

“Resurrection! News for the Whole World”

Acts 17.16-34

He is Risen! He is Risen INDEED! > no problem to shout here in these four walls
Hotel Lobby? Presidential Palace? KOSGU University? Ramstore? USAID?

SHOCKING > probably Unacceptable > TAKING THINGS A BIT TOO FAR!
Past 7 months devoting attention to words of a RELIGIOUS RADICAL > Paul

Porcius Festus "You are out of your mind, Paul!" he shouted.
"Your great learning is driving you insane." Acts 26.24

To Corinthians: “if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep (DIED) in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead”
1 Corinthians 15.17-20

To Romans: “(He) was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord... He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.” 1.4, 4.25

NOW > Paul preaching on front lines > Message of Resurrection > City of Athens

Paul probably never been in Athens before > But HE KNEW MUCH ABOUT IT
// person from here > never been to Moscow > heard many stories about famed city

v. 16 “Paul was waiting for them (Silas and Timothy) in Athens”
HE TOURED the City > NO LONGER in its Prime Glory > Still FASCINATING

City of GREAT BEAUTY > some world’s finest Statues & Architecture

Prominent Hill - ACROPOLIS / PARTHENON > Statues and Images
Inside > huge Gold and Ivory STATUE to Patron Goddess ATHENA
“her gleaming spear-point was visible 40 miles away”

RELIGIOUS ART > Spiritual Purpose > temples, shrines, statues, altars
“More gods in Athens than people”

ALL Olympus: Apollo, Jupiter, Venus, Mercury, Bacchus, Neptune, Diana, ZEUS

PAUL WAS MORE OPPRESSED THAN IMPRESSED
v. 16 “he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols”

Lit. City was UNDER IDOLS > City SMOTHERED BY Idols
 FELT RESURRECTION LIFE BEING DRAINED RIGHT OUT OF HIM

ZEALOUS for the Glory of the Lord Jesus Christ > RISEN KING
 Wanted ALL Athens > ALL WORLD > Bow in Confession and Praise

Henry Martyn > M to Persia 1800's "I could not endure existence of Jesus Christ
 were not glorified; it would be hell to me, if he were always to be dishonored"

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

Athens - Roman Empire's INTELLECTUAL METROPOLIS

v. 18 "A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him."
 EPICUREANS = Life is CHANCE – try to ESCAPE & ENJOY LIFE!
 STOICS = FATE is CONTROLLED – you must SUBMIT - ENDURE LIFE!

ATHENS HELD THE GLORIES OF ANCIENT GREECE
 Center - Philosophy / Literature / Art / Democracy

Aesthetically Magnificent / Culturally Sophisticated
 Morally Decadent / Spiritually Dead

v. 19, 20 ATHENS TALK RADIO: Craving new ideas / strange ideas / latest ideas
 v. 21 (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing
 nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

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 is this babbling trying to say?" / Seed Picker / Scavenger Bird

Jesus and the Resurrection = "Jesus"/male "anastasis"/female > Man & Wife?
 TODAY some May Say – I Never Heard of that Rock band?

GOOD NEWS of Blessing to Us / May sound like Babble to the Unbelievers
 v. 18 Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods."

1. Strategy 2. Sermon 3. Summary

1. Strategy

a. He went to “the Church” > if it were today, Paul would come to ICF

v. 17 “So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks”
BELIEVERS need to Hear the Good News of God’s Love > Again & Again

SING: “I love to tell the story, for those who know it best seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest. And when in scenes of glory I sing the new, new song, ‘twill be the old, old story that I have loved so long”

Weak Christians? / Weak Church? - POOR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD
Be Not Conformed by spirit of this age / But Be Transformed by God's Spirit

Book of Daniel > Time of Crisis - People of God in pagan nation: Daniel 11.32
"the PEOPLE who KNOW their GOD shall STAND FIRM and TAKE ACTION"

b. He went to the Marketplace > today we may find Paul preaching at Ramstore

v. 17 “as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there”

AGORA > market, meeting place, center of Public Social Life
// Shopping Mall – Public Park – Bar & Grill – School Auditorium

Jesus: "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden." Mt 5.14
DARED to ENTER the Public Square > Message of God’s Eternal Kingdom

NOT AFRAID OF THESE ATHENIANS > More AFRAID FOR them

LAST WORDS LUKE TELLS US ABOUT PAUL > house prison in Rome
Acts 28.31 “Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.”

c. He went to the Areopagus > today we would find this radical in the Akimat

v. 19 “Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus”
// Highest Seat of Government – Courthouse – University

From the Areopagus > City Fathers of Athens > oversaw all Religion & Education
 // Modern Media – Center of Ideas and Influence
 Lawmakers / Professors / Journalists / Producers / Broadcasters

Paul's Strategy > Message of Resurrection > not just for weak & powerless

About a Weak Powerless Servant > unjustly nailed to a Cross
 THAT SERVANT IS THE SOVEREIGN GOD > NOW Risen in Power and Glory

MESSAGE for the CENTERS of Power, Influence, Government, Education

Athenians > God-thinkers, God-talkers, God-seekers
 PAUL'S STRATEGY > was that they become GOD KNOWERS

“this is eternal life: that they may know HIM, the only true God, and Jesus Christ,
 whom HE HAS sent” John 17.3

2. Sermon

Some Sermons > Affirm what Hearers already Believe > Good when True Beliefs
 Paul presents 8 points which CHALLENGE Core Beliefs of Athenian People

v. 22 “Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious.”

1st Challenge > Popular Idea – RELIGION IS GOOD

People in Athens > FLATTERED BY Paul's Introduction “you are very religious”
 Good Right!?! > Easter Services / Singing Wonderful Hymns / Sermons / Prayers

Pastor Spent Night at Church Member's House > awakened by singing in kitchen
 Woman of House singing > “Nearer My God to Thee”

Pastor: “I am very impressed by your morning devotional singing”

Woman: “Oh that's how I time my boiled eggs > 3 vss for Soft > 5 vss for Hard
 SOME ARE “having a form of godliness but denying its power” 2 Tim 3.5

Resurrection Viewpoint > JUST being Religious is BAD

Early Chapters of Romans > Problem of Religion > Try to Make Self Acceptable

Many People Religion Defined by Most Popular Verse in Bible > NOT IN BIBLE
 “God helps them that help themselves”

TRUE RELIGION “God helps them who CANNOT help themselves”
 THOSE Humbled by Sin / Repentant / Broken by own Failures

Paul spent first part of his life doing religion the wrong way: TESTIMONY

“If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.”
 Philippians 3.4-9

Jesus came to FORGE a RELATIONSHIP Not to FOUND a RELIGION

2nd Challenge > Popular Idea – v. 23 God is UNKNOWABLE

v. 23 Altar "TO AN UNKNOWN GOD" - fearfully wondered, forgot one?

PLATO “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.”

ARISTOTLE - Supreme Cause “by all men dreamed of, and by no man known”

Man found little boy busily drawing a picture

Man “what are you drawing”

Boy “I am drawing a picture of God”

Man “But no one knows what God looks like”

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

Athenians wanted to make sure they covered all possibilities:

v. 23 “For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.”

HOPE TO PLACATE EVERY POSSIBLE DEITY > gain favor of all gods

Pastor in Hawaii > often got calls to Pray for Blessing on New Homes / Businesses
Mormon Bishops / Buddhist Priests / Roman Catholic Priests / Hawaiian Chanters
All invited to call on our gods for the prosperity of their new enterprises!

v 23 Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you

REALLY KNOW GOD? How? Sounds Arrogant? Exclusivist?

Distinction Between - Theoretical and Experiential Knowledge
Many know Red double-decker buses in London/ diff btwn photos and riding one

BIG DIFFERENCE between: What READ ABOUT / What DONE YOURSELF

Paul did not know God by Reason but by REVELATION > met Christ Personally

"I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing
Christ Jesus my Lord...I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection"
Philippians 3.8,10

3rd Challenge > Popular Idea – We can PUT GOD IN OUR BOXES

Paul is SHOCKED by Abundance of Athenians Temples and Shrines

Church Building is not God's House / Even Temple was not God's House
Solomon's Prayer of Dedication for the Temple

"But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot
contain you. How much less this temple I have built!" 1 Kings 8.27

v. 24 "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and
earth and does not live in temples built by hands.

Cannot LOCALIZE or LIMIT God / He will not be our PRISONER or PUPPET

4th Challenge > Popular Idea – God Needs us and our Gifts

gods of Athens > Surrounded by pagan priests and false worshippers

Church: "Isn't he a great servant of God? What would God do without him?"
Inflated view of OUR OWN IMPORTANCE > Power of OUR MINISTRIES

Heard man speak this week > founded church in El Salvador
 Grew to 22,000 members / Christian schools > 80,000 students
STRONG EMPHASIS > All praise and glory goes to Jesus > HUMILITY
 Perhaps that's why God could trust him with 100,000 souls

v. 25 “And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.”

Paul Turns Tables on Athenians > God serves us! God sustains us!
 God will not be TAMED or DOMESTICATED like a HOUSEHOLD PET

5th Challenge > Popular Idea – God made different people from different stock
 Greeks, ESP. Athenians > Believed themselves Master Race of Superior Humans

NO ARYAN RACE / No Super Power Nations in God's Eyes
 No First World / No Third World STATUS under His Sovereign Analysis

Everyone thinks they are the best / Everyone looks down on Everyone Else

v. 26 “From one man he made every nation of men”

No matter the Color of our Skin > Same Sin-Tainted blood of Adam in our Veins
ONLY BLOOD OF THE LAST ADAM CAN REDEEM US ALL FROM SIN

6th Challenge > Popular Idea – Our life is a matter of Random Chance

Hawaii saying “Lucky you live Hawaii” / ONLY MATTER OF LUCK?

Is life Result of COSMIC ACCIDENT / CRUEL FATE / ULTIMATE MISTAKE?
 v. 26 WE “should inhabit the whole earth; and (GOD) determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.”

We have Father in HEAVEN > Not just ME counting my hairs in Shower Drain
GOD HIMSELF HAS NUMBERED THEM > I am His slowly balding child

7th Challenge > Popular Idea – If there is a god, he must be very far off

Some – Even Christians! – call God “The man upstairs” / “The old man”
PROMOTING IDEA that God is Drowsy, Distant, and Disinterested in Us

IDOLATRY > taking Name of God in Vain

We can only Rightly Call God > what He Teaches us to call Him
 Many names of God in Scripture > “Man Upstairs” is NOT ONE OF THEM

v. 27 “God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out 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.”

Paul APPROVINGLY QUOTES > 6th C Greek Poet EPIMENIDES
 ALL TRUTH IS GOD’S TRUTH > from Greek poets / godless Rock Stars

Bible GOES FURTHER THAN EPIMENIDES > or even the Koran
 Koran > “God is closer than your JUGULAR VEIN”/ evokes Warm Fuzzy feeling!

JESUS: PERSONALIZES Truth “I am with you always” Mt 28.20

8th Challenge > Popular Idea – We can fashion god into our own image

Thus, we ultimately control him > We set the Agenda of Life and Eternity
 Some Venerate > Shrines, Graves > Places of Spiritual Power
 Some Wear > Charms and Jewels > Provide Spiritual Protection

v. 28 “As some of your own poets have said, `We are his offspring.' "Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone--an image made by man's design and skill.”

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
 > Attempts to CONFINE – Him who is Infinite & Awesome

Greeks CLAIMED great LOGIC > IDOLATRY utter FOOLISHNESS

3. Summary

v. 30 “In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he 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. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”

REPENTANCE – not just advised or suggested >

COMMANDS ALL PEOPLE EVERYWHERE

From Athens to Almaty / Church to Courts / Cinemas to Shopping Malls

Resurrection brings FINAL CHAPTER of Salvation History

WORK OF 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 will be DEFINITE > “he has SET A DAY”

500 yrs before Paul came to Athens > Greek named Aeschylus spoke in Areopagus
“When the dust has soaked up a man’s blood, once he is dead, there is no resurrection”

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

THREE REACTIONS:

1. Some REJECT

v. 32 “When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered”

2. Some REFLECT

v. 32 but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject."

3. Some RECEIVE

v. 34 “A few men became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.”

Athens TODAY > Streets named after Paul and Dionysius
 BETTER TO HAVE NAME WRITTEN IN LAMB'S BOOK OF LIFE?

HOW WILL YOU RESPOND?

John 5. 24. "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 PATON > Scotsman went as M to South Pacific > people feared for him
 Islands he was heading for inhabited by CANNIBALS

"I confess to you that if I can live and die serving my Lord Jesus Christ, it makes no difference whether I am eaten by cannibals or by worms, for in the Great Day of the Resurrection, my body will rise as fair as yours in the likeness of our Risen Redeemer!"

John 11.25,26 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

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

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

