

Acts 17.16-34

Ambassador All Alone

2nd M Journey Ap. PAUL > Invited onto Europe > by Macedonian Man

vs. 14-15 Silas and Timothy stayed at Berea. Those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens...

Enters ALONE – probably NOT AFRAID > FAMOUS City of Athens

Probably never been Athens before > But HE KNEW MUCH ABOUT IT

// American Never been Wash DC > Knows much about Famed City

v. 16 Paul was waiting for them (Silas and Timothy) at Athens

TOURED City > NO LONGER in its Prime Glory > Still FASCINATING

Athens was in the late afternoon of her glory. E.M. Blalock

City GREAT BEAUTY > some world's finest STATUES & Architecture

Every Gk City – Highest Pt Elev – Temple god/goddess – Patron Deity

Athens Prominent Hill - Acropolis / PARTHENON > Statues & Images

Huge Gold & Ivory Statue - Patron Goddess ATHENA / Minerva (Rome)

“her gleaming spear-point was visible 40 miles away”

RELIGIOUS ART > Spiritual Purpose > temples, shrines, statues, altars

“More gods in Athens than people” incl. Apollo, Jupiter, Venus, Mercury, Bacchus, Neptune, Diana, ZEUS, Athena

Every idol demonstrated the Athenian's hunger for God, but it also testified to their spiritual emptiness. R. Kent Hughes

PAUL WAS MORE OPPRESSED THAN IMPRESSED

v 16 his spirit was provoked within him as he saw the city was full of idols

Lit. = City was UNDER IDOLS > City SMOTHERED BY Idols

FELT RESURRECTION LIFE BEING DRAINED RIGHT OUT OF HIM

Paul ZEALOUS for the Glory of the Lord Jesus Christ > RISEN KING

Wanted ALL Athens > ALL WORLD > Bow in Confession and Praise

City of Great BRILLIANCE > home of heroes Socrates, Plato, Aristotle

Athens - Roman Empire's INTELLECTUAL METROPOLIS

v. 18 “Some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him.”

ONLY 2 Schools of Philosophy mentioned in SACRED SCRIPTURE

Both Stoics & Epicureans virtually abandoned the quest for ultimate truth & instead pursued what brief happiness possible, in radically different ways. R.C. Sproul

EPICUREANS = Influenced ONLY Educated Upper Classes

// DEISTS – God Distant Uninvolved in Universe Now – Irrelevant to Life

“America founded on faith in Jesus” John Witherspoon > MOST Deists!

Life is Chance – try Find BALANCE between PAIN and PLEASURE!

Epicureans...seek pleasure in moderation, just the right amount of drink or food or adultery. Excess has dire consequences...Epicureans sought a formula. R.C. Sproul

STOICS = Most Popular Gk Philosophy – PANTHEISTS – God in ALL

FATE is CONTROLLED – you must SUBMIT - ENDURE LIFE!

Stoics...believed man has no power to influence his life – *que sera, sera*, ‘what will be will be.’ ...nothing gets you down...keep a stiff upper lip R.C. Sproul

ATHENS HELD THE GLORIES OF ANCIENT GREECE

Center - Philosophy / Literature / Art / Democracy

Aesthetically Magnificent / Culturally Sophisticated

Morally Decadent / Spiritually Dead

Athens TALK Radio: Craving NEW Ideas / Strange Ideas / Latest Ideas

v. 21 All the Athenians and the foreigners would spend their time in nothing except telling and hearing something new.

v. 19, 20 they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, ‘May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean’

Like People Glued to Social Media = Face to Face > Got to Know Latest

Paul MORE than SIGHT-SEER > Came to Athens as a SOUL WINNER

v. 18 Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.

WE SAY – Amen! Go for it! Preach it Paul!

They: v. 18 "What does this babbler wish to say?" ((Seed Picker/ Scavenger Bird)) Others "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities"

Preaching Jesus & resurrection = “Jesus”/male -- "anastasis"/female, Man & Wife?

1. Approach to the City

a. He went to 'the Saints' > if today, Paul would come to Kalahikiola

v. 17 he reasoned in synagogue with the Jews & the God-fearing Greeks

Believers need to Hear the Good News of God's Love > Again & Again

Weak Christians? / Weak Church? - POOR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Book of Daniel > Time of Crisis - People of God in pagan nation:

....the people who know their God will display strength and take action Daniel 11.32

b. He went to Shoppers > Today > Paul preaching at COSTCO

v. 17 "in the marketplace every day and those who happened to be there"

AGORA > market, meeting place, center of Public Social Life

// Shopping Mall – Public Park – Bar & Grill – School Auditorium

Dared to Enter Public Square > Message of God's Eternal Kingdom

NOT AFRAID OF ATHENIANS > More AFRAID FOR them

Ex. Christian = 1st Trip to Bar > INVITED by Fried been PRAYING FOR

Jesus: "You are light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden." Matthew 5.14

c. 'Shakers and Movers' v. 19 "they took him to the Areopagus"

// Highest Seat of Government – Courthouse – University

From Areopagus City Fathers of Athens oversaw all Religion & Education

// Modern Media – Center of Ideas and Influence

Lawmakers / Professors / Journalists / Producers / Broadcasters

There is an urgent need for more Xtian thinkers who will dedicate their minds to X, not only as lecturers, but also as authors, journalists, dramatists and broadcasters, as television script-writers, producers and personalities, and as artists and actors who use a variety of art forms in which to communicate the gospel.

John Stott

Message: Weak and Powerless Servant > Unjustly Nailed to a Cross

SERVANT is SOVEREIGN GOD > NOW Risen in Power and Glory

MESSAGE for CENTERS of Power, Influence, Government, Education

Athenians > God-thinkers, God-talkers, God-seekers

PAUL'S STRATEGY > was that they become GOD KNOWERS

Jesus: Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

John 17.3

2. Announcement of Christ

When Paul evangelized this city of Socrates, he used the method of Socrates. Ajith Fernando v. 22 “Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens! I perceive that in every way you are very religious.”

People in Athens FLATTERED BY Paul’s Intro “you are very religious”
 Christian Theology > Problem of Religion > Try to Make Self Acceptable
 Many Defined Religion by Most Popular Verse in Bible NOT IN BIBLE

“God helps them that help themselves” Hezekiah 0.0 / Benjamin Franklin
 TRUE RELIGION “God helps them who CANNOT help themselves”

Great Gk Thinkers > God is Unknowable –

“It is hard to investigate and to find the framer of the universe. And, if one did find him, it would be impossible to express him in terms which we could understand” Plato

“The Supreme Cause is by all men dreamed of, and by no man known.” Aristotle

Man found little boy busily drawing picture / Man “what are you drawing”

“I’m drawing picture of God” / Man “no one knows what God looks like”

Boy “When I finish this picture, everyone will know”

v. 23 For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: ‘To the unknown god’

Altar "TO AN UNKNOWN GOD" - fearfully wondered, forgot one?

HOPE to Placate EVERY POSSIBLE DEITY > gain Favor of all gods

Pastor in Hilo > Called to Pray for Blessing on New Homes / Businesses

Mormon Bps / Buddhist Priests / RC Priests / Hawaiian Chanters

v 23 what therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you: 17 Attributes of GOD

1. God is the Creator of all things: v. 24 “God...made the world and everything in it” – v. 28 “we are his offspring” (quote from Greek philosopher)

2. God is the Sustainer of all things v. 25 “God...gives all men life and breath and everything else”

3. God is the Ruler over all things: v. 24 “God...is the Lord of heaven and earth”

4. God is Transcendent Spirit v 24 “God does not live in temples built by hands” v. 29 “we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone”

5. God is Perfectly Complete in Himself v. 25 “God...is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything”

6. God Directs Providence v. 26 “from one man he made every nation...that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live”

7. God is Personal and seeks a Relationship with All People v. 27 “God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him”

8. God is Near to this World v. 27 “God...is not far from each one of us; in him we live and move and have our being” (quoting Epimenides)

9. God is our Father v. 29 “We are his offspring”

10. God is Merciful v. 30 “In the past God overlooked such ignorance”

11. God is Morally Righteous and demands Repentance
v. 30 “God...commands all people everywhere to repent”

12. God is Just v. 31 “God...will judge the world with justice”

13. God Rules History and is leading it to Jesus Kingdom v. 30,31 “God...now...commands all people everywhere to repent...for he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed”

14. God Raised Jesus to Life v. 31 “God...raised him from the dead”

15. God has Set a Time for Judgment v. 31 “God...has set a day when he will judge the world”

16. God will Judge all People by Jesus Christ v. 31 “God...will judge the world by the man he has appointed”

17. God has Provided Proof of His Judgment by Raising Jesus v. 31 “God...has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead”

GOD IS LOVING HEAVENLY FATHER > Sovereign, Risen King

CANNOT BE MANIPULATED OR CAJOLED

NO PLACE FOR IDOLS > Material or Mental, Ancient or Modern

Idols and Amulets > Attempt to CONTROL God rather than Submit

Temples & Shrines Attempts CONFINE Him who is Infinite & Awesome

Can Paul REALLY KNOW GOD? How? Sounds Arrogant? Exclusivist?

Difference Between - Theoretical and Experiential Knowledge
 Red Double-Decker Buses in London/ diff btwn Seeing photos & Riding

Paul gave Crash Course on Basic Theology > Study of GOD

Every PRIMARY Attribute of GOD Asserted or Implied

Paul's Gospel is ROOTED in Paul's God

Need to Let People Hear & See Greatness of our God >

Some reject Gospel as Trivial > World needs to Meet Big God in X

3. Attitudes of the Citizens

v. 30 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.

Repentance Not advised or suggested > OPTIONAL EXTRA for Some

Commands all PEOPLE Everywhere - From 1st C to 21st C

REDEMPTION FINISHED / Raised to Life for our Justification

NOW > we Anticipate God's Judgment Day

Living & Dead // High & Low // Scholars & Simple // Haves & Have Nots

Judgment will be RIGHTEOUS > "he will judge with JUSTICE"

Judgment is DEFINITE > "he has SET A DAY"

500 yrs before Paul - Greek Philosopher spoke in Areopagus: Aeschylus
 When the dust has soaked up a man's blood, once he is dead, there is no resurrection.

NOW Paul in same place: Declares Jesus has RISEN FROM THE DEAD

Paul in Athens - Jesus Christ - Lord of Aereopagus & Parthenon

Today Lord Of University - Church - World - Your Life?

3 Reactions:

a. Some Reject v. 32 "When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked"

Hard to Speak to Sophisticated Snobs, Cling to FADING Glory of Athens

Also Need Jesus > Patiently, Winsomely PRESENT Good News to Them

b. Some Reflect v. 32 others, "We want to hear you again about this"

NOT Turn Athens Upside-Down / Macedonian cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea > Good Seed Planted in HARD Soil, God is Faithful

Door Still OPEN for Later Be Encouraged – Some Need Years to Come

c. Some Receive v. 34 some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagus and a woman named Damaris and others with them

Some consider Preaching Failure, NO Record of Athenian Church Planted

My Sermons, NO VISIBLE Response – AUDIBLE Response SNORING!

Poor come More Quickly to X – Rich and Famous don't Need God!

One from AEROPAGUS – ELITE of ATHENIAN Society

Athens TODAY > Streets named after Paul and Dionysius

BETTER TO HAVE NAME WRITTEN IN LAMB'S BOOK OF LIFE!

ALWAYS be SOME who BELIEVE & Follow –Jesus Calls His Sheep

Our JOY be USED by Him where we Are Call His Sheep to True FAITH!

Jesus: "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." John 5.24

Congregational Prayer - Heavenly Father, we thank you for the faithful witness of your servant Paul in Athens. We see that You are the Maker of all peoples and places. Everyone is made in your image. We are made to be creative, ruling over the world you have made so that we might place our gifts at your feet. We are made to imagine, thinking our thoughts after yours, so we might walk in your ways. We are made to worship, designed with souls that will not be satisfied until we find fellowship and joy in You.

We are sorry that we have rejected your creation order. Like those in Athens, we have exchanged your immortal glory for things that do not bring you glory. Instead of taking our place as servants, we strive to be served. We advance our own kingdoms. Our strength is sapped by things that fade. Too often we build with wood, hay, and stubble, instead of gold, silver, and precious stones. Lord, forgive us of our small thinking. Help us remember this is your world. May your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is heaven.

Pray for our 'city' to know and follow our Maker and Redeemer.

"The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one

man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for ‘In him we live and move and have our being’... The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead” (Acts 17.24-31) Amen and Amen.

Acts 17:16-34 ¹⁶ Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, “What does this babbler wish to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities”—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹ And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? ²⁰ For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean.” ²¹ Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new. ²² So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: ‘To the unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, ^[c] ²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. ²⁶ And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, ²⁷ that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, ²⁸ for “‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, “‘For we are indeed his offspring.’ ²⁹ Being then God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. ³⁰ The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.” ³² Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, “We will hear you again about this.” ³³ So Paul went out from their midst. ³⁴ But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.