

Berea

Berea was a city of southwestern Macedonia in the district of Emathia; modern Verria. Lying 40 mi (65 km) W of Thessalonica and 25 mi (40 km) from the Gulf of Thermai, Berea was situated on a tributary on the Haliacmon at the foot of Mt. Bermius. It was called “a town off the beaten track” by Cicero (*In Pisonem* 36) probably because it was not on one of the main Roman roads. The existence of the city by the end of the 4th cent b.c. is verified by an ancient inscription (U. Koehler, ed, *Inscriptiones Graecae*, II/5 [1895], no 296i). Moreover, it is mentioned twice by Polybius (xxvii.8; xxviii.8). After the battle of Pydna in 168 b.c., Berea was the first city to surrender to Rome, and fell into the third of the four regions into which Macedonia was divided (Livy xlv.45; xlv.29).

When they were driven out of Thessalonica, Paul and Silas came to Berea, where they preached in the synagogue of the Jews. Many of their hear-

ers came to believe, having first carefully examined the message in the light of the Scriptures (Acts 17:10f). The work of Paul and Silas in Berea terminated when a group of hostile Jews from Thessalonica created a disturbance in the city and thereby forced them to leave (vv 12–15). Perhaps Sopater of Berea, who accompanied Paul to Asia on his last journey, was one of his converts on this visit (20:4).

As one of the most populous cities of Macedonia, Berea was made a bishopric under the metropolitan of Thessalonica and was itself made a metropolis by Andronicus II (1283–1328). According to tradition, Onesimus was the first bishop of the church. After playing a prominent role in the struggles between the Greeks and the Bulgarians and Serbs, Berea was conquered by the Turks in 1373/74. A large number of inscriptions are the only known remains of the ancient city.^[1]