

GOD DREAMS: Thessalonica – Turning the World Right Side Up

Feb 6, 2022

Overarching Theme: 2022 – *The Year of the Lord's Favor* (Luke 4:19)

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. *The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.*

Core Point:

As the world awakens from almost 2 years of pandemic stupor, the words of Jesus proclaiming “the year of the Lord’s favor” is a dream whose time has come. This passage from Luke 4 harkens back to the ‘year of jubilee’ of Leviticus 25 and Isaiah 61, a year of a fresh start, a clean slate and reset for everyone who can dream God’s dream.

Reflect on this Scripture:

Acts 17:1-7 After Paul and Silas had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. ² And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three sabbath days argued with them from the scriptures, ³ explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, “This is the Messiah, Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you.” ⁴ Some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. ⁵ But the Jews became jealous, and with the help of some ruffians in the marketplaces they formed a mob and set the city in an uproar. While they were searching for Paul and Silas to bring them out to the assembly, they attacked Jason’s house. ⁶ When they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some believers before the city authorities, shouting, “These people who have been turning the world upside down have come here also, ⁷ and Jason has entertained them as guests. They are all acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor, saying that there is another king named Jesus.”

This Week: Acts 17:1-7

Paul’s proclamation in Thessalonica that the Jesus who suffered is the living Messiah persuaded a few fellow Jews into the Jesus movement, and they joined the Christian mission in their city. Presumably these Jewish converts include Jason and those meeting in his house (see 17:6).

Those who reacted against Paul's teaching ministry did so in disagreement with his Jesus-centered, 'suffering-and-rising Messiah' reading of Scripture. Perhaps these opponents held that the Messiah would be a conquering hero who would usher in a new world order immediately. They hired some "ruffians" to form a mob in the agora that would "set the city in an uproar" (v. 5b), which thereby allows them to falsely accuse Paul and Silas of "turning the world upside down." Paul's opponents routinely used this tactic, using the riot they instigate as evidence against the church's mission. In this case, Paul's opponents wanted to bring him and Silas before the "citizens' assembly" but could not locate them; and so they took their mischief to "Jason's house" (v. 5c) and "dragged Jason and some believers" before the city authorities to accuse Jason of having "entertained them as guests" (v. 7a), thereby bringing the virtue of hospitality to trial.

The "city authorities" are local magistrates who formed the city's administrative council and whose tasks are similar to those of the Philippian "magistrates" (see 16:20). One of their principal duties is to make certain that proper respect and due loyalty are given to Caesar. For this reason the only politically relevant accusation leveled against Paul and Silas is the third, which claims that they say that there is "another king named Jesus" (v. 7b). Paul would not argue with their assertion about another king, but would add that King Jesus began to turn this nightmarish world 'right side up' through suffering and rising according to God's dream.

-Adapted from New Interpreters Commentary, Vol X, p. 238-239

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. What do you think about Paul's assertion that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer? Was this 'necessity' due to God's design or due to the realities of the human condition? Discuss.
2. How is Jesus' rising from the dead evidence that God has begun to turn the world "right side up?" Can you think of some examples of 'resurrection' in the world today?
3. How has the reign of King Jesus begun to turn your personal world right side up?
4. Discuss ways that you might lean into God's resurrection dream of turning something in your world (or sphere of influence) right side up by the power of the risen King Jesus. Are there some examples of this already taking place in our community that you can join in? Anything your LIFE group can do together? Prayerfully dream about the possibilities.

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC
2. Read and reflect through your **God Dreams** journal (beginning on page 18).
3. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: **Acts 17:6-7** ⁶ When they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some believers before the city authorities, shouting, "These people who have been turning the world upside down have come here also, ⁷ and Jason has entertained them as guests. They are all acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor, saying that there is another king named Jesus."