when it comes to Jesus

Jason as far as we can see has not being caught in the act of evangelism/gospel persuasion.

But what has he done? He has welcomed the likes of Paul into his home!

Let’s use the Town Centre Mission as an example!

The Town Centre Mission is what I would call very friendly evangelism. We are creative and winsome, conversational, respectful and gentle but we do try and persuade others!

What do you do when your friends say next week “are you part of that group that was in the Town centre talking to people about Jesus”? Bit weird isn’t it! Dont think you should do that?

What do you say? Yes that my church? Yes I was actually there some days?

You see we can’t fence sit when it comes to following Jesus. All Christians are to be involved in some way in telling others but even when we don’t expect to be counted in the number. Not everyone appreciate the message of the cross!

So ultimately we are forced to ask why does the message meet this response and if it does is it worth standing by?

The ultimate authority v7b-9

Here is what they say:

They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus." 8 When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil. 9 Then they made Jason and the others post bond and let them go.

In their world Ceaser was King and no one else! That is the crime!!!

In today's world Caesar isn't King but who is?

We are! We are told its our life!

Frank Sinatra: "I did it my way"

Bon jovi:

" It's my life
It's now or never
I ain't gonna live forever
I just want to live while I'm alive
(It's my life)
My heart is like an open highway
Like Frankie said
I did it my way
I just want to live while I'm alive
It's my life"

Ultimate it's a question of who is King of your life isn't it!!

Ask people this question: If I could prove beyond doubt Christianity was true would you believe it!

Many people say: No!!!

Why because ultimately it means a new King of your life! It not because people cant but because they wont.

But is it worth having Jesus as King of your life?

For the sake of the joy of knowing God, being reconnected with the creator, having your life renewed and reorder and the knowledge of eternal life. Than answer has to be always yes!