



## Accidental or Evidential Belief?

Acts 17:1—15

John Aldax – Sierra Community Church  
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<sup>17:1</sup> When Paul and his companions had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue.

<sup>2</sup> As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, <sup>3</sup> explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. <sup>3</sup> “This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah,” he said. <sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> 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. They rushed to Jason’s house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd. <sup>6</sup> 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, <sup>7</sup> and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar’s decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus.” <sup>8</sup> When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil. <sup>9</sup> Then they made Jason and the others post bond and let them go.

<sup>10</sup> As soon as it was night, the believers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. <sup>11</sup> Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. <sup>12</sup> As a result, many of them believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men.

<sup>13</sup> But when the Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word of God at Berea, some of them went there too, agitating the crowds and stirring them up. <sup>14</sup> The believers immediately sent Paul to the coast, but Silas and Timothy stayed at Berea. <sup>15</sup> Those who escorted Paul brought him to Athens and then left with instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible.

## Three words that describe Paul’s ministry

1. Paul **REASONED** – preaching or teaching, including the sense of discussion
2. Paul **EXPLAINED** the Hebrew Scriptures. Means “to open”  
Luke 24:32 – “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and **opened** the Scriptures to us?”
3. **PROVED** – He gave evidence, offering “**proof**” from the Hebrew Scriptures concerning the identity of Jesus as the Messiah.

## The ONE THING

**YOU** are responsible for your spiritual growth & health and for the spiritual formation your children.

## How do you prepare?

1. Commit to deepening your understanding of Christianity and the arguments skeptics use to undermine it. Apologetics – learn how to defend your faith and answer hard questions.
2. Schedule a *regular time* to work on growing your understanding of and relationship with God.
3. Exercise critical thinking skills.
4. Work on deepening your knowledge of the Scriptures.

## RESOURCES

The Bible Project Classroom - <https://bibleproject.com/classroom/>

Colson Center for Christian Worldview - <https://www.colsoncenter.org>

Cold Case Christianity - <https://coldcasechristianity.com>

## Community Group Questions

1. What is the most important thing you got from this message?
2. Did the message change the way you think about apologetics or not?
3. Read Psalm 73. What helped the psalmist get back on track?
4. Share some of your favorite resources and how they have helped.