

THE BOOK OF ACTS | GOD'S REVELATION OF TRANSITION

SESSION 55 | ACTS 17:10-21

ACTS 17:10-14 | THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY: BEREIA

- Verse 10 –
 - It looks like only Paul and Silas were **sent away**, but verse 14 tells us that Timothy either later joined them or was with them with they were sent.
 - Berea is modern day Veria and is one of the most beautiful and quaint cities of modern Greece. The ruins of the **synagogue of the Jews** have never been discovered, but there is a memorial built to commemorate Paul's visit. A more modern synagogue (1850) is in the Jewish district. On May 1, 1943 all the Jews of Veria were arrested and taken to concentration camps and the Jewish presence was gone from the town.
- Verse 11 –
 - Note that these were Jews, neither kingdom-era nor Pauline-era believers.
 - They were receiving the word with an open-mindedness and searching the Scriptures. Because of this, many of them became believers.
 - The scriptures which they searched were the Old Testament scriptures.
 - The word **searched** is ἀνακρίνω [anakrino], literally, "to make a judgment again." Those who will do such are **more noble** than others, regardless of what their original position is.
- Verse 12 –
 - A willingness to hear and judge the facts is essential to a good harvest of belief. Earlier in the chapter (v. 5) there were those whose ears and minds were closed. Facts were immaterial to them; they had previously made up their mind.
 - The make-up of the Berean assembly of believers was both Jews and Greeks. This will not be unusual from this point onward and affects how we read Paul's letters. He sometimes speaks to those of a totally Gentile background, other times to those with a Jewish background.
- Verses 13-15 –
 - We do not know the time spent in Berea, but it does not look like a lengthy period before trouble comes. Paul, whose message was most offensive to the Jews, was sent to Athens, where Paul gave word for Silas and Timothy to later join him. We will see them again in Acts 18:5.
 - Paul was sent **as it were to the sea**. This could indicate that they secretly sent him *by land* to Athens, but made it look like he went by sea. (Note: a textual variant in the modern versions reads "as far as the sea" rather than "as it were to the sea").

ACTS 17:16-34 | THE SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY: ATHENS

- Verse 16 –
 - Especially for a Jew like Paul, a **city wholly given to idolatry** was enough to stir his spirit.
 - The Greek word is παροξύνω [paroxuno], which is a compound of *para* (to come alongside) and *oxus*, a word which is usually translated *sharp*, but has the root of *acid*. You could graphically translate this as *the idolatry of the city poured acid on Paul's spirit*.
 - In a world full of sin, we should take care to make sure that things which are unbiblical retain a *sharpness* to our spirit.

- Verse 17 –
 - Because his **spirit was stirred in him** (v. 16) he **disputed** everywhere with everyone. The word **disputed** is διαλέγομαι [dialegomai], which is to “thoroughly discuss.” Our English word *dialogue* is related.
 - Notice that Paul’s missionary strategy was not to build relationships, but to immediately begin to dialogue about worldviews.
- Verse 18 –
 - Athens is well known for having been a city of philosophy.
 - Epicureans were deists who had a basically materialist worldview with pleasure as the ultimate goal. “Eat, drink, and be merry” is an epicurean philosophy.
 - Stoics were almost polar opposites. They were pantheists who believed that one should be master of their circumstances, and thus live without the passions that may cloud judgment (passions such as grief, joy, delight, disgust, etc).
 - The word translated **babbler** is σπερμολόγος [spermologos]. Literally, “to talk about seeds.” The word was used metaphorically of one who would talk about anything but not really have any skin in the game.
 - Some didn’t think he was a **babbler**, but rather **a setter forth of strange gods**.
- Verses 19-20 –
 - To their credit, the philosophers wanted to hear more of **this new doctrine**.
 - They took Paul to **Areopagus**, or “Mars hill” (as in v. 22).
 - The word **Areopagus** is a transliteration while **Mars hill** is a translation (Ares = Mars, a reference to the Greek god, not the planet that bears his name).
 - Areopagus would have been a place where many people could hear Paul’s presentation.
- Verse 21 –
 - While we rightly credit the philosophers for hearing Paul’s presentation, it should be pointed out that they had an addiction **to hear something new**. This can become a “drug” just like other abused drugs.
 - There comes a time when one must weigh the evidence and settle somewhere. When this happens, they will not need to pursue every new idea. They become *principled* rather than endlessly curious.