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**Acts 17:11: Search
The Scriptures And
Test What You Are
Taught**



By Dan Maines

Acts 17:11: Search The Scriptures And Test What You Are Taught

Introduction

† Acts 17:11 gives us one of the clearest pictures in the Bible of how believers should respond to biblical teaching. The Bereans didn't blindly accept what Paul and Silas taught, they listened eagerly and then examined the Scriptures for themselves.

† Their example is especially powerful because the teacher standing before them was the apostle Paul. If Paul's preaching was examined by Scripture, no pastor, teacher, preacher,

denomination, tradition, commentary, or theological system today should be placed beyond examination.

† Biblical truth doesn't fear examination. When a teaching is true, careful study strengthens it. When a teaching is false, careful study exposes it.

† This principle is extremely important when studying prophecy. We shouldn't begin with what we've always been taught and then force Scripture to agree with us. We should begin with Scripture and allow Scripture to correct what we've been taught.

† The fulfilled perspective asks people to do exactly what the Bereans did, examine the Scriptures carefully, consider the audience, respect the time statements, compare Scripture with Scripture, and determine whether these things are so.

Acts 17:11

Now these people 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.

† Notice that the Bereans did two things. They received the message willingly, but they also examined it carefully. An open mind wasn't enough, and examination without willingness wasn't enough. They combined eagerness with discernment.

† They didn't reject Paul's teaching simply because it challenged what they already believed. They investigated the Scriptures to determine whether his message was true.

† The standard wasn't tradition, emotion, popularity, or personal experience. The standard was the written Word of God. That principle remains essential for us today (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

† The words whether these things were so show that biblical claims are meant to be tested. Christianity isn't built upon refusing examination, it's built upon truth that can withstand examination.

Acts 17:2-3

And according to Paul's custom, he visited them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining

and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ."

† Paul's method explains why the Bereans could examine his teaching. Paul reasoned from the Scriptures. He didn't ask people to accept his message merely because he claimed apostolic authority.

† Paul demonstrated from Israel's Scriptures that Jesus was the promised Christ. His preaching connected promise with fulfillment (Luke 24:25-27).

† This gives us an important pattern for prophecy. A doctrine should be demonstrated from Scripture in its biblical context, not built upon speculation about modern events.

† The question isn't whether a teaching sounds convincing. The question is whether the Scriptures actually teach it.

Luke 24:27

Then beginning with Moses and with all the Prophets, He explained to them the things written about Himself in all the Scriptures.

† Jesus Himself demonstrated that the Scriptures pointed toward Him. The biblical story reaches its purpose and fulfillment in Christ.

† This changes how we study prophecy. We shouldn't read the prophets as though their ultimate destination were modern political events. Jesus directed His disciples toward Himself as the fulfillment of the scriptural story (Luke 24:44-47).

† When Scripture is interpreted through Christ, the promises, shadows, sacrifices, priesthood, kingdom, covenant, and prophetic hope come together in Him.

† The Berean approach therefore isn't simply reading individual verses. It's learning to see how the entire biblical message fits together in Christ.

John 5:39

You examine the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is those very Scriptures that testify about

Me;

† Jesus told His first-century audience that the Scriptures testified about Him. Scripture wasn't intended to become an end in itself while people missed the One to whom it pointed.

† A person can study prophecy constantly and still miss its center if Christ isn't the focus. Biblical prophecy isn't ultimately about satisfying curiosity concerning world events, it's about God's redemptive purpose accomplished through Christ.

† This is why fulfilled prophecy magnifies Jesus rather than diminishing Him. Fulfillment means God accomplished what He promised (2 Corinthians 1:20).

† Searching Scripture correctly should lead us toward Christ, His completed work, His kingdom, and the blessings believers possess in Him.

Isaiah 8:20

To the Law and to the testimony! If they do not speak in accordance with this word, it is because they have no dawn.

† God's revealed Word has always been the standard by which claims are tested. Human authority can't replace divine revelation.

† This principle protects believers from claims such as God told me when those claims introduce supposed revelation that can't be demonstrated from Scripture.

† We don't need secret knowledge to understand God's revealed truth. We need careful reading, sound interpretation, context, and a willingness to allow Scripture to correct us (2 Timothy 2:15).

† A doctrine that requires us to ignore clear biblical statements isn't strengthened by ignoring those statements. It's weakened by them.

1 Thessalonians 5:21

but examine everything; hold firmly to that which is good,

† Paul didn't teach Christians to believe everything they heard. He instructed them to test what was presented and hold firmly to what proved good.

† This means discernment isn't unbelief. Asking for biblical evidence isn't rebellion against spiritual authority. It's responsible Christian study.

† This principle applies equally to futurism, preterism, denominational traditions, sermons, books, internet teaching, and anything taught in this group. Every biblical claim should remain open to scriptural examination.

† If someone tells you that Christ's coming was near, examine the passages. If someone tells you it remains thousands of years future, examine that claim too. Let Scripture establish the conclusion (James 5:8-9; Revelation 1:1-3).

1 John 4:1

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

† John warned first-century believers that false prophets were already present among them. They weren't supposed to accept every spiritual claim simply because someone presented it as coming from God.

† Notice John's language, many false prophets had already gone out into the world. The danger was present in John's own time, not merely predicted for a distant generation (1 John 2:18).

† The principle remains valuable. Claims about God must agree with what God has revealed in Scripture.

† Spiritual confidence isn't proof of spiritual truth. Sincerity isn't proof either. Scripture remains our objective standard.

2 Peter 1:19

And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

† Peter directed believers toward the prophetic Word. Prophecy wasn't given so people could endlessly move its fulfillment into another generation. It was God's testimony concerning His redemptive plan in Christ.

† The first-century church lived during the unfolding completion of that prophetic story. Peter told his own audience to pay attention to the prophetic Word while they awaited what God had promised them (1 Peter 1:10-13).

† When studying prophecy today, we must ask who received the prophecy, when it was given, what covenant setting surrounded it, and what inspired writers said about its fulfillment.

† Ignoring audience and timing can turn fulfilled promises into permanently postponed promises.

Historical References

† Josephus recorded the catastrophic events surrounding Jerusalem and the temple in the first century, particularly in The Wars of the Jews, Books 5-7. His account provides important historical background when examining biblical passages concerning Jerusalem's judgment.

† Tacitus described the Jewish war and the circumstances surrounding Jerusalem in Histories, Book 5. Although writing from a Roman perspective, his account provides independent historical testimony concerning that first-century conflict.

† Eusebius recorded early Christian traditions concerning believers leaving Jerusalem before its destruction in Ecclesiastical History, Book 3. His writings show that early Christians understood Jerusalem's fall as an event of enormous biblical significance.

† Historical writers don't determine biblical doctrine. Scripture determines doctrine. Historical records can, however, help us understand the historical setting in which biblical predictions were fulfilled.

† The Berean principle therefore applies even to historical sources. We use them as historical witnesses, but we don't place them above Scripture.

How It Applies To Us Today

† Don't believe something merely because a preacher says it. Search the Scriptures.

† Don't believe something merely because your denomination taught it. Search the Scriptures.

† Don't believe something merely because your family has believed it for generations. Search the Scriptures.

† Don't believe something merely because I teach it. Search the Scriptures and determine whether these things are so.

† When studying prophecy, write down the audience statements and time statements. Words such as you, this generation, soon, near, quickly, and at hand matter because God inspired those words (Matthew 24:34; Revelation 22:6, 10).

† Compare Scripture with Scripture. Allow clearer passages to help explain symbolic passages rather than allowing speculation to control interpretation.

† Most importantly, keep Christ at the center. Scripture's prophetic story leads to Him, and God's promises find their fulfillment in Him (2 Corinthians 1:20).

† Acts 17:11 isn't merely a compliment to an ancient congregation. It's a pattern for every serious Bible student. Receive the Word eagerly, examine the Scriptures carefully, and hold firmly to what Scripture proves to be true.

Q & A Appendix

Q: Why were the Bereans called more noble?

A: Because they received the message eagerly while examining the Scriptures daily to determine whether what they were hearing was true (Acts 17:11).

Q: Should Christians accept a teaching because a respected pastor or teacher teaches it?

A: No. Respect for teachers doesn't remove our responsibility to examine their teaching according to Scripture (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

Q: Does questioning a doctrine mean someone lacks faith?

A: No. Biblical examination is encouraged. The Bereans were praised for testing what they heard rather than accepting it blindly (Acts 17:11).

Q: Should fulfilled eschatology also be tested?

A: Absolutely. Every doctrine should be tested by Scripture.

Examine the audience, context, covenant setting, time statements, and parallel passages, then follow the evidence wherever Scripture leads (2 Timothy 2:15).

Q: Why are the biblical time statements important?

A: Because they're part of the inspired text. When the New Testament says events were near, soon, or connected with that generation, those statements must be allowed to speak according to their normal meaning and original audience (Matthew 24:34; James 5:8-9; Revelation 1:1-3).

Q: What's the safest response when someone says God told me something?

A: Test the claim against Scripture. Christians aren't instructed to accept every spiritual claim without examination (1 John 4:1).

Q: What's the central goal of searching the Scriptures?

A: To know God's revealed truth and see its fulfillment centered in Jesus Christ. Jesus said the Scriptures testified about Him (John 5:39).

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Acts 17:11; Acts 17:2-3; Luke 24:27; John 5:39; Isaiah 8:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 John 4:1; 2 Peter 1:19

† Historical writers: Josephus, The Wars of the Jews, Books 5-7; Tacitus, Histories, Book 5; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 3

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