

## ACTS 17:15-34 PAUL CONFRONTS THE EPITOMY OF ANCIENT CULTURE: ATHENS

CHRONOLOGY REVIEW: We are in the midst of Paul's second missionary journey which occurred from late 49 or early 50 – 52 or early 53 AD. Luke covers this in Acts 15:36 - 18:22. Paul arrived in Athens sometime in 51 AD; his stay was brief.

### 17:14, 15 To Athens

- v. 14 From Berea to Athens by land was \_\_\_\_\_ miles, by sea it was a \_\_\_\_\_ day journey under normal sailing conditions. Paul most likely went by sea (v. 14 states that intent).  
Question: Who supplied the funds?
- v. 15 Those who travelled with Paul were sent back to Berea with a request to send \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ back to Paul (Athens) with dispatch. (They probably came immediately and then were sent back to Macedonia to help believers, compare I Thess. 3:1-6. Whatever, they eventually rejoin Paul in Corinth according to Acts 18:6. Question: Who supplied the funds?)

### ATHENS:

- Cultural center of the ancient world from 400 BC ff.
- City of architecture, statuary, art forms, temples, images
- Center of political thought, literature, art, oratory, philosophy
- A "free" city under the Romans out of respect for its cultural history
- DIVINE VIEWPOINT: A CITY GIVEN TO \_\_\_\_\_(v. 16)!

### 17:16-18 The Affect of Athenian Idolatry Upon Paul

- v. 16 MOTIVATION: lit. "*while seeing the city so full of idols, his spirit kept on being agitated\*, disturbed within him.*"  
\*the verb is παραυξομαι/parauxomai in the imperfect tense
- v. 17 RESULT: "**he kept dialoging**" (imperfect tense, middle voice)  
- with Jews in the synagogue,  
- with devout Greeks, God-fearers,  
- with marketplace-people (the *agora*) daily.
- v. 18 PHILOSOPHIC CONFRONTATION:

#### Epicureans

- "the wise make most out of enjoyment"
- this degenerated into gross sensualism
- "there is no accountability to gods"
- "there is no retribution to come"

#### Stoics

- "the wise subject passion to reason"
- "do not be affected by passion or feeling"
- "save yourself by stoicism"
- "live above what will be:" fatalism

### BOTH SCHOOLS ARE CONTRARY TO THE GOSPEL

- "**certain encountered**" Paul: the verb is imperfect active indicative; they kept conferring with, discussing with, questioning Paul.
- "**this babbler**," lit. "seed-picker," "one who picks-up scraps of information"
- "**strange gods**," lit. "foreign demons" in the Greek sense of gods

THE REASON FOR THE CONFRONTATION: "Because he \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ unto them Jesus and the \_\_\_\_\_."

NOTE: NO PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH BY PAUL!

**(over)**

v. 19 **THE AREOPAGUS:** known two ways -

1) the \_\_\_\_\_, the august court in charge of the religious, cultural and governmental affairs of Athens; and

2) the \_\_\_\_\_, where the council met: Mars' Hill.

At least one member of this council gets saved, Dionysius (v. 34).

v. 22 **PAUL'S ACCUSATION:** "**You men of Athens are very, very, religious**" ("superstitious," KJV).

v. 23 **PAUL'S RATIONALE:**

"**I observed** the objects (idols) of your worship."

"**I saw** an altar dedicated 'to the Unknown God.'"

"**I am announcing** to you who this unknown God is." (i.e., He is knowable)

v. 24-31 **PAUL EXPOUNDS ON THE ONE TRUE GOD**

v. 24a "God is the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of the universe."

v. 24b "God is too great to dwell in a human crafted \_\_\_\_\_" (was Stephen's speech ringing in Paul's ears? Acts 7:47-49).

v. 25 "God does not need what humans can give: He himself is the giver."

v. 26 "God has created the entire human race from one to dwell in respective nation states on planet Earth" (compare Deut. 32:8).

v. 27, 28 "God's ultimate goal is that men might discover the Lord."

v. 29 "God's nature (θειον/theion) is not like gold, silver, or stone images: images are destitute of life, thought, intelligence, volition, therefore idolatry is supremely absurd."

"Whereas, we who are God's offspring (γενος/genos, descendents of a common ancestor) mirror some of His attributes, though darkly, due to our derivation from Him."

v. 30 "Since such is the nature of idolatry, you must \_\_\_\_\_; that is, change your \_\_\_\_\_ about it."

v. 31 "God will judge the world of men by Jesus Christ whom He raised from the dead." Paul is saying, "The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead \_\_\_\_\_ everything I have said." - with this, Paul is abruptly silenced by his listeners.

### **17:32-34 The Results of Paul's Message to the Areopagites**

v. 32a Some mocked, they expressed contempt.

v. 32b Some procrastinated, they courteously refused him.

v. 33 Paul leaves the Areopagus (he soon departs Athens).

v. 34 **SOME BELIEVED INCLUDING:**

- Dionysius the Areopagite

- Damaris (a woman)

- Others with them!

Paul's Athenian experience illustrates that:

- culture is not the answer

- philosophy is not the answer

- human-viewpoint-education is not the answer

- rhetoric is not the answer

- art (and art forms) are not the answer

**ONLY THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST BRINGS MEN TO GOD.**

See you in heaven, Dionysius, Damaris, and all you others!