

An Introduction to the Thessalonian Letters

1 Thessalonians 1:1 and Acts 17:1-13

1 Thessalonians 1:1

Paul and Silvanus and Timothy,
To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

1 Thessalonians 1:1

Paul and Silvanus and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

1 Thessalonians 1:1

Paul and Silvanus and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians

in God the Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace.

Acts 17:1-13

Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ." And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women.

Acts 17:1-13

But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people.

When they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have upset the world have come here also; and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.”

Acts 17:1-13

They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them.

The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.

Acts 17:1-13

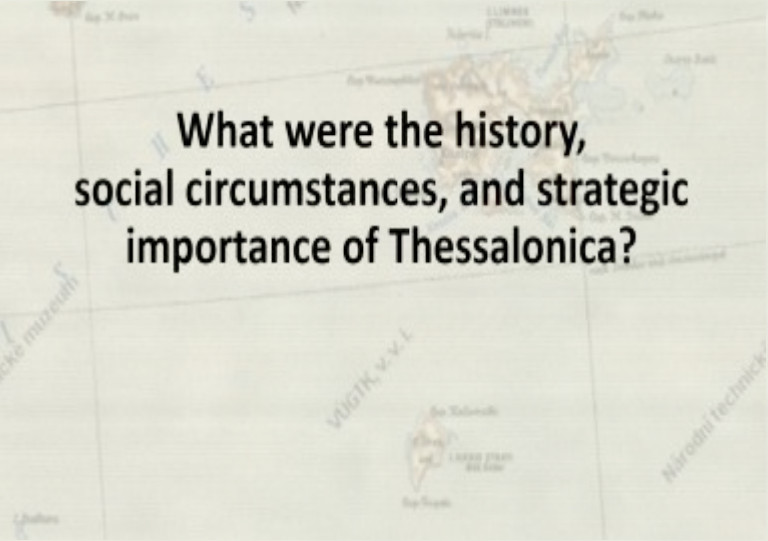
Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men.

But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there as well, agitating and stirring up the crowds.

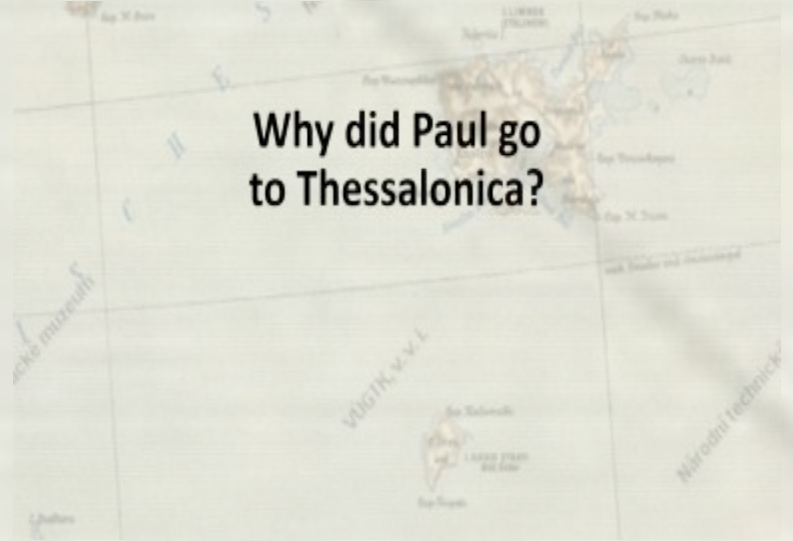
Main Point

Understanding the background and circumstances of the letters the Apostles wrote is crucial to sound interpretation and application.

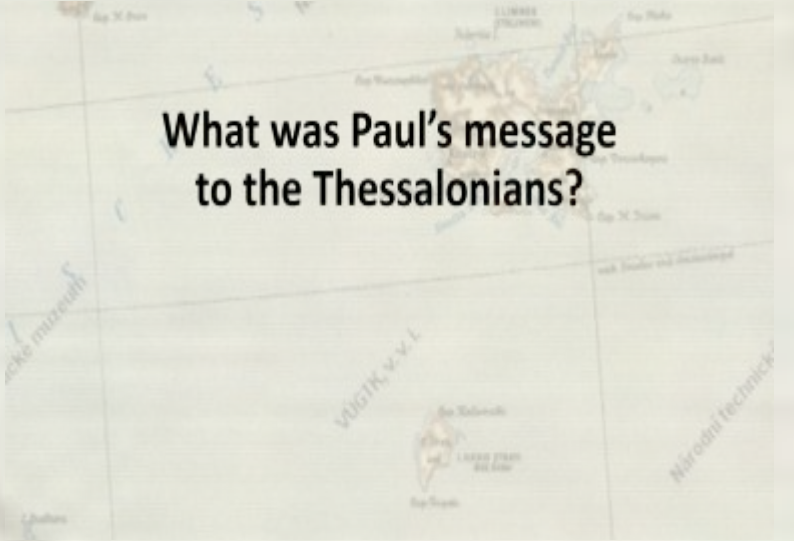
Key Questions



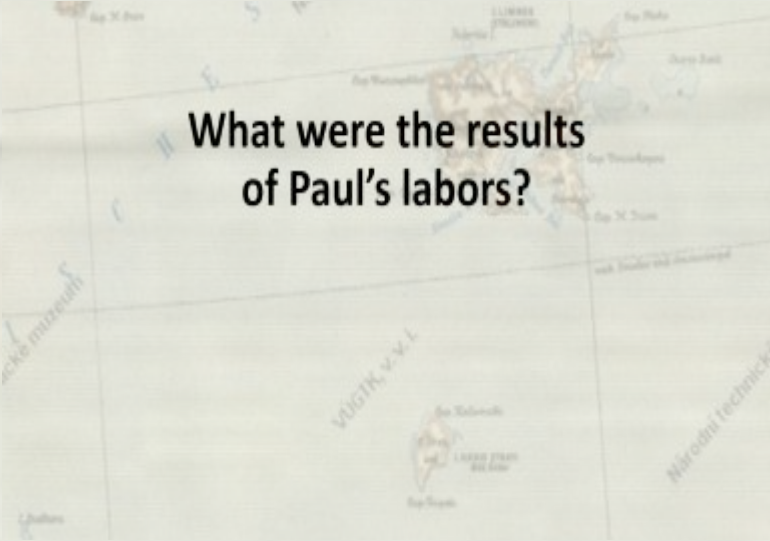
What were the history, social circumstances, and strategic importance of Thessalonica?



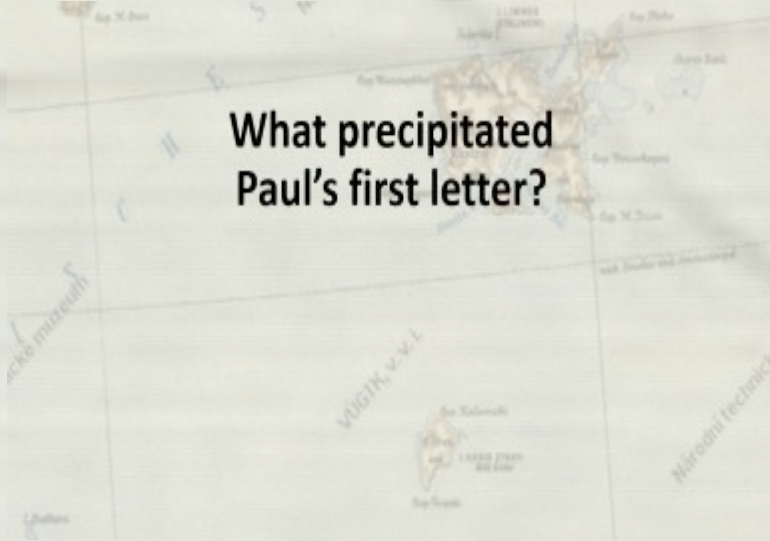
Why did Paul go to Thessalonica?



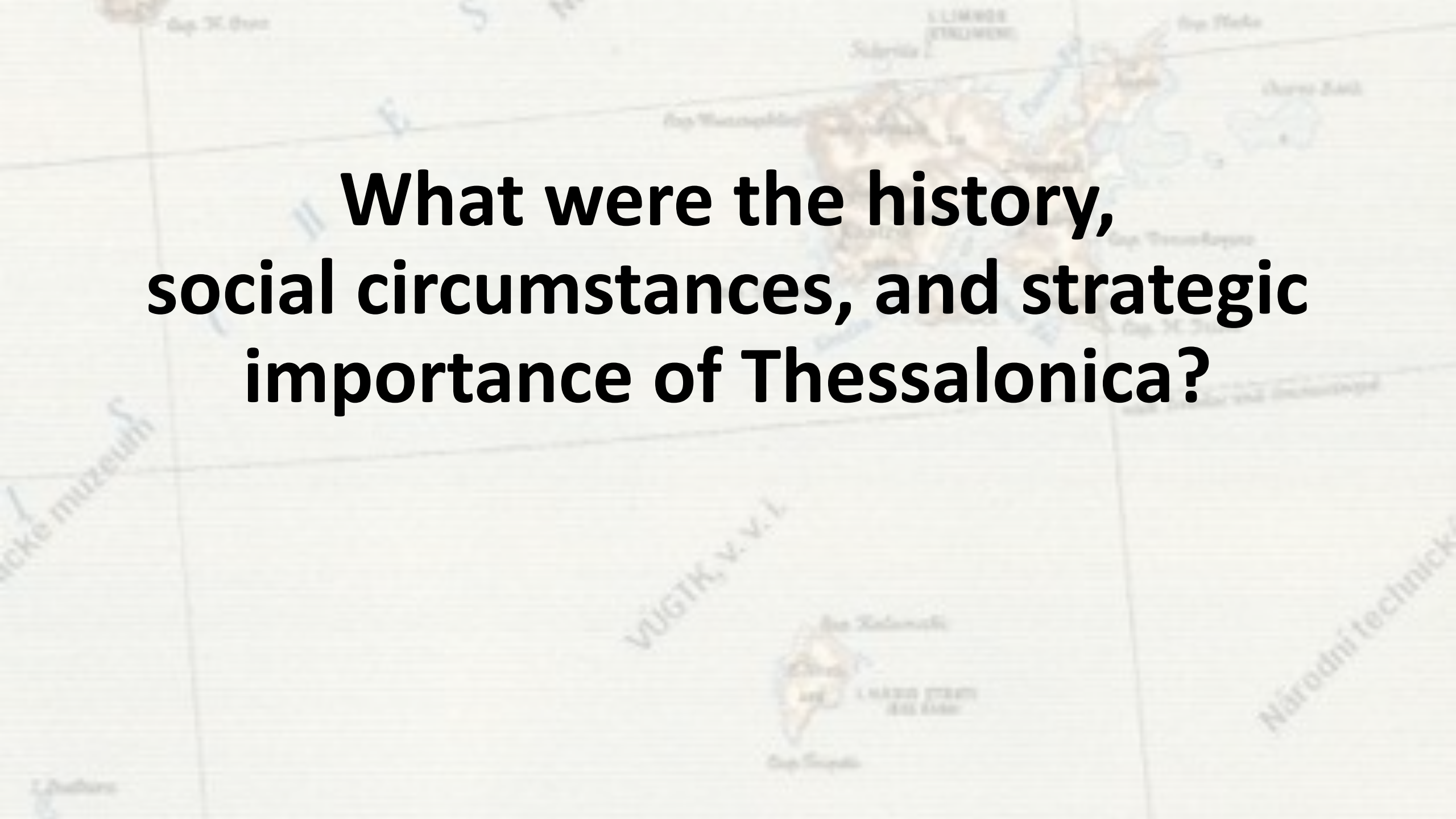
What was Paul's message to the Thessalonians?



What were the results of Paul's labors?



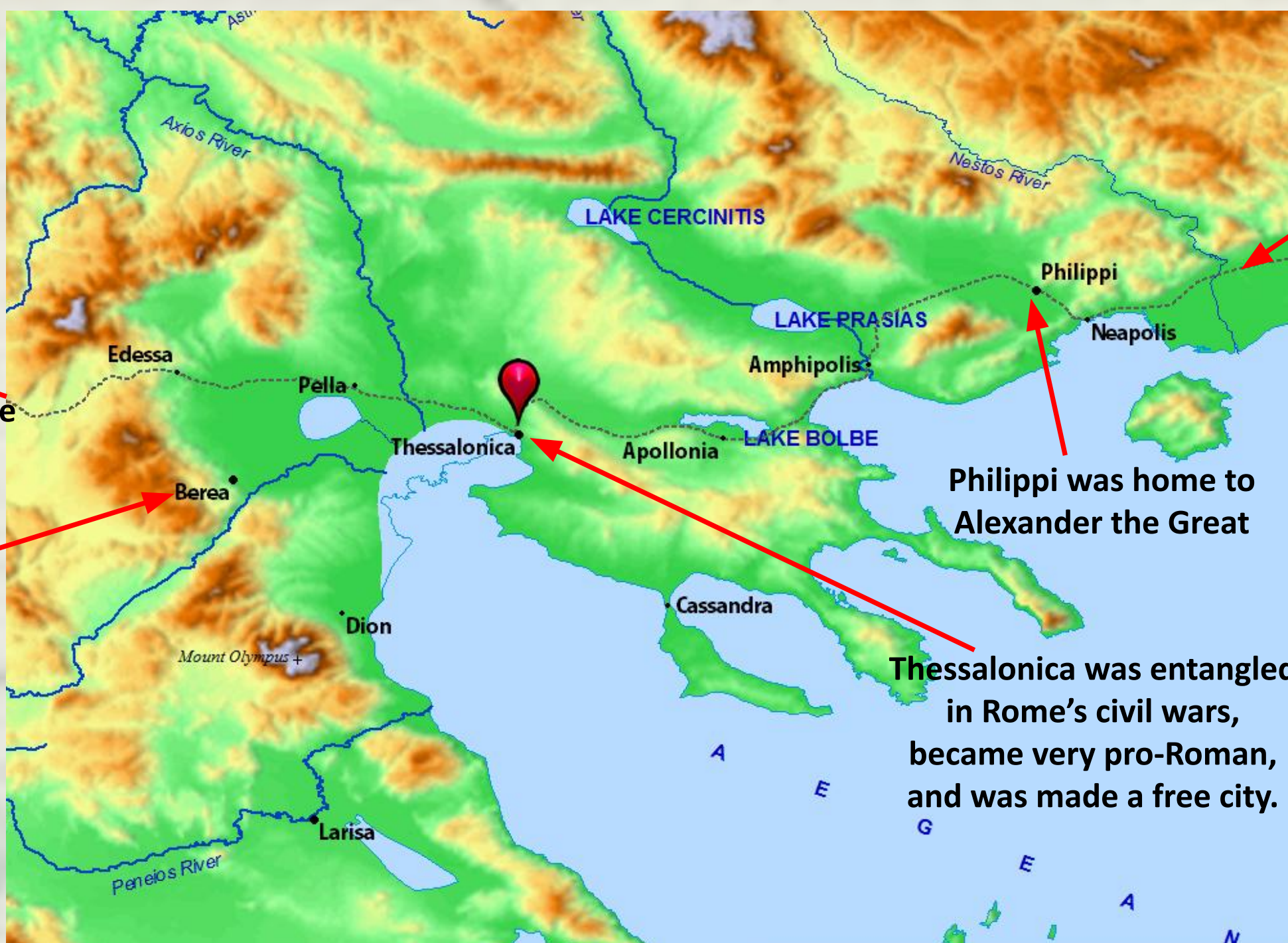
What precipitated Paul's first letter?



**What were the history,
social circumstances, and strategic
importance of Thessalonica?**

History, Circumstances, Importance

History and geography



Rome

Berea

Athens
Corinth

Philippi was home to
Alexander the Great

Thessalonica was entangled
in Rome's civil wars,
became very pro-Roman,
and was made a free city.

Via Egnatia



History, Circumstances, Importance

History and geography

Social circumstances

Acts 17

v. 1: Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Appollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where **there was a synagogue of the Jews.**

v. 4: And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the **God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women.**

v. 6: When they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren **before the city authorities...**

v. 7-8: ...shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also...and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, **saying that there is another king, Jesus.**"

The Thessalonian Letters

1:9: "...how you turned to God from idols..."

4:3: "...that you abstain from sexual immorality..."

4:11: "...make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you" **And**

2 Thess. 3:10, "...if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either."



History, Circumstances, Importance

History and geography

Social circumstances

Strategic importance





Why did Paul go to Thessalonica?

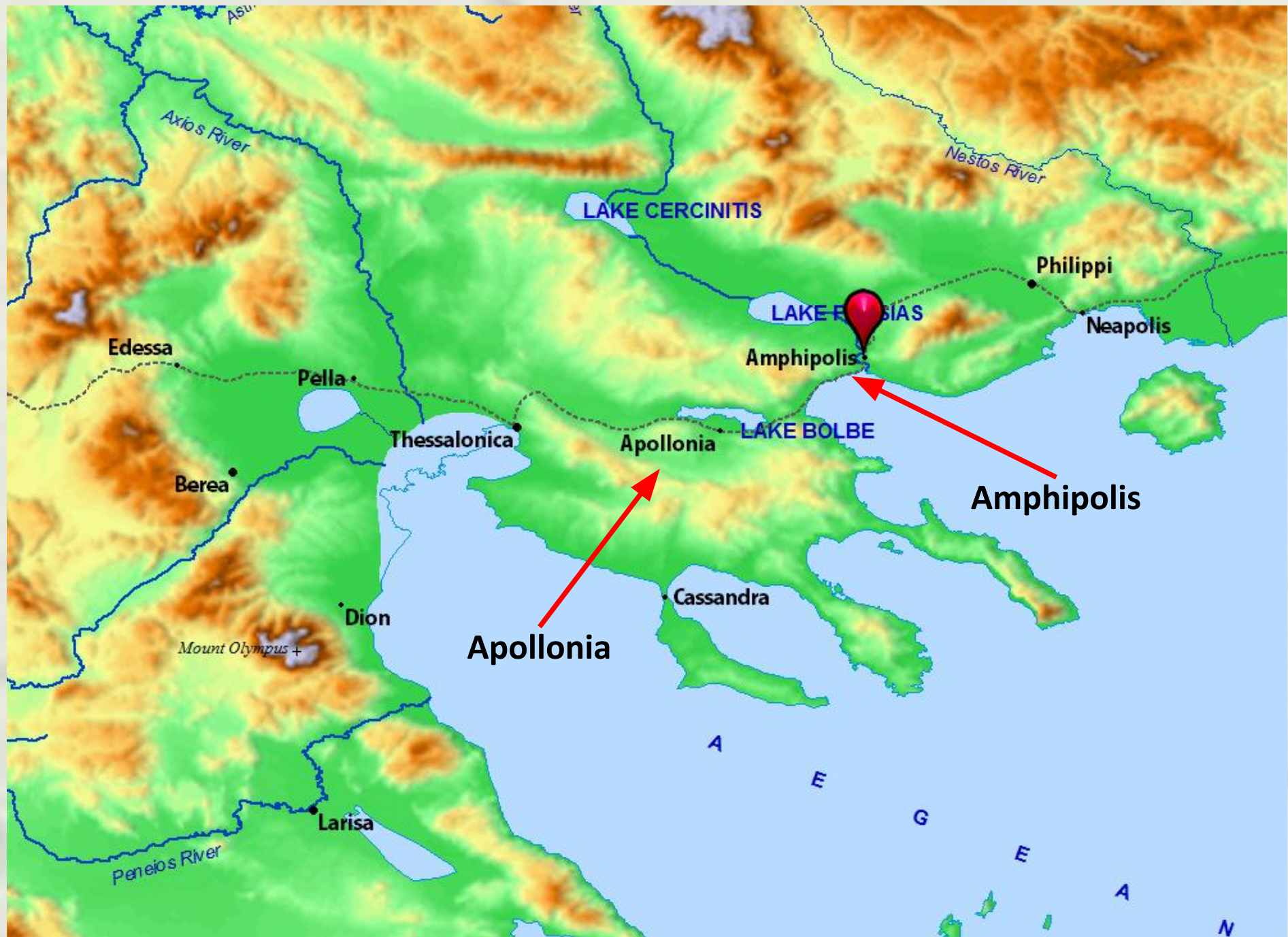
Paul's Second Missionary Journey





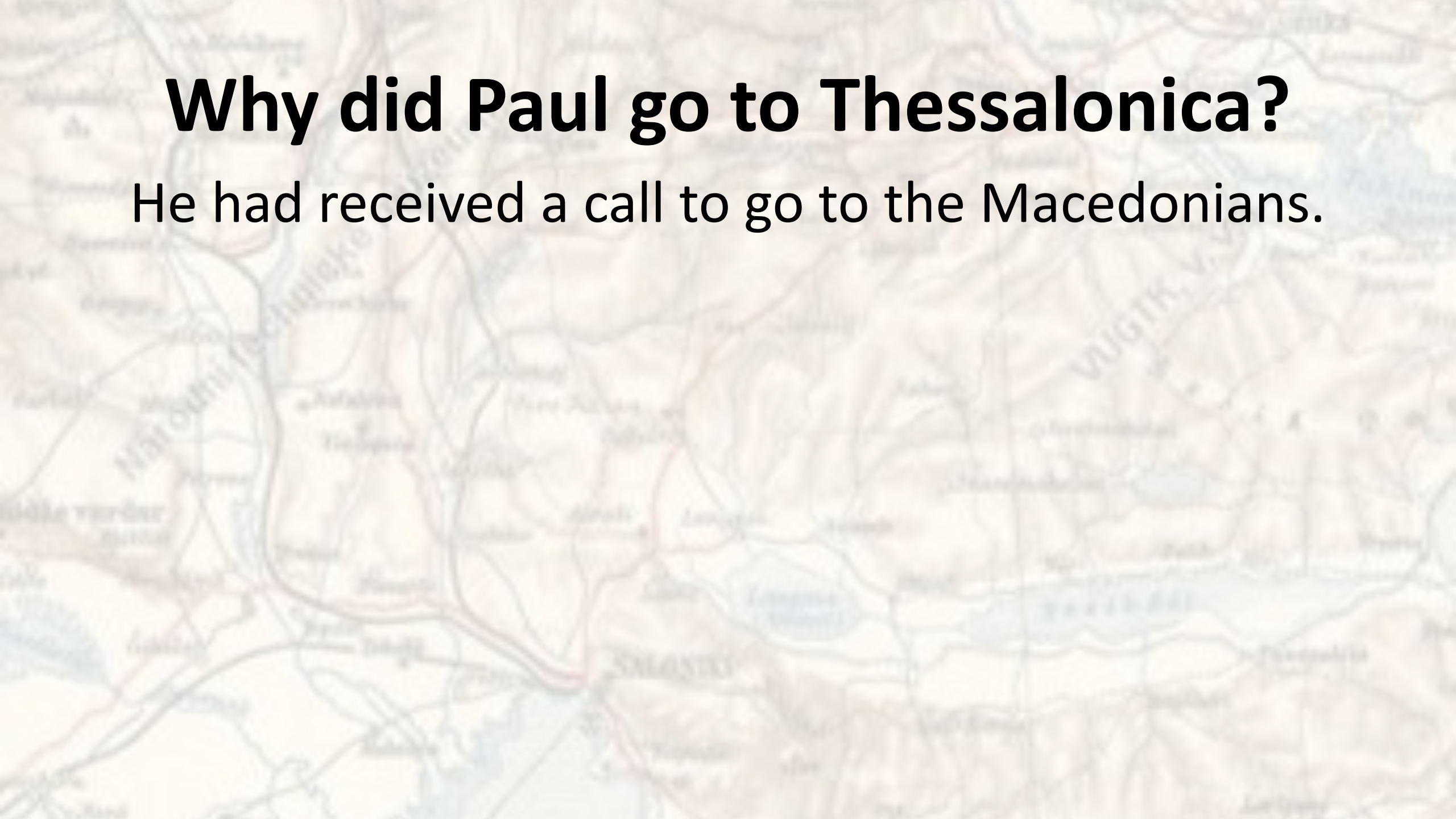
Acts 17:1

Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.



Why did Paul go to Thessalonica?

He had received a call to go to the Macedonians.



Acts 16:9-10

A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying,

“Come over to Macedonia and help us.”

When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Why did Paul go to Thessalonica?

He had received a call to go to the Macedonians.

He had been run out of Philippi.



Acts 16:22-24 and 39-40

The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

...they kept begging them to leave the city. They went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.

1 Thessalonians 2:1-2

For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, but **after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi**, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition.

Why did Paul go to Thessalonica?

He had received a call to go to the Macedonians.

He had been run out of Philippi.

Thessalonica was a highly strategic city
for the advance of the mission.

1 Thessalonians 1:8

For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you,
not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in
every place your faith toward God has gone forth,
so that we have no need to say anything.

[illegible]



What was Paul's message?

The Christ had to suffer, die,
and rise from the dead.

Acts 17:2-3

And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead.

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Scriptures, **explaining** and giving evidence **that the Christ**
had to suffer and rise again from the dead.

Isaiah 53:3

He was despised and forsaken of men,
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

Isaiah 53:12

Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great,
And He will divide the booty with the strong;
Because He poured out Himself to death,
And was numbered with the transgressors;
Yet He Himself bore the sin of many,
And interceded for the transgressors.

Luke 24:25-26

And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?”

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Was it not necessary for the Christ **to suffer**
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What was Paul's message?

The Christ had to suffer, die, and rise from the dead.

Jesus is the Christ.

Acts 17:3

“This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ.”

Acts 17:3

“This **Jesus** whom I am proclaiming to you **is the Christ.**”

Luke 24:27

Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets,
He explained to them the things concerning Himself
in all the Scriptures.

What was Paul's message?

The Christ had to suffer, die, and rise from the dead.

Jesus is the Christ.

Turn away from your idols, serve the true God,
and wait for Jesus' return.

1 Thessalonians 1:9-10

For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

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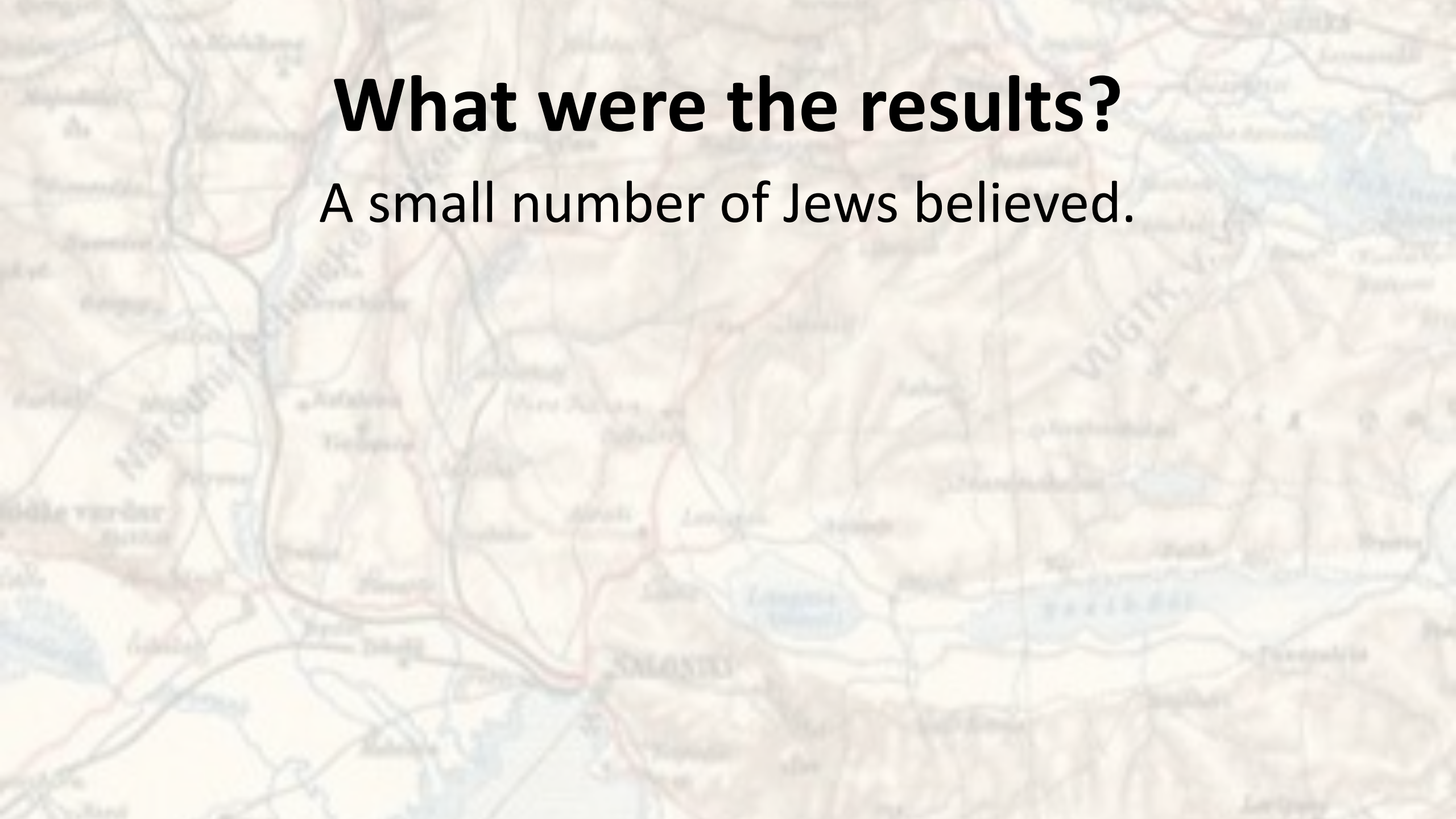
Acts 20:20-21

“I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

What were the results of Paul's labors?

What were the results?

A small number of Jews believed.



Acts 17:4

And **some of them were persuaded** and joined Paul and Silas,
along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks
and a number of the leading women.

What were the results?

A small number of Jews believed.

Many God-fearing Greeks believed.

Acts 17:4

And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas,
along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks
and a number of the leading women.

What were the results?

A small number of Jews believed.

Many God-fearing Greeks believed.

Some prominent women believed.

Acts 17:4

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along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks
and a number of the leading women.

What were the results?

A small number of Jews believed.

Many God-fearing Greeks believed.

Some prominent women believed.

**Jealous Jews stirred up opposition
and ran Paul out of town.**

Acts 17:5-10

But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people.

When they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities...

They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them.

The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea...

Acts 17:13

But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there as well, agitating and stirring up the crowds.

Matthew 24:9

Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name.



**What precipitated
Paul's first letter?**

Why did Paul write this letter?

Some were seeking to undermine his ministry by making false accusations against him.

1 Thessalonians 2:3-6 and 10

For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit; but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed — God is witness — nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others...

You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers.

Why did Paul write this letter?

Some were seeking to undermine his ministry
by making false accusations against him.

Persecution and hardship were
weighing heavy on this church.

1 Thessalonians 2:14

For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen.

1 Thessalonians 3:4-5

For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know.

For this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor would be in vain.

1 Thessalonians 4:13

But we do not want you to be uninformed,
brethren, about those who are asleep,
so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.

Why did Paul write this letter?

Some were seeking to undermine his ministry
by making false accusations against him.

Persecution and hardship were weighing heavy on this church.

Cultural influences needed correction.

1 Thessalonians 4:9-12

Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need.

Romans 12:2

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Conclusion

This word we have been given is *God's Word*.

Jesus is the Christ, believe on Him.

Keep turning from idols to serve the true God
and keep waiting patiently for Christ.