

# Paul's Preaching In Athens

**Acts 17:22-34**



- A few weeks ago, I presented a lesson based upon Peter's message to Cornelius (**Acts 10:34-43**).  
Our approach was to consider some things to teach one who believes in God, Jesus and the Bible, but still needs the whole truth.
- Today, I would like to address another sermon from Acts. Paul's address to the Athenians -  
**Acts 17:22-34**  
This is a lesson to consider for one who questions these foundations of our faith.





# Paul in Athens

- **Acts 17:14-21** - Paul has left Berea on his 2<sup>nd</sup> preaching tour. He left behind Silas and Timothy. After he arrives in Athens he is alone, having sent message to Silas & Timothy to come to him.
- He observes the city is given over to idols and is provoked by this [**Are we bothered by godlessness and false gods around us?**]. So he preaches and teaches wherever he has opportunity - the synagogues and markets.





# Paul in Athens

- **Acts 17:14-21** - news of his preaching comes to the ears of various philosophers -
- **Epicureans** - followed Epicurus (342-270 BC). They believed experience is the greatest source of knowledge. They appealed to the senses with the goal of pursuing pleasures over pain [If it feels good do it, but in moderation, simplicity and friendship]. Basically, do no harm with your beliefs and pursuits, but with some restraint. They believed at best the gods were “hands off” and uninterested in mankind. There is nothing beyond this life - no immortality so gods were not to be feared.





# Paul in Athens

- **Acts 17:14-21** - news of his preaching comes to the ears of various philosophers -
- **Stoics** - followed Zeno (~300 BC). Their name was based on where they taught in Athenian porticos (stoa). Their emphasis was to understand how the universe and world worked naturally. They emphasized logic, ethics and nature work together. They were primarily pantheistic (god is in everything). Thus the universe itself was divine. The goal of man was to align himself with nature.  
[This would appeal to many extreme environmentalists and naturists today]





# Paul in Athens

- **Acts 17:14-21** - applying Paul's message to today.
- While the majority in our society today believe in God, yearly that number is declining, especially among our younger generations.
  - We are living in a pluralistic (religiously diverse) society .
  - EVERYONE has a belief system, even if they deny it.Whether atheist/agnostic, naturalist or adhering to specific moral, ethical & religious principles, we believe something and it governs our thoughts, motives and actions.
- Understanding such things MATTERS as you determine WHERE to begin a dialogue.
- This is why Paul's message to Athens is different!
- Paul's focus in this message - there is ONE God!





# Paul's sermon

- **Acts 17:22** - *I perceive that you are very religious.*
- Paul begins with common ground. Whenever possible, that is where we start.
- They were *religious* - a generic & ambiguous term.
  1. Having or showing belief in or reverence for God or a deity.
  2. Of, concerned with, or teaching religion.
  3. Extremely scrupulous or conscientious.
  4. Of or pertaining to religion; concerned with religion.

(American Heritage Dictionary, May 28, 2026)





# Paul's sermon

- **Acts 17:22** - *I perceive that you are very religious.*
- He notes that they were thoughtful about their beliefs and wanted to hear what others had to say (a desire to be more enlightened, not necessarily to change).
- But Paul is grateful to speak regardless of what the outcome might be.
  - **Cf. Acts 26:2** - before Agrippa & Festus
- A barrier today to teaching the gospel is the closed minds of so many who are not interested in rational discourse.
  - (**Cf. Luke 8:12** - the wayside soil).
  - - Some will declare they are “spiritual” or religious, BUT see no need to consider Jesus and the Bible.
- BUT, if someone is willing to discuss, there is an opportunity!





# Paul's sermon

- **Acts 17:23** - *I was considering the objects of your worship...*
- They were doing what they thought they ought to be doing.
- We are living in a culture filled with man-made religions. Everyone does what he wants (**cf. Judges 21:25**)
- Recall **Matthew 15:9** - traditions of men
- **Colossians 2:23** - the appearance of wisdom and self-imposed religion
- Familiarity with what one believes can be helpful in our studies. It can also help anticipate how to act and what questions, objections one might have.  
**Cf. 1 Corinthians 9:19-23**





# Paul's sermon

- **Acts 17:23** - *...the unknown God*
- Athens was filled with temples, altars, gardens, etc. all devoted to numerous deities. The “unknown god” statue was erected in case they overlooked some deity.
- Today, the one TRUE God is unknown to many!
- But He desires that we know Him -  
**John 17:3, Philippians 3:10**
- How well do you know Him? Are you prepared to share that knowledge with others?
- *The one you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you.*





# Paul's sermon – The ONE true God

- **Acts 17:24** - *God... He made the world and everything in it!*
- **Acts 14:14-15** – Paul & Barnabas in Lystra.
- **Hebrews 3:4** - God built all things
- God consists of 3 persons (triune) they are so united we describe them as one - **1 Corinthians 8:5-6**, **John 10:30**, etc.
- Paul is contrasting this with the polytheism of Greece and Rome (and Egypt, eastern religions, etc.)





# Paul's sermon – The ONE true God

- **Acts 17:24** - *He is Lord of heaven and earth*
  - A declaration of His sovereignty.  
He has all authority
    - He desires to be worshipped and served reverently
- Hebrews 12:28-29**
- There is to be no other!





# Paul's sermon – The ONE true God

- **Acts 17:24-25** - *He does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshipped (served - LSB, NASB) with man's hands, as though He needed anything...*
- HOW we worship God matters - **John 4:24**
- He does not need to be portrayed as an image
  - **1 Kings 8:26-27**
  - **Exodus 20:3-4** - no other gods, no graven images
- When man tries to build something to God, typically he is seeking to honor himself. He envisions God materially.
  - This is the problem with ornate buildings, statues and portraits in buildings, religious jewelry, icons, music, shrines, etc.
- What God wants in your heart! **Matthew 22:37**





# Paul's sermon – The ONE true God

- **Acts 17:25** - *He gives to all life, breath and all things.*
- **Genesis 2:7** - created from dust and became a living being.
- **Psalm 50:7-15** - He owns it all
  - We are only stewards!





# Paul's sermon – The ONE true God

- **Acts 17:26** - *He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth.*
- NOTE: *Blood* is not found in earliest mss, but it is well attested to and fairly early. The point is the same.
- All men descend from Adam and Eve
- **Genesis 9:18-19** - to the sons of Noah...
- NOTE: When blood is needed to save a life, the ethnicity or nationality is not the determining factor - human blood is human (It is blood type)





# Paul's sermon – The ONE true God

- **Acts 17:26** - *He has ...determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings.*
- God rules over the world, not just Israel.
- He is sovereign, omnipotent and omniscient.
- While pagans typically thought of many gods, they often limited their powers and boundaries (national gods).
- Paul's point - the ONE true God is in control of all -  
**1 Timothy 2:1-2** - we pray for all rulers!
- Does He micromanage? No! Even the OT demonstrates His control of all nations.





# Paul's sermon – The ONE true God

- **Acts 17:26-27** - *so that they should seek the Lord.*
- God WANTS man to seek after Him!
- He is a personal God and cares about each of us!
- We are NOT left to guess who He is or what He wants. He has told us  
**1 Corinthians 2:10-13**  
**Romans 1:16-17**
- One purpose of sending Jesus was to reveal God to us  
- **John 1:18, 14:9, etc.**





# Paul's sermon – The ONE true God

- **Acts 17:26-27** - *though He is not far from each of us.*
- Again, He is a personal God.
- Many faiths today view God as distant and unapproachable. But He is NOT! **James 4:8**





# Paul's sermon – The ONE true God

- **Acts 17:28** - *for in Him we live and move and have our being...*
- God has designed us with purpose and meaning.
- *We are His offspring* - **Genesis 1:26, Ecclesiastes 3:11** - He has put eternity in our hearts.
- Paul even quotes a stoic poet (Artus - ~300 BC)





# Paul's sermon – The ONE true God

- **Acts 17:29** - *Being His offspring, “we ought not think that the divine nature is like silver or gold..*
- Again Paul emphasizes the futility of reasoning that with our own hands we know what is best how to worship Him.
- A study of worship declares God has ALWAYS expected that we worship Him a certain way -  
**cf. Genesis 4:1-5**





# Paul's sermon – The ONE true God

- **Acts 17:30-31** - *Truly these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent...*
- Paul declares that these things matter. We WILL be held accountable!
  - Ignorance is no excuse. Did He overlook ignorance in times past?
    - In one sense - absolutely - our text says so.
    - BUT, even Gentiles during OT times had access to God - **cf. Romans 2:13-14.**





# Paul's sermon – The ONE true God

- **Acts 17:30-31** - *Truly these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent...*
- He declares that all men everywhere repent!  
Repentance is about surrender and submission.  
**Luke 13:3**  
**Acts 2:38, 8:22**  
**1 John 1:9**





# Paul's sermon – The ONE true God

- **Acts 17:30-31** - *Truly these times of ignorance God overlooked, ... because He has appointed a day to judge the world*
- There will be a day of reckoning.  
Gospel preaching often included warnings of judgment
  - **Acts 10:42** - Jesus would judge
  - **Acts 24:25** - before Felix, etc.





# Conclusion – through Jesus

- **Acts 17:30-31** - *...by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.*
- Jesus will be our judge - **John 4:28-29, 12:48** - He will judge us in the last day
- The resurrection was (is) central to the preaching of the **1 Corinthians 15:17-19**- without the resurrection... Preaching the resurrection provoked the response - positive or negative.
- Some mocked, some wanted to hear more, some followed - **Acts 17:32-34**





# Concluding thoughts

- Sharing God's word in this world calls for us to understand who God is!  
This prepares us to teach others  
AND this insulates us from the fiery darts of Satan in these matters.
- **1 Peter 3:15** calls for us to be ready to give a defense for our hope.



**How will you  
respond to His  
invitation?**

**Acts 17:22-34**

