

CAC-Session 1: Detailed Observation, Acts 17:10-15

Jan Paron, PhD

All Nations Leadership Institute

Exemplar

**Detailed Observation: Acts 17:10-15**  
**Text Used: NKJV, ESV, NIV, NLT, Greek Interlinear**  
**Acts 17:10**

Strikethrough=Answered questions; Yellow Highlighted=Still need to answer

Sample Contextual Background Essay:

<https://specs12.wordpress.com/2021/09/04/valley-of-the-dry-bones-contextual-background/>

“Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews” (NKJV).
“The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue” (ESV).
“As soon as it was night, the believers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue” (NIV).
“That very night the believers sent Paul and Silas to Berea. When they arrived there, they went to the Jewish synagogue” (NLT).
“And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming [thither] went into the synagogue of the Jews” (Greek Interlinear). <a href="https://www.scripture4all.org/OnlineInterlinear/NTpdf/act17.pdf">https://www.scripture4all.org/OnlineInterlinear/NTpdf/act17.pdf</a>

Observations	Questions	Possibilities
<p><b>17:10</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The text does not say make the speaker known.</li> <li>Narration of an event.</li> <li>The event involves the brethren, Paul, and Silas.</li> <li>Then indicates that something occurred before the event. When, provides a time sequence. This...that</li> <li>“As soon as it was night in the” NIV shows that whatever occurred in the last verse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where is Berea?</li> <li>Why did the brethren send Paul and Silas away and why by night?</li> <li>Who are the brethren?</li> <li>Why did the brethren choose Berea?</li> <li>Did Paul go to Berea because it was the safest place to travel after being driven out of Thessalonica??</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Berea lies 60 miles south of Thessalonica, also a part of Macedonia<sup>1</sup> with Thessalonica, and Phillipi.<sup>2</sup></li> <li>“In Paul’s day, Berea was already an ancient city, first mentioned by Thucydides in 437BC.”<sup>3</sup></li> <li>Berea had grown to a prosperous city in Roman times with a large Jewish community<sup>4</sup> Perhaps, Paul</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Ray Vander Laan, Ray, *Cultures in Conflict Discovery Guide* (HarperChristian Resources), 132.

<sup>2</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles: Sacra Pagina* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992) 307.

<sup>3</sup>“Paul in Berea,” *Bible Journey*, <https://www.thebiblejourney.org/biblejourney1/10-pauls-journey-to-phrygia-macedonia/paul-in-berea/>

<sup>4</sup> “Paul in Berea,” *Bible Journey*,

<p>happened during the daytime, and the brethren had to wait until the cover of darkness to move Paul and Silas out...Sneak out, so to speak.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upon arrival to Berea, Paul and Silas went to the synagogue of the Jews</li> <li>• Immediately denotes a sense of urgency in Paul and Silas' departure.</li> <li>• By night suggests that they left by the cover of darkness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <del>What was Berea in relation to Paul and Silas' last location?</del></li> <li>• <del>Who was Silas?</del></li> <li>• <del>Why did Paul and Silas go to the synagogues first?</del></li> <li>• <del>What does the phrase synagogue of the Jews mean? (Other verses do not use this phrase.)</del></li> <li>• How long did Paul stay in Thessalonica?</li> </ul>	<p>stopped there because it had a sizable population of Jews.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location: About 45 miles west of Thessalonica, 30 miles south of Pella on the Via Egnatia<sup>5</sup></li> <li>• A modern reconstruction from Jewett, cited in Keener estimated 3 months.<sup>6</sup></li> <li>• Synagogue in Greek means a gathering of people but also refers to the place of assembly.<sup>7</sup> See Acts 15:21, which says they studied the Torah and the prophets.<sup>8</sup></li> <li>• Bruce Malina explained a synagogue is a gathering or assembly <u>as well as the place of gathering (a meeting place). a men's community center.</u> (Check this out further...<u>Do only men go to the synagogue.</u>). "Judeans might worship anyplace, these gathering centers might serve as a place of worship or a place of Torah study in the first century. The phrase "synagogue of the Jews" describes the participants."<sup>9</sup></li> </ul>
---	--	---

<sup>5</sup> "Paul in Berea," *Bible Journey*,

<sup>6</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: Volume 3: 15:1-23:35*.

<sup>7</sup> Chad Spigel, "First-Century Synagogues," Bible Odyssey, <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/places/related-articles/first-century-synagogues>

<sup>8</sup> "For in every city, for generations past, Moses has had those who proclaim him, for he has been read aloud every sabbath in the synagogues" (Acts 15:21).

<sup>9</sup> Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch.. *Social-science Commentary on the Book of Acts*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 122.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Silas was a key figure in the Church of Jerusalem traveling with Paul to give validity to Paul as one who was not at odds with the mother church. He was the secretary for two of Paul's letters and a Roman citizen.<sup>10</sup></li> <li>• "Judean" was the general outgroup name for any Israelite, whether one fully devoted to the customs of Judea or one who followed Hellenistic customs and who was an assimilated Israelite who knew and kept Judean traditions in varying degrees. In the Roman Empire, the outgroup name for both devout Judeans and assimilated Israelite Greeks was "Judeans,"<sup>11</sup></li> <li>• Culturally, Hellenistic Israelites from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and Asia went to the "synagogue of the Freedmen" in Jerusalem (Acts 6:9).<sup>12</sup></li> <li>• The Greek Israelites were less informed about traditions, while more assimilated to the Mediterranean behaviors and values from non-Israelites.<sup>13</sup></li> <li>• Travelers used the Via Egnatia when journeying</li> </ul>
--	--	---

---

<sup>10</sup>Ben Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Social-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, Publishing Company, 1998), 473.

<sup>11</sup>Malina and Pilch, *Social-science Commentary on the Book of Acts*, 122.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

		<p>across the Roman provinces of Macedonia and Illyricum to Dyrrachium (modern-day Durrës on the coast of Albania).<sup>14</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They could sail from Berea across the Adriatic Sea to Bari or Brindisi and continue along the Via Appia to Rome. (Check this.)<sup>15</sup></li> <li>• Paul and Silas encountered hostility or threats to their lives in Thessalonica with a stirred up crowd making it necessary to leave that location (17:8).</li> <li>• Ramsey asserted that Paul went to Berea because of the Jewish settlers there. The synagogue provided a place for witness.<sup>16</sup></li> <li>• The brethren perhaps consist of a small house church group of Christians who helped Paul and Silas. (Lydia's household???)</li> <li>• Paul perhaps would go first to the synagogues upon visiting any city.</li> <li>• Perhaps, the phrase synagogue of the Jews was meant to highlight Paul and Silas' first visit location.</li> </ul>
--	--	--

---

<sup>14</sup>“Paul in Berea,” *Bible Journey*,

<sup>15</sup> “Paul in Berea,” *Bible Journey*,

<sup>16</sup> William Mitchell Ramsey, *St. Paul the Traveler and Roman Citizen* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2001), 226..

### Acts 17:11

“These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and sought the Scriptures daily *to find out* whether these things were so” (NKJV).

“Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so” (ESV).

“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” (NIV).

“And the people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul’s message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth” (NLT).

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” (Greek Interlinear).  
<https://www.scripture4all.org/OnlineInterlinear/NTpdf/act17.pdf>

### Acts 17:11

Observations	Questions	Possibilities
<p><b>17:11</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These refers to the Bereans</li> <li>• The verse compares the Bereans to Thessalonians: Fair-minded (NKJV), noble (ESV, NIV, GIL), open-minded (NLT)</li> <li>• Noble transliterates to <i>eugenesteroi</i> meaning more well generated (GIL)</li> <li>• The verse describes fair-minded as received the word with all readiness/eagerness (NKJV, ESV, NIV), listened eagerly (NLT), and with all readiness of mind (GIL).</li> <li>• Received the word in Greek transliterates to <i>edexanto ton logon</i>.</li> <li>• Daily translates to two words in Greek: <i>καθ ημεραν</i> meaning day-by-day suggesting an ongoing process rather than an</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <del>What does fair minded mean in terms of character traits?</del></li> <li>• <del>Why would Luke point out that the Bereans were more well generated?</del></li> <li>• <del>Was searching scripture part of the Berean character traits overall or just in terms of Paul?</del></li> <li>• <del>Who were the Bereans? Were they a sect of early Christians or Jews?</del></li> <li>• <del>How did Paul deliver the message to the Bereans? Where did he deliver the message? (In the synagogue?)</del></li> <li>• <del>Are Bereans a sect of people or does it identify the people who lived there?</del></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During Paul’s missionary journey after Thessalonica (17:1-10) and before Athens (16-34).</li> <li>• <i>Eugenesteroi</i> demonstrates well born. Luke contrasts the character of the Bereans to the Thessalonians who were <i>agoraioi</i>, or of a rabble character.</li> <li>• The Bereans were Jews. Berea had a large population during the time of Paul’s visit, and among it, a colony of Jews (Acts 17:10).<sup>17</sup></li> <li>• Keener hypothesized that the Bereans discussed the Scriptures based on</li> </ul>

<sup>17</sup> Conybeare and Howson, “Life and Epistles of Paul,” *Bible Study.org*,  
<https://www.biblestudy.org/apostle-paul/life-epistles-of-apostle-paul/visiting-berea.html>

<p>isolated action related to Paul. This further describes their character.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In addition to fair minded, searching the scriptures daily provides a clue to their character. It further described their searching as done with eagerness.</li> <li>• The NLT says the Bereans “listened,” while the others received. Nevertheless, Once received or listened to they acted upon it by searching scriptures to see if what Paul were true.</li> <li>• The GIL describes their searching scripture as done with “readiness of mind.” The other versions use “readiness” (NKJV), “eagerness” (ESV), “great eagerness” (NIV), and “eagerly” (NLT).</li> <li>• Bereans also searched scriptures daily (NKJV, GIL), examining the scriptures daily (ESV, NIV), searched the Scriptures day after day (NLT)</li> <li>• Thessalonica may refer to the location of the previous location prior to 17:10.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does a word search in the NT say about receive versus listen to a message?</li> <li>• Translate the meaning of the Greek transliteration to <i>edexanto ton logon</i>.</li> <li>• <del>When did this occur?</del></li> <li>• Why were they open minded to Paul’s message?</li> <li>• How does readiness of mind differ from eagerly?</li> <li>• What word did Paul present to the Bereans?</li> <li>• <del>What made the Bereans cultural boundedness different from the Thessalonians?</del></li> <li>• How long did Paul stay in Berea that word got back to the Thessalonians and they time travel to Berea?</li> <li>• <del>What scriptures did the Bereans examine?</del></li> </ul>	<p>communal memory, but they may have had a Torah scroll or other Scripture scrolls, presumably in Greek translation. Most Diaspora synagogues would seek to have them (cf. Jos. Ant . 16.164; see comment on Acts 13:15).<sup>18</sup></p>
---	---	---

### Acts 17:12

<p>“Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men” (NKJV).</p>
<p>“Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men” (ESV).</p>
<p>“As a result, many of them believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men” (NIV).</p>
<p>“As a result, many Jews believed, as did many of the prominent Greek women and men” (NLT).</p>
<p>“Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few” (Greek Interlinear).  <a href="https://www.scripture4all.org/OnlineInterlinear/NTpdf/act17.pdf">https://www.scripture4all.org/OnlineInterlinear/NTpdf/act17.pdf</a></p>

<sup>18</sup>Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: Volume 3: 15:1-23:35*.

Observations	Questions	Possibilities
<p><b>17:12</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Therefore indicates a transition from the last event of Bereans being open minded about what Paul said to them.</li> <li>If the text mentions Greeks believed, it may stand to reason that Berea is located in Greece, and the Roman Empire included Greece at that time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does many of them mean the Bereans?</li> <li>Where in Greece was Berea located? (This determines, in part, their cultural location.)</li> <li>Were Greeks and women Jewish converts or people Paul encountered elsewhere in the area???? (I think 17:13 indicates Berea.)</li> <li>What is the culture of the Greeks who believed and what cultural boundedness did they rid themselves of to receive his message?</li> <li>Did Paul bringing the message of salvation to the Gentiles contribute to the Thessalonian Jews jealousy?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Berea is located in Greece. Acts 20:3–6 and 1 Tim 1:3 connects it to Macedonia. Perhaps, Berea is located in Macedonia. Note to self: Check this out the second pass of my notes.</li> <li>Three groups received the message of salvation: Bereans Jews, Greek God-fearers, and prominent women.</li> <li>“Converts are made from ethnic Jews and from the Gentile God-fearers (cf. 1 Thess 1:5–2:16 for Paul’s account of the church’s founding). The latter group included “not a few of the prominent women” (v. 4; 13:50; 16:14; 17:12). Judaism seemed to hold a special attraction for Gentile women, especially prominent ones. Josephus mentions several instances of this phenomenon.”<sup>19</sup> However, this verse does not say whether the women and God-fearers were converts. Check this. I need a clearer picture of God fearers.</li> <li>Paul probably arrived around 51 AD, during his second missionary trip but before the fall of the second temple in 70 AD. Therefore, the Jews in</li> </ul>

<sup>19</sup> Charles Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2015), 148.



		<p>Berea either settled there from people exiled previously from the Northern or Southern Kingdoms. The Jewish religion at this time was protected by the Roman Empire. (Check the last sentence with one of my Christian history books.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The fact that Greeks and prominent women also believed suggests that Paul preached outside the synagogue.<sup>20</sup></li> </ul>
--	--	--

### Acts 17:13

<p>“But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds” (NKJV).</p>
<p>“But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds” (ESV).</p>
<p>“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” (NIV).</p>
<p>“But when some Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word of God in Berea, they went there and stirred up trouble” (NLT).</p>
<p>“But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.” (Greek Interlinear).  <a href="https://www.scripture4all.org/OnlineInterlinear/NTpdf/act17.pdf">https://www.scripture4all.org/OnlineInterlinear/NTpdf/act17.pdf</a></p>

Observations	Questions	Possibilities
<p><b>17:13</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• But, indicates a transition to another event that results from the prior, meaning Paul at Berea.</li> <li>• It would seem they traveled first on land and then by boat evading the Jews from Thessalonica</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who were the Jews of Thessalonica exactly?</li> <li>• Who were the agitators???</li> <li>• What cultural boundedness did the Jews of Thessalonica have that made them so against Paul?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Jews of Thessalonica may have been professional agitators against the tenets of Christianity. Note to self: Check this one the second pass.</li> </ul>

<sup>20</sup> William Mitchell Ramsey, *St. Paul the Traveler and Roman Citizen*, 232.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The butts show that the Thessalonian Jews heard about preaching at Berea, which resulted in them going to Berea to stir up the crowds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What occurred when the Jews stirred up the crowd?</li> </ul> <p>Find this out!!!</p>	
---	---	--

### Acts 17:14

<p>“Then immediately the brethren sent Paul away, to go to the sea; but both Silas and Timothy remained there” (NKJV).</p>
<p>“Then the brothers immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea, but Silas and Timothy remained there” (ESV).</p>
<p>“The believers immediately sent Paul to the coast, but Silas and Timothy stayed at Berea” (NIV).</p>
<p>“The believers acted at once, sending Paul on to the coast, while Silas and Timothy remained behind” (NLT).</p>
<p>And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still.” (Greek Interlinear).  <a href="https://www.scripture4all.org/OnlineInterlinear/NTpdf/act17.pdf">https://www.scripture4all.org/OnlineInterlinear/NTpdf/act17.pdf</a></p>

Observations	Questions	Possibilities
<p><b>17:14</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whatever the agitation, it resulted in the brethren again sending away Paul</li> <li>At once suggests high danger for Paul</li> <li>Whatever the agitation, what Paul said must have run deep below the cultural iceberg for the Thessalonians.</li> <li>Paul and Timothy stayed back in Berea</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who were the brethren?</li> <li>Why did Paul leave, but not Silas and Timothy?</li> <li>What is significant about the two staying behind?</li> <li>When did Timothy come into the picture?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Timothy lived in Greece (1 Tim 1:3) as came from a Greek/Jewish family. Mom-Jewish and Father-Greek. He may have heard Paul speak in Lystra or Derbe and joined him (Acts 16:1).??</li> <li>“When Paul fled Berea, Timothy stayed behind and later rejoined him in Corinth. Paul met two other “disciples” in Corinth who also played a significant role in his ministry and later ministered with him in Ephesus and Rome.”<sup>21</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>21</sup> Ray Vander Laan, Ray. *Cultures in Conflict Discovery Guide* (p. 132). HarperChristian Resources.

		•
--	--	---

### Acts 17:15

“So those who conducted Paul brought him to Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed, they departed” (NKJV).
“Those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens, and after receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed” (ESV).
“Those who escorted Paul brought him to Athens and then left with instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible” (NIV).
“Those escorting Paul went with him all the way to Athens; then they returned to Berea with instructions for Silas and Timothy to hurry and join him” (NLT).
“And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed” (Greek Interlinear). <a href="https://www.scripture4all.org/OnlineInterlinear/NTpdf/act17.pdf">https://www.scripture4all.org/OnlineInterlinear/NTpdf/act17.pdf</a>

Observations	Questions	Possibilities
<p><b>17:15</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• So, signals where the brethren brought Paul after Berea.</li> <li>• The brethren brought him by sea (v. 14).</li> <li>• Conducted and escorted Paul to Athens.</li> <li>• It would seem that the brethren stayed with Paul on enroute to Athens.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the difference between conducted and escorted?</li> <li>• Did the same group of brethren move Paul to Athens?</li> <li>• What does this speak about the loyalty of the brethren or their relationship with Paul?</li> <li>• What was the location of Athens from Berea.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paul went to Athens in Achaia (southern Greece). He travelled down the east coast of Greece or possibly west along the Via Egnatia to Illyricum before sailing south along the west coast of Greece (See Rom 15:19)<sup>22</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>22</sup> “Paul in Berea,” *Bible Journey*,

## Further Investigation

### What cultural boundedness did you observe among the Bereans from the passage?

Answer in one to three sentences.

The Berean Jews had to confirm what Paul said in the scriptures (17:11). Scholars debated the method they used to confirm Paul's message. However, Keener felt the Bereans discussed the Scriptures based on their communal memory, but perhaps they also searched through a Torah scroll or other Scripture scrolls in Greek in their possession. Most Diaspora synagogues would seek to have them.<sup>23</sup> Acts 13:15 shows a synagogue in the region holding written materials as rulers from Antioch in Pisidia there, read from the Law and Prophets.

### What contextualization strategies did Paul use?

- While the text does not say how long Paul stayed in Berea, he would have remained sufficient time for the ethnic Jews to dialogue with him regarding his witness against scripture. Based on modern reconstructed time by Jewett of Paul's Berean ministry using both Acts and the Pauline epistles (17:10–14), Keener cited the apostle's ministry would have last about two months.<sup>24</sup>
- The synagogue in and of itself provided Paul with an easily accessible place for him to witness. Synagogue in Greek means a gathering of people but also refers to the place of assembly.<sup>25</sup> (Acts 15:21 where they studied the Torah and the prophets.)<sup>26</sup> Thus, he entered a location of avid students of the word where a large assembly eagerly availed themselves to his message.
- Further, Paul stopped in synagogues during his missionary trips. This became part of his missionary strategy of spreading the gospel.
- Paul took advantage of a ready audience by going to the synagogue of the Jews in Berea. Berea had grown to a prosperous city in Roman times with a large Jewish community<sup>27</sup> Thus, he met where they already congregated.
- Unlike the Thessalonians, Luke describes the Bereans as *eugenes* meaning well born. Thus, the Bereans received what Paul had to say. The group examined the Scripture daily

---

<sup>23</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: Volume 3: 15:1-23:35*.

<sup>24</sup> Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*.

<sup>25</sup> Chad Spigel, "First-Century Synagogues," Bible Odyssey, <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/places/related-articles/first-century-synagogues>

<sup>26</sup> "For in every city, for generations past, Moses has had those who proclaim him, for he has been read aloud every sabbath in the synagogues" (Acts 15:21).

<sup>27</sup> "Paul in Berea," *Bible Journey*,

with eagerness to confirm what he had said (Acts 17:11). The word examine in Greek can indicate a legal examination of witnesses (4:9; 12:19; 24:8; 28:18). Malina saw this as suitable since Paul's testimony utilized Israelite traditions.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps, Paul crafted his teaching in testimony fashion knowing the Bereans would confirm it in Scripture.

### **Passage Contextual Background Notes**

(Bullet them under the subheaders below-Draw from the possibilities column. This information lays the foundation for your paper. Do not add other subheaders. Also, watch that you don't get sidetracked with information you don't need. After each bulleted information, add your cite as a footnote at the bottom. You'll thank yourself later for remembering to cite.)

#### **Genre**

- The passage comes from the book of Acts, a historical writing. Luke wrote it in narrative style. (Need cite here.)

#### **History**

- The second missionary began with Paul and Silas setting out to deliver the Council of Jerusalem decrees for the new believers to keep (Acts 16:4-5).
- Paul's trip to Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens occurred during his second missionary trip between 50-52AD.<sup>29</sup>
- Note the adversities and struggles of the early church. Paul and Silas encountered hostility or threats to their lives in Thessalonica with a stirred up crowd making it necessary to leave that location (17:8). Thus, the apostle spread the gospel to another location in that area, which in turn, took hold.
- They traveled by night (v. 10) to Berea 60 miles south of Thessalonica, both part of Macedonia.<sup>30</sup> During the time of Paul's visit, Berea had grown to a prosperous city with a large Jewish community<sup>31</sup> Perhaps, Paul stopped there because it had a sizable population of Jews. Ramsey supported this theory believing Paul went to Berea because of the Jewish settlers there. The synagogue provided a place for his witness.<sup>32</sup> Paul stopped in the synagogues upon visiting a town as was his custom (17:2).

---

<sup>28</sup> Malina, 124.

<sup>29</sup>Walter J. Kaiser Jr. and Duane Garrett, Duane. *NIV Archaeological Study Bible: An Illustrated Walk Through Biblical History and Culture*.

<sup>30</sup>Ray Vander Laan, *Cultures in Conflict Discovery Guide*, 132.

<sup>31</sup> "Paul in Berea," *Bible Journey*,

<sup>32</sup> William Mitchell Ramsey, *St. Paul the Traveler and Roman Citizen* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2001), 226.

- After Paul fled Berea to Athens, Timothy stayed behind presumably to develop the community of believers. (Cite)

### Geographic

- Berea situated itself 60 miles south and 45 west of Thessalonica, and 30 miles east of Pella in Macedonia along with Thessalonica and Phillipi. (Acts 20:3–6 and 1 Tim 1:3 connect it to Macedonia.<sup>33 34</sup>
- The cities Paul traveled during his second missionary trip lie on the Via Egnatia or the Roman Road.<sup>35</sup> Travelers like Paul used the Via Egnatia when journeying across the Roman provinces of Macedonia and Illyricum to Dyrrachium.<sup>36</sup>

### Culture (Includes religious beliefs)

- Paul addressed three groups with the message of salvation: Berean Jews, Greek God-fearers, and prominent women (Acts 17:12).
- He drew converts from ethnic Jews and Gentile God-fearers (cf. 1 Thess 1:5–2:16 for Paul’s account of the church’s founding). The latter group included “not a few of the prominent women” (v. 4; 13:50; 16:14; 17:12).” Judaism seemed to hold a special attraction for Gentile women, especially prominent ones. Josephus mentions several instances of this phenomenon.”<sup>37</sup> (Read back on this quote.) The fact that Greeks and prominent women also believed suggests that Paul preached outside the synagogue.<sup>38</sup>
- The Bereans were Judean Jews. Berea had a large population during the time of Paul’s visit, and among it, a colony of Jews (Acts 17:10).<sup>39</sup>
- Safri and Stern described the Greeks as pro-Jewish and placed them inside the synagogue.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> Ray Vander Laan,, *Cultures in Conflict Discovery Guide* (HarperChristian Resources), 132.

<sup>34</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles: Sacra Pagina* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992) 307.

<sup>35</sup> “Paul in Berea,” *Bible Journey*,

<sup>36</sup> “Paul in Berea,” *Bible Journey*,

<sup>37</sup> Charles Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2015), 148.

<sup>38</sup> William Mitchell Ramsey, *St. Paul the Traveler and Roman Citizen*, 232.

<sup>39</sup> Conybeare and Howson, “Life and Epistles of Paul,” *Bible Study.org*, <https://www.biblestudy.org/apostle-paul/life-epistles-of-apostle-paul/visiting-berea.html>

<sup>40</sup> Schmucl Safrai and M. Stern. *The Jewish People in the First Century, Volume 1: Historical, Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions*. (1988), 160.

- Paul probably arrived around 51 AD, during his second missionary trip but before the fall of the second temple in 70 AD. Therefore, the Jews in Berea either settled there from people exiled previously from the Northern or Southern Kingdoms. The Jewish religion at this time was protected by the Roman Empire.<sup>41</sup>
- Luke contrasted Bereans to Thessalonians of which the former showed a character of nobleness, while the latter one of rabble rouser. Thus, Berean character influenced the setting's culture. According to Johnson, nobleness means well born (Greek: *eugenes*)<sup>42</sup> First Cor 1:26 and Luke 19:12 implies *eugenes* describes a person of higher standing with a social status in the world. In the context of the verse, however, it would seem to mean more gracious and open minded in contrast with the Thessalonians. Upholding this supposition, the NKJV describes *eugenes* as fair minded and NLT as open-minded. Acts 17:11 illustrates their open-mindedness to Scripture with three verbs, received, searched, and find.<sup>43</sup>

### **Social (Societal related)**

- Acts 17:10 notes that Paul and Silas went to the synagogue of the Jews upon arrival.” Bruce Malina described a synagogue of the Jews as a gathering or assembly, meeting place, or men’s community center for Judeans. The synagogue served as a place of Torah study or worship. Greek Israelites had their own separate synagogue.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, one might assume that Paul only witnessed to Israelite Judeans in the synagogue rather than Hellenistic.
- While the term Judean characterized both devout Judeans and assimilated Israelite Greeks. Culturally speaking, Hellenistic Israelites from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and Asia went to a separate synagogue called the "synagogue of the Freedmen" in Jerusalem (Acts 6:9).<sup>45</sup> The Greek Israelites were less informed about traditions, while more assimilated to the Mediterranean behaviors and values from non-Israelites.<sup>46</sup>
- The NLT in 17:12 labels the Greeks who believed as God fearing. Krabel argued that God-fearers arguing acknowledged Gentiles who had shown favor toward the Jews of the

---

<sup>41</sup> William Mitchell Ramsey, *St. Paul the Traveler and Roman Citizen*, 232.

<sup>42</sup> Johnson, *Acts of the Apostles*, 307.

<sup>43</sup> In describing the Bereans fair mindedness Acts 17:11 notes, “These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” (NKJV).

<sup>44</sup> Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch., *Social-science Commentary on the Book of Acts*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 122.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

Diaspora, perhaps in offering financial support for a local synagogue.<sup>47</sup> But, does this passage mean the same thing?

- Judaism seemed to hold a special attraction for Gentile women, especially prominent ones. Josephus mentions several instances of this phenomenon. In War 2.20.2 § 561, he says that at Damascus “yet did the Damascenes distrust their wives, who were almost all addicted to the Jewish religion.” In Antiquities 18.3.5 § 81, he mentions a prominent woman in Rome, Fulvia, who became a devotee to Judaism and was promptly taken advantage of by unscrupulous Jewish rogues. In Antiquities 20.2.3 §§ 34-35, he tells how a pagan king’s wives in Adiabene came to worship God in the Jewish manner. Indeed, one of the disciples of Jesus who provided for him was Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward (Luke 8:3). Acts reflects the cultural fact (13:50—women of prominence who are worshipers; 17:4, 12). Acts, generally, pays especial attention to the involvement of women in the church (1:14; 5:14; 8:3, 12; 9:2; 12:12; 16:15, 40; 17:4, 12; 17:34; 18:2, 18, 26; 21:9).

### **Economic**

- While Berea represented a prosperous community of ethnic Jews.

---

<sup>47</sup>Krabel in Marjorie J. Cooper, “Theological Perspectives on the God-Fearers, with Application to Acts 13:48.” *Presbyterion* 46, no. 1 (April 1, 2020): 90–99.