



## Rice Memorial MBC

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## **Making God Known**

Definitions in **bold letters** are from **Strong's** Exhaustive Concordance  
Other definitions are from **Webster's** Dictionary, 1828 /1913 Edition  
or Roget's Thesaurus – **November 22, 2015**

## **Acts 17:1-4, 10-12, 22-25, 28**

**Introduction:** The continuation of the **second missionary tour** is the theme of Acts 17, in which Luke relates the success of Paul's mission in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9), even greater success in Berea (Acts 17:10-15), Paul's arrival in Athens where he was invited to speak in the Areopagus (Acts 17:16-22), and the account of Paul's address on Mars' Hill (Acts 17:23-34).  
(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=17#1>)

**Acts 17:1**, Now when they had passed through **Amphipolis** and **Apollonia**, they came to Thessalonica, where was a **synagogue** of the **Jews**...

**NOTE:** The passing by of certain towns to visit others gives a clue to the plan Paul was following. It was that of "**planting** the gospel in strategic cities ... he did not aim to preach wherever he could find an audience ... but had a program for establishing churches in **key centers**." Dummelow observed that: His plan was first to evangelize the seats of government and the trade centers, knowing that if Christianity was once established in these places it would spread throughout the empire.<sup>[2]</sup>

**When they had passed ...** The use of the third person pronoun "**they**" in this verse is significant. As Wesley said, "Luke seems to have been left at Philippi."<sup>[3]</sup> Apparently Luke continued there, preaching throughout that area until Paul returned (Acts 20:5,6), upon which occasion Luke again referred to himself as in Paul's company, continuing to do so until the end of Acts.

It was also concluded by McGarvey that due to the grammatical antecedent of "**they**" being "**Paul** and **Silas**," "it is implied that **Timothy** also remained with Luke, to still further instruct and organize the church."

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=17#1>)

**NOTE: Thessalonica** - This was a **celebrated city** of **Macedonia**, situated on what was called the Thermaic Gulf. According to Stephanus Byzantinus, it was embellished and enlarged by **Philip**, king of Macedon, who called it Thessalonica, the victory of Thessalia, on account of the victory he obtained there over the Thessalians; but, prior to this, it was called Thermae. But Strabo, Tzetzes, and Zonaras, say that it was called Thessalonica, from Thessalonica, **wife** of Cassander, and **daughter** of Philip.

**A synagogue of the Jews** - **The synagogue**; for the article here must be considered as emphatic, there probably being no other synagogue in any other city in Macedonia. The Jews in different parts had other places of worship called proseuchas as we have seen, Acts 16:13.. At Thessalonica alone they appear to have had **a synagogue**.

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/acc/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=17#1>)

**Acts 17:2-3**, And **Paul**, as **his manner was**, went in unto them, and three sabbath days

**reasoned** with them out of the **scriptures**, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is **Christ**.

**NOTE: Three sabbath days ...** does not indicate the length of Paul's stay in Thessalonica, but the period of preaching primarily to **Jews** in the synagogue. "This was followed by an indefinite period of preaching in the house of **Jason**, his host."<sup>[8]</sup>

Acts 17:2 must be understood to mean that he worked for **three weeks** among the **Jews**, and **afterward** turned to the Gentiles, among whom he labored for three or four months. Where a knowledge of the **Scriptures** permitted it, Paul always founded his preaching upon the prophetic utterances of the Old Testament, as he did here.

<sup>[8]</sup> E. H. Trenchard, A New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1969), p. 321. <sup>[9]</sup> J. R. Dummelow, op. cit., p. 841.

**...this Jesus, whom, said he, I proclaim unto you, is the Christ.** That Jesus of Nazareth was the long-awaited Messiah promised in the Old Testament is the fundamental Christian truth, attested by some 333 Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in him.

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=17#1>)

**Acts 17:4**, And **SOME** of them **believed**, and **consorted (associate with)** with **Paul** and **Silas**; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a FEW.

**NOTE: And consorted** - Literally, had their lot with Paul and Silas; that is, they **united** themselves to them, and became their disciples. The word is commonly applied to those who are partakers of an inheritance.

**And of the devout Greeks** - Religious Greeks; or, of those who **worshipped God**. Those are denoted who had renounced the worship of idols, and who attended on the worship of the synagogue, but who were NOT fully admitted to the privileges of **Jewish proselytes**. They were called, by the Jews, **proselytes of the gate**.

**And of the chief women** - Women of influence, and connected with families of rank.

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bnb/view.cgi?bk=43&ch=13>)

**Acts 17:5**, But the **Jews** which **believed not**, moved with **ENVY**, took unto them certain **LEWD** fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

ENVY, to fret (be agitated, be angry) or grieve one's self at the real or supposed superiority of another, and to HATE him on that account.

**NOTE:** Such **jealousy** is easily understood. The devout (devoted to religious feelings and duties) Jews had been teaching in that city for generations with minimal results; then Paul and Silas in the space of **three weeks** or a little longer had moved a "great multitude" to accept the gospel. The **unbelieving** element in the synagogue retaliated by organizing a mob and assaulting the house of Jason, where Paul was living, hoping no doubt to find him there; which, if they had succeeded, might have resulted in Paul's death.

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=17#1>)

**James 3:14-16**, But if **YE** have bitter **ENVYING** and **strife** in your **hearts**, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth NOT from **above**, but is **earthly, sensual, devilish**.

For where **ENVYING** and **STRIFE** is, there is **CONFUSION** and every **EVIL** work.

**Acts 17:6-10**, And when they found them not, they drew **Jason** and **certain brethren** unto the **RULERS** of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another **KING**, one Jesus. And they **troubled** the people and the **rulers** of the city, when they **heard** these things. And when they had taken **security** of Jason, and of the

other, they let them go. And the brethren immediately sent away **Paul and Silas by night** unto **Berea**: who coming thither went into the **synagogue** of the Jews.

**NOTE: These that have turned the world upside down...** - The very character our forefathers had for preaching that Gospel, in every part of the land, by which the nation has been illuminated, the mob disciplined into regularity and order, and the kingdom established in the hands of the best of monarchs.

**These all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar** - Persecutors always strive to affect the lives of the objects of their HATRED, by accusing them of sedition (excitement of discontent against the government, or of resistance to lawful authority), or plots against the state.

**That there is another king, one Jesus** - How malevolent (evil-minded) was this saying! The apostles proclaimed Jesus as king - that is true; but never once insinuated that his kingdom was of this world. The reverse they always maintained.

**And they troubled the people and the rulers** - It is evident that there was no disposition in either the people or the rulers to persecute the apostles. But these **wicked Jews**, by means of the unprincipled, **wicked lawyers**, those lewd fellows of the baser sort, threw the subject into the form of law, making it a state question, in which form the rulers were obliged to notice it; but they showed their unwillingness to proceed in a matter which they saw proceeded from malice, by letting Jason and his companions go off on bail.

**Taken security** - Having taken what was **sufficient**, or **satisfactory**. Sufficient for the present, to prove that the apostles were upright, peaceable, and loyal men; and that Jason and his friends were the like, and would be, at any time, forthcoming to answer for their conduct. Perhaps this is the sense of the phrase in the text.

(Source: <http://www.studyight.org/commentaries/acc/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=17#1>)

**NOTE: Sent away Paul and Silas ...** This journey to Berea was some "sixty miles," and the urgency of their departure is seen in their **leaving at night**. They no longer traveled the main road, the Via Egnatia, but took a less-traveled route to a somewhat out-of-the-way place called **Berea**.

... In Paul's day, it was a prosperous center with a significant center with a significant **Jewish** population and a **synagogue**. It was the home of Sopater (Acts 20:4). Here Paul followed his usual manner of **beginning work** in **the synagogue**, but this time with significantly greater than usual success.

<sup>[20]</sup> F. F. Bruce, op. cit., p. 346. <sup>[21]</sup> The New Bible Encyclopedia, op. cit., p. 142.

(Source: <http://www.studyight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=17#1>)

**Acts 17:11**, *These were more noble (generous [honorable]) 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.*

**NOTE:** They received the word ... - They **listened attentively** and **respectfully** to the gospel. They did NOT reject and spurn it as unworthy of examination.

**And searched the scriptures** - That is, the Old Testament. See the notes on John 5:39. The apostles always affirmed that the doctrines which they maintained respecting the **Messiah** were in **accordance** with the **Jewish scriptures**. The **Bereans** made diligent and earnest inquiry in respect to this, and were willing to ascertain the truth.

**2 Corinthians 13:1**, This is the THIRD time I am coming to you. In the mouth of TWO or THREE witnesses shall **every word** be established.

**1 Thessalonians 5:21-22**, **PROVE (examine) ALL** things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from ALL appearance of evil.

**Daily** - Not only on the Sabbath, and in the synagogue, but they made it a **daily** employment. It is evident from this that they had the Scriptures; and this is one proof that Jewish families would, if possible, obtain the **oracles** (communications, revelations,

or messages delivered by God to the prophets; also, the entire sacred Scriptures) of God.

**Hebrews 5:12-14**, For when for the TIME ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the **first principles** of the **oracles** of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth **milk** is **unskilful** in the word of righteousness: for he is a **babe**. But strong **meat** belongeth to them that are **of full age (mature)**, even those who by reason of USE have their **senses** exercised to discern both good and evil.

**2 Timothy 3:16-17**, ALL **scripture** is given by inspiration of God, and is **profitable** for doctrine, for **reproof (conviction: evidence)**, for **CORRECTION**, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be **perfect (fresh** [untainted; invaluable, USEFUL ]), thoroughly furnished unto ALL good works.

**Whether those things were so** - Whether the **doctrines** stated by **Paul** and **Silas** were in accordance with the Scriptures. The Old Testament they received as the standard of truth, and whatever could be shown to be in accordance with that, they received. On this verse we may remark: **(1)** That it is proof of true nobleness and liberality of mind to be willing to examine the **proofs** of the truth of religion. What the friends of Christianity have had most cause to lament and regret is, that so many are **unwilling** to **examine** its claims; that they spurn it as unworthy of serious thought, and condemn it without hearing. **(2)** the **Scriptures** should be **examined daily**. If we wish to arrive at **the truth**, they should be the object of constant study. That man has very little reason to expect that he will **GROW** in **knowledge** and **grace** who does not peruse, with candor (sincerity) and **with prayer**, a portion of the Bible every day. **(3)** the constant searching of the Scriptures is the best way to keep the mind **from error**. He who does not do it daily may expect to "be carried about with every wind of doctrine," and to have no settled opinions. **(4)** the **preaching** of **ministers** should be **examined** by **the Scriptures**. Their doctrines are of no value unless they accord with the Bible. Every preacher should expect his doctrines to be examined in this way, and to be rejected IF they are not in accordance with the Word of God. The **church**, in proportion to its increase in **purity** and **knowledge**, will feel this more and more; and it is an indication of advance in piety when people are increasingly disposed to examine everything by the Bible. How immensely important, then, is it that the young should be **trained up** to **diligent habits of searching** the Word of God. And how momentous (Important) is the obligation of parents, and of Sunday school teachers, to inculcate (teach and enforce by frequent repetitions; to urge on the mind) **JUST VIEWS** of the interpretation of the Bible, and to form the habits of the rising generation, so that they shall be disposed and enabled to **examine every doctrine** by the **sacred oracles**. The **purity** of the church depends on the extension of the spirit of the noble-minded Bereans, and that spirit is to be extended in a very considerable degree by the instrumentality of Sunday schools.

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bnb/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=17#1>)

**Acts 17:12**, Therefore **MANY** of them **believed**; also of **honourable women** which were Greeks, and of **men**, not a **FEW**.

**NOTE: Therefore many of them believed** - From the manner in which they **heard**, **RECEIVED**, and **EXAMINED** the word preached to them, it was not likely they could be deceived. And, as it was the truth that was proclaimed to them, it is no wonder that they apprehended, believed, and embraced it.

**Of honorable women which were Greeks** - Probably mere heathens are meant; and these were some of the chief families in the place. Thus we find that the preaching of Paul at Berea was made the instrument of **converting** both **Jews** and **Gentiles**.

(Source: <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/acc/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=17#1>)



**Acts 17:13-22**, 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**. And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still. 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. Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, **his spirit** was **stirred in him**, when he **saw** the city wholly **given to idolatry**.

Therefore **disputed** he (reason with, discussed) in the **synagogue** with the **Jews**, and with the **devout persons**, and in the market DAILY with them that met with him. Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And **SOME** said, What will this **babbling** say? other **SOME**, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection. And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this **new doctrine**, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some NEW THING.) Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I **perceive** that in all things ye are **too superstitious (more religious than others)**.

**NOTE: Ye are too superstitious** This is a most unhappy translation. We use the word "superstitious" always in a bad sense, to denote being "over-scrupulous and rigid in religious observances, particularly in smaller matters, or a zealous devotion to rites and observances which are not commanded." But the word here is designed to convey no such idea. It properly means "**reverence for the gods.**" It is used in the Classic writers in a **good sense**, to denote "piety toward the gods, or suitable fear and reverence for them"; and also in a **bad sense**, to denote "**improper fear** or **excessive dread** of their anger"; and in this sense it accords with our word "superstitious." But it is altogether **improbable** that Paul would have used it in a bad sense. For: **(1)** It was not his custom needlessly to blame or **offend** his auditors.

**(2)** it is not probable that he would commence his discourse in a manner that would only excite prejudice and opposition.

**(3)** in the thing which he specifies Acts 17:23 as proof on the subject, he does not introduce it as a matter of blame, but rather as **a proof** of their **devotedness** to the **cause of religion** and of their regard for God.

**(4)** the whole speech is calm, dignified, and argumentative - such as became such a place, such a speaker, and such an audience. The meaning of the expression is, therefore, "**I perceive that you are greatly devoted to reverence for religion;** that it is a characteristic of the people to honor the gods, to rear altars to them, and to recognize the divine agency in times of trial."

(Source: <http://www.study-light.org/commentaries/bnb/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=17#1>)

**Acts 17:23**, For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE **UNKNOWN GOD**. Whom therefore ye **ignorantly worship**, him declare I unto you.

**NOTE:** Polytheism is here manifested in one of its most pitiful characteristics. Some poor worshiper, having placated all the gods that **he knew**, still felt no certainty or confidence, but went out and erected an altar to the GOD who was UNKNOWN. The proliferation of **idols in Athens**, coupled with the amazing example of it here, prompted Alexander Campbell to write: They had gone beyond their contemporaries in erecting an altar to "**the unknown God.**" ... No other people or city had thus confessed their ignorance and their devotion. It was a grand conception to erect an altar to the **GREAT UNKNOWN** in the center of Greek civilization.<sup>[38]</sup>

It was the **inspired genius** of Paul that seized upon such a circumstance and made the inscription the text of his address. That Paul should have placed a proper construction upon words which were obviously, in context, of **pagan intention** is **remarkable**.

"Paul treats the worship of deities by pagans as a misdirected form of a natural and correct religious impulse."<sup>[39]</sup>

<sup>[38]</sup> Alexander Campbell, op. cit., p. 119. <sup>[39]</sup> Sir William M. Ramsay, op. cit., p. 197.  
(Source: <http://www.studyight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=17#1>)

**Acts 17:24-25, God (the **supreme** [Highest in authority] **Divinity**) that **made the world** and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all **life**, and **breath**, and all things...**

**NOTE:** The main object of this discourse of Paul is to convince them of the folly of idolatry Acts 17:29, and thus to lead them to repentance. For this purpose he commences with a statement of the true doctrine respecting God as the Creator of all things. We may observe here: **(1)** That he speaks here of God as the Creator of the world, thus **opposing** indirectly their opinions that there were **many gods**.

**(2)** he speaks of him as the Creator of the world, and thus **opposes** the opinion that matter was **eternal**; that all things were controlled by Fate; and that God could be confined to temples. The Epicureans held that **matter** was **eternal**, and that the world was **formed** by a **fortuitous** (**ACCIDENTAL**) concurrence of ATOMS.

**Lord of heaven and earth - Proprietor** (owner) and **Ruler** of heaven and earth. It is highly absurd, therefore, to suppose that he who is present in heaven and in earth at the same time, and who rules over all, should be confined to a temple of an earthly structure, or dependent on man for anything.

**Neither is worshipped with men's hands** - The word here rendered "worshipped" denotes to "serve"; to wait upon; and then to render religious service or homage. There is reference here, undoubtedly, to a notion prevalent among the pagan, that the **gods** were **fed** or **nourished** by the **offerings made** to them.

(Source: <http://www.studyight.org/commentaries/bnb/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=17#1>)

**Acts 17:26-28, And hath made of **one blood** all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in **(BY) him** we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his **offspring (production of any kind)**.**

**NOTE:** The expression "in him" evidently MEANS **BY him**; by his originally forming us, and continually sustaining us. No words can better express our constant dependence on God. He is the original fountain of life, and he upholds us each moment.

(Source: <http://www.studyight.org/commentaries/bnb/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=17#1>)

**Acts 17:29-34, Forasmuch then as we are the **offspring** of **God**, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.**

**NOTE:** ...**we are the offspring of God**,.... In the sense before given; for the apostle is not here speaking of himself, and other saints, as being the **children** of **God**, by adoption, and by regenerating grace, and faith in Christ Jesus, but as MEN in common with others...

(Source: <http://www.studyight.org/commentaries/geb/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=17#1>)

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now **commandeth all men every where to repent**: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will JUDGE the world in righteousness by **that man** whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the **dead**. And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, **SOME** **mocked**: and **others** said, We will hear thee again of this matter. So **Paul departed** from among them. Howbeit **CERTAIN MEN** **clave** unto him, and **believed**: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.