

Saturday, December 24, 2022 • Read Acts 17:16–34

Questions from the Scripture text: What was Paul doing in v16? What happened to him? Where did he go to reason first (v17)? With whom? Where else did he reason? With whom? Who encounter him (v18)? What does he preach to them? Where do they take him instead (v19)? What do they request (v19–20)? Why were they so interested (v21)? What did Paul begin by observing around them (v22)? What does he note as evidence (v23)? What does he claim about the relationship of this unknown God to his own preaching? How does Paul identify this God in v24? Where can't He be contained (v24b)? How can't He be worshiped/served (v25a)? Why not (v25b)? From what has He made whom (v26)? What has He appointed to them?

What is the message of the gospel in a place like Athens? Acts 17:16–34 looks forward to the morning sermon on the coming Lord's Day. In these nineteen verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **the message of the gospel is the same in every place: Christ crucified and risen.**

The same apostolic message. The message to Athenians is the same as to Jews: Jesus and the resurrection (v18, cf. v2–3).

The best that they could do was knowing that there is One that they cannot know (v23). They knew that He is from the things that were made (v24a, cf. Rom 1:19–20). But because they had exchanged His glory for the lie, they were unable to arrive at a right knowledge of Him or worship of Him (v24b–25). Just as life and breath come from God, so also right worship can come only from God. He needs nothing; so, only what He commands is acceptable, since it depends upon Him.

They had multiplied idols from every nation. But each of these nations already owed their existence to the one true God (v26). He had given them His image. He had assigned to them their time. He had assigned to them their location. And He had assigned to them their purpose: knowledge of Him (v27a). He had even put that knowledge into them (v27b–28).

Man's uniqueness in God's image should have been a clue to them that man himself could not come up with an image of God (v29). Nations had not been routinely destroyed for idolatry up until that point (v30a). But with the message of the gospel going out, it is not only necessary that individuals repent and believe in Jesus, but that nations respond rightly to the gospel that is preached among them (v30b).

And there is coming a day when He Who has been judging nations through history will judge each individual in the cosmos by Jesus (v31a). He has identified Jesus as the Righteous One by raising Him from the dead (v31b).

The same grace-dependent response. At first, most of the responses seem to range only between mockery and willingness to give a second hearing (v32). But apparently as he departs (v33) it is then that the Spirit moves some to convert (v34). The Lord is saving whom He will. None for whom Christ died can be lost!

Why were you made? How can you fulfill this purpose? How do you know Christ is the only way?

Sample prayer: Lord, thank You for creating us to know You and to worship You. Thank You for displaying the truth about yourself in the creation and giving us an inherent sense of it in our own hearts. But thank You most of all for giving Christ to atone for our idolatry, and to rise again as our righteousness, so that we may have hope in Him for the day of judgment. Grant unto us to believe in Him, we ask in His Name, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP46 "God Is Our Refuge and Our Strength" or TPH417 "Jesus Shall Reign, Where'er the Sun"

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Act 17 beginning in verse 16 and going to verse 34. Now, while Paul waited for them in Athens, his spirit was provoked within him. When he saw that, the city was given over to idols. Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the gentile worshipers, and then the marketplace daily with those who happen to be there.

In certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, what does this badmark want to say? Others said, he seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods. Because he preached to them, Jesus. And the resurrection. And I took him and brought him to the Ariopagus saying, May we know what this new doctrine is of, would you speak for?

You are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore, we want to know what these things mean. For all the Athenians and foreigners who 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 the Ariopagus and said men of Athens, I perceive that an old thing, you are very religious.

For as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription. To the unknown God. Therefore, the one whom you worship without knowing, Him, I proclaim to you. God, who made the world and everything in it. Since he is lord of heaven and earth.

That's not dwell in temples. Made with hands. Nor is he worshiped with men's hands as though he needed anything? Since he gives to all life, breath, and all things. And he has made from one blood. Every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth. And has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings.

So that they should seek the Lord in the hope that they might grope for him and find him. Though he is not far from each one of us. For in him we live and move, and have our being. Has also some of your own poets have said for we are also his offspring. Therefore, since we are the offspring of God.

We are not to think that the divine nature. Is like gold or silver or stone. Something shaped by art. And man's devising. Truly these times of ignorance, God overlooked. But now, commands all men. Everywhere to repent. Because he has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man, whom he is ordained.

He has given a sureance of this to all. By raising him from the dead. When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. While others said we will hear you again on this matter. So pull it. Departed from them. However, some men joined him and believed among them.

Dianesius theoryopagite. A woman named Tamaris. And others. With them. So, for the reading of God's inspired and inherent word, Well, I suspect we're going to be in this passage for two weeks. Um, But we will. Uh, we will go through and we'll highlight. A bunch of the teaching in the passage.

Today. The main thing being. God has made himself evident in the creation and in ourselves. That we can see from the things that are made. That. God is and that God has divine attributes. But because we have exchanged, the glory of God, Uh, for the corrupted creature.

And suppressed the truth about God. In unrighteousness, exchanging the truth. For the lie, that's all from Romans. One. That's all language from Romans one. We have. Made ourselves guilty. Guiltily, culpably. Ignorant of God. We do not know him because we have sinned. Against. And God in his mercy has not destroyed.

The nations. Uh, that do not know him. Although everyone who dies outside of Christ, of course, Deserves help. And there's certainly is not any. Teaching of individual. Um,

Permissiveness, for ignorance. In this passage. So, there's Um, There's Paul grieving, over souls. And then there's this kind of Uh, When they, when he's preaching to them. About Jesus, they bring him to the Areopagus. Uh, To give. What they consider to be like his national viewpoint. Oh, we'd like to hear about the God of your nation.

And he basically says, It's not just a God of my nation. There's a God of all nations. Is the God of all races. And just because he hadn't destroyed Rome yet. For refusing to acknowledge him. It does not mean Uh, that he will not do so. In fact, the fact that the Lord Jesus has come and has risen from the dead now.

Mix Rome puts Rome as a nation as an empire under obligation. To bow, the need to the Lord, Jesus Christ, or be destroyed for failing to do so. And this is a new age that world history has entered now. In the wake of the resurrection. In which nations rise and fall.

Quite specifically. As. Um, are taken down nation's pole quite specifically as punishment's. For not bowing, the need to the Lord Jesus Christ. Which for our nation. Ought to be. Terrifying. Um, The more a nation has sinned against the knowledge of Christ. The more imminent and horrible. It should expect its destruction to be.

Certainly. China. Russia. Other nations like them. Although, Some might. Easily argue. That the US's rebellion against Christ as of a more hostile nature. Than that of China or that of Russia, not that of China. China is as half hostile but has less grace. Thought I answer for. And so, it's very interesting.

Um, you have the evangelism of Paul in the front half of the text that will probably have End up having having for the sermon. Maybe I should even change the worst folders. Since I know that this is how it's developing. Um, Uh, you have the You have the individual evangelism.

Uh, in the front half. And then, In the second half. Uh, you have Uh, Paul basically understanding why they brought him to the Areopagus, As this weird little foreigner to tell them about his weird foreign God. So that they can have, you know, a religious studies lecture like a TED talk on.

The the weird then weird new foreign God that this guy was proclaiming. Um, and he answers kind of the national Question. Later. Uh, but let's make our way through the passage. Now, while Paul waited for them, an asset at Athens, the spirit was provoked in him. When he saw that, the city was given over to idols.

Um, Paul, of course. His heart imitating, the heart of Christ here. Seeing and perceiving and caring about. The spiritual condition. Of the community around him. You remember the Lord Jesus especially doing this with Israel. Being grieved for her because they're like, sheep with other shepherd, being grieved for Jerusalem.

Uh, because of the condemnation that it was bringing upon itself before. God And Paul can't just hang out in Athens and ignore the fact. That there are hundreds of thousands that perishing human souls around it. When he sees the idolatry, he doesn't just say oh I'd better not participate.

In the Uh, in the cultural traditions and the cultural mind. Mindset. Because it's idolatrous, he grieves, For those who are enslaved. To an ignorance about God in which their manufacturing, their own religious ways and their own religious feelings. Because he knows that they're bringing wrath upon themselves. And so he starts where he always starts.

As was his habit, which is the right place. He, he knows from the course of history and God's covenantal dealings first for the Jew, and then for the Gentiles. So even though he's the apostle to the Gentiles, what does he do? Therefore, he reasoned in this synagogue with the Jews and the worshipers, or the fearers, meaning the God-fearers Um, And in the marketplace daily with those who happen to be there.

So whenever there are people gathered in this synagogue he goes and he reasons with them. He understands that that is not just providentially arranged but covenantally appointed And then when church lets out, he goes to the marketplace and anybody who will listen to him. He tells them about the resurrected Christ.

Who has died for sins according to the scriptures and risen from the dead, according to the scriptures and his appeared to many. So, whoever happens to be there. You just considers it a providentially appointed. This is the equivalent of Um, corner, street preaching. Which Um, Many faithful men still do.

Um, Uh, but here he is, and he's preaching Jesus on the resurrection to them and Some who are into philosophy, you know, some are Epicurean philosophers and some who are Stoic philosophers. They encounter him and And they say, what is this babbling man want to say? Others said he seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.

Notice that although this passage not Yeah, is often mispreached or misunderstood because they conflate the original ministry in the marketplace with the ministry at the Areopagus. Many people say see he took a point of Of intersection between their culture. And no, he didn't. He started with the scriptures.

In the church and then when he went out to the marketplace he cut straight to the chase. He proclaimed Jesus and the resurrection. So that it sounded like nonsense to the world. He was not ten times sounding clever. Using their philosophers and their poets, and you know, engaging well with the culture He was proclaiming, Jesus died dead.

According to the scriptures, Jesus risen, according to the scriptures and being identified as a A babbling man by the philosophers. And some proclaimer of weird gods by the others. That's what's going on in verse 18. So they drag him to where this kind of stuff. Goes a basically. They stop him from Street preaching, which Yeah, pretty much universally.

You ever since the resurrection street preachers get told that they're not allowed to do that they're and in this case and god's providence, they bring him somewhere else. He didn't find the the place of cultural conversation. He got taken there in god's providence. They took him and brought him to the ariophagus saying, May we know what this new teaching is.

Of what you speak. Now, this is what every preacher of the gospel wants. That god and his providence would bring him. Someone who says Would you please preach? And we don't say, no. And we obviously, We don't participate in adulterous worship services. But if they say, come preach at the Community rally or come preach on a float in the parade or Uh, come preach at a funeral of someone that you Um, You never even met.

You say absolutely? I will preach the gospel of jesus christ. They took him, they brought him to the area up against i said may we know what this new teaching is this new doctrine is? So the word doctor means. It's just teaching of which you speak for. You are bringing some strange things to our ears.

Therefore, we want to know what these things mean for, All the athenians and the foreigners who were there, Spent their time and nothing else. But either to tell or to hear, Some new thing. So, here they are. Um, they have been given in And god's. Providential mercy, such a lifestyle.

As to be wealthy enough to have all of this. Uh, discretionary time all of this extra time and they spend it in just hearing new things, why? Because they don't have truth. They don't have the knowledge of god. They don't know. What a human is and why? And so, an ordinary life of working hard and enjoying the good things that God gives us and serving one another and have enjoy and thankfulness and things like marriage and eating and drinking.

That has. That has. Fulfilling appeal to them because they're created for the knowledge of god. So they're still groping after something new So, paul stands in the midst of the ariopic. That's verse 22. And says men of Athens, i perceive that in all things, you are very religious. First, i was passing through and considering the objects of your worship.

I even found an altar with this inscription. To the unknown. God. Therefore the one whom you worship, without knowing him, i proclaim to you. So he says, the only thing that you have right in all of your religion is that you don't know, god. He's not saying you're almost there, let me help you over the hump.

He's saying that. That's Romans one teaches us as the same apostle. Teach us by this spirit and Romans one. That. Fallen man. Can know there is a god And know that he doesn't know them. But he can't know. God. Apart from grace. Missouri says, here's the one thing you're right about.

You don't know god. But he made the world. And everything in it. And these lord of heaven and earth. In other words, Not only do you or you write that you don't know god. But you are positively wrong about everything else. No one or anything that you think you do know is god And so he doesn't dwell in temples made with hands nor is he worshiped with men's ends as though he needed anything.

Okay, so we are unable to give god. Anything he needs because he doesn't need anything. Our hands already belong to him. We already owe him those hands. But we're also unable to give god anything by our life. Or our breath. Or as verse 29 describes anything from our mind, our devising.

All of those things are already owed to god. If we come up, With how to serve god. How to worship god. Than it is offensive to god. It is the opposite of what you wants. Only god can give us how to worship Him because he doesn't need anything. He gives us the privilege.

Of knowing him and worshipping him in the way. That he says, to He has made from one blood every nation. Here's where? Um, it changes and it's probably wearable break the passage.

Verse 26. And he has made from one blood every nation of men. To dwell on the all the face of the earth and is determined their pre-appointed times in the boundaries of their dwellings. In other words, It doesn't matter where the nation is, it doesn't matter when the nation is That nation owes its existence to god.

And you Every one of us individually. Have been appointed by god have given been given by god, what nation we would live in at what time. Okay, so it's not like there's Different nations with different rules. All our subject to the creator, all nations are subject to the creator.

Just like each individual person. Is subject to the creator. So that they should seek the lord in hope that they might grope for him and find him. The he is not far from each one of us. For in him, we live and move, and have our being is also some of your own poets of said, Where we are.

Also his offspring. So again. But do you know you know that there is a god and you know that you don't know him. And now what else do you know? You know that? Your created to know him. You have a soul. Nothing else. Has a soul. And so there is, there is god, who is spirit who is the answer for for the existence of the soul?

You have an appetite, there's food. You have thirst. There's drink. Everything that you have been. Uh, you have been Everything that you experience a knowledge of and a desire for has its answer, except for the soul. It's because god is the purpose of the soul. That's what it means here.

When it says we are his offspring. It doesn't mean that we are a little gods, but it does mean we're created in his image. And that there is something in us. For which there is no answer in the creation. The only answer. Is in the creator. Therefore since we are the offspring of god, we ought not to think that the divine nature is like gold or silver or stone something shaped by art and man's devising.

Okay, so we are created by god. We don't. Create god. We learn. About god from him. Now, he Reminds them, or Uh, applies to them the fact that The knowledge of god in jesus is being proclaimed. Not just to people, but among nations. Truly these times of ignorance, god overlooked But now he commands all men everywhere.

To repent. Because he has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness, not on a scale. Not according to how much quote unquote opportunity you had. Because he has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness. By the man whom he is ordained.

He is a he has given assurance of this to all. By raising him from the dead. And if god, Has not. Um,

Has not. Overlooked a single. Uh, Particle of the guilt of the sins for whom christ died. If christ being united to us. Means that he had to pay. For all of our sins and all of the wrath Was spent so that jesus rose again from the dead. Then he will surely judge everyone else.

If even his son. Could not be spared. Because of the sin that was upon him through being united with us. Certainly God will not overlook or spare. Overlook any other sin or spare. Anyone else? And so it's a very solemn word for each individual. And it's a very solemn word for every nation.

And then you have the response. When they heard the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. While others said we will hear you again. On this matter. The resurrection. The atonement. The return. And Of christ in glory and his righteous judgment. These are things that the natural mind cannot accept.

Which is one of the reasons why it's so foolish. Uh, to try to dumb down the miracles of the bible. Or give into any. The cultural difficulties with God's truth and the scripture. They have difficulty with. Um, The. Creation. Because of their theory of evolution, they have difficulty with the age of the earth because of the amount of time that is needed for their Their theory of evolution.

Oh, the theory is, is an attempt to Interpret data. From a grid that begins with the rejection of the knowledge of god. And then what do many in the church, do they? They say, oh well, we can fit some parts of your theory. Uh, with our with our Bible.

Let's retranslate and read theologize. This passage. And that passage. Whatever else you can make palatable. How are you going to make palatable? That god became a man died for sin. Rose again from the dead. And is physically bodily. In glory. From which he will return. And judge the world in righteousness.

It is a fools errant. To compromise. A particle of the bible truth. And that's not what paul did paul.

Spirit was. Provoked within him verse 16. As he saw all these people, perishing told them exactly what was happening. You're made in the image of god. All that you are right about is that there is a god and you don't know him. And that's not okay. It is guilty before god to not know him, it is guilty before god to think of him in a way that comes from you.

And instead of that comes from him, it is guilty before god's to worship Him in a way that comes from you. Instead of that comes from him. And so repent. Turn from your ignorance. Believe what his word says turn. From your idolatry. Worship the way that his word says.

Turn from your idologist worship. Turn from your idolatrous doctrine. Think of him only as he says, Trust in the risen. Righteous jesus. Because the judgment will not be on a curve. It will be according to righteousness. And the only righteousness that you can have on that day, is the righteousness of jesus himself.

But of course, if God doesn't give them to believe, what are they going to do? When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. Others said we'll hear you again on this matter. And they were not believers. You know, they were trying to be reasonable, they don't get bonus points for being reasonable.

From the second group. Whichever ones did not repent and believe in jesus christ perished in their sins and will spend eternity under wrath every bit as much as the first group.

Pulled apart from among them verse 33. Some do, however, They don't just mock. But it's not just that they didn't mock. And they don't just say, we'll hear you again on this matter. Some. Join him and believe. Some who apparently are known to the church. Dianesius. The ariopagite. A woman named damaris.

And others with them. So, it's not You know, a marvelously successful. Uh, evangelistic moment. But it is an example of faithful preaching. Uh, that does not. Accommodate or try to connect with the culture. But uses their ignorance. As a starting point to give them a solid morning. And may we be warned of the same.

Last we who have the scriptures and have faith in jesus christ and know him crucified and driven. Let's we be those who then add things that come? From our own ideas. To how to think about jesus, Or how to feel about jesus. Or how to worship jesus. And reintroduce, the ignorance of the flesh.

When god has been submersible to us, To give us the grace of faith.

Father, we pray that you would work in us that our hearts would be provoked. Provoked, for your church in which there is so much ignorance of you. In which their religious about many things. And every once in a while, bump upon a truth that connects to the gospel. But you make our hearts to be provoked for the masses around us.

Created in your image and Yet, ignorant of you willfully, ignorant. How we thank you that you have revealed yourself to us in jesus. That you have revealed your righteousness. Four. Sinners. In jesus, give us lords to turn from ourselves. And to him. Make him our righteousness. Before we see him as our judge.

Would you pray for our nation? Which is so guilty and culpable before you. Have mercy of god and Grant to so many. Such a repentance. As would bring revival and reformation in the nation. And turn away your wrath from this country. You o? Lord have appointed to us. To have this time and these boundaries for our dwelling, And so we pray.

Lord for The place where you have put. That you would give the saving knowledge of christ. Help us lord to be as plain about the truth. As the apostle is here. Not watering down or compromising or Trying to make. Accommodation. Remind us lord that What they need is spiritual resurrection.

So that they would believe in the bodily, resurrection. Of the lord jesus christ. We pray that you would help me as i continue to study. And, Quite evidently, not yet fully organized and my thoughts about this yet. For the sake of Your honor and your worship. And your people who gather, Give me skill.

Packaging. And Communicating this. But lord, more than that. We pray that you would come by the power of your spirit on the lord's day. And give us to understand and believe and respond rightly to your word. Applying Christ himself to us. By this particular means of your grace, For we ask it in his name, amen.