

Paul's conclusion introduces Jesus as the one who has the power over death and the authority to judge the world. Jesus along with the Father and the Spirit created all things. Through his sacrifice God saved the world, and after His resurrection He resumed His place alongside the Father reigning in Heaven.

How do you feel about the idea of resurrection? Do you find it uncomfortable, exciting, puzzling, frightening? Do you feel you have a solid understanding of what the bible teaches about the resurrection of the dead?

3. The Response

32 When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject." 33 At that, Paul left the Council. 34 Some of the people 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. - Acts 17:32-34 NIV

There was a very mixed response to Paul's message, some sneered, others wanted to talk longer. But Paul was done and as he left, some became his followers and believed on Jesus.

Given the audience and the circumstances of Paul's discourse on Mars Hill would you consider it effective and successful or not? What would you have done differently if you were addressing this crowd?

WRAP-UP

Paul's speech at the Areopagus in Athens (Acts 17) demonstrates how he engaged a highly intellectual and religious audience surrounded by idols and competing philosophies. Rather than debating Greek ideas directly, Paul pointed to the one true God—the Creator and Sustainer of all things—who is near to humanity and calls people to seek Him. He challenged the Athenians to repent because God has appointed Jesus, whose resurrection proves His authority, to judge the world. While many listeners mocked the idea of resurrection, others wanted to hear more, and some believed and became followers of Christ. The passage encourages reflection on how we discern truth amid competing worldviews, understand our relationship with God, and respond to the biblical teaching of repentance, resurrection, and salvation through Jesus.

MEMORY VERSE

3 For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

- 2 Timothy 4:2-4 NIV

Challenge – *Scrutinize your news sources through a biblical lens this week. Do they reflect God's character, his love and truth or not?*

Paul in Athens Pastor Phillip 5.31.26

INTRODUCTION

When he visited Athens, Paul spoke at the Areopagus on Mars Hill. Athens was the intellectual capital of the Greco-Roman world. Its citizens gathered at the Areopagus, spending their time telling and hearing about every new thing. It was no surprise that they wanted to hear what Paul had to say about this new foreign god, Jesus. Paul's address to the Athenians took place within view of the Acropolis, a bustling hub of pantheistic worship, dominated by the Parthenon containing 3 massive statues of Athena. But Paul was unimpressed with the artistry of the architecture and statues. Instead, he was provoked and compelled to preach the gospel as he walked in streets filled with idols. Paul pointed them to the one true God, who was unknown to them. He told them the time had come to meet this God and to repent because He is a righteous judge and on an appointed day He will judge the world.

Ice Breaker

Where do you turn to find out what is in the news? How would you summarize the content of your digital news feeds?

Key Passage

22 Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. 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. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship--and this is what I am going to proclaim to you. 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 human hands. 25 And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. 26 From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. 27 God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. - Acts 17:22-27 NIV

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Worldviews and Seeking Something New

The citizens of Athens were some of the most intellectually advanced of their day. We specifically see two groups named who engaged Paul in debate. They were the Epicureans and Stoics. Both groups shared the same skepticism and cynicism of man's ability to know God. But they were on opposing sides of the spectrum in their worldviews. Epicureans sought out pleasure and avoided pain. Their philosophy was essentially "if it feels good, do it." But the Stoics

believed there was no purpose in our lives, and we had no control over what happens, so we will get whatever fate comes our way. They thought the best way to deal with our circumstances was to “roll with the punches” and “keep a stiff upper lip.”

18 A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. 19 Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? 20 You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean." 21 (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

- Acts 17:18-21 NIV

Were you raised with more of a Stoic or Epicurean influence- in other words, were you encouraged more towards “Keep a stiff upper lip” or “If it feels good, do it”? Both of these attitudes are still prevalent today. How does each of these philosophies conflict with a Biblical worldview?

If these Athenians had cell phones they would be glued to their screens, and just like some of us, they became addicted to seeking whatever was “new”. Their compulsion to hear “more” obscured recognizing what was important. We need to guard against that in our lives as well.

2 Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction. 3 For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

- 2 Timothy 4:2-4 NIV

In his letter to Timothy, Paul could almost be describing Athens—or our world today. Like the Athenians, we are surrounded by a constant stream of new opinions and ideas. From diet trends and media movements to theology, the latest claims are shared and reshared whether or not they are true. And because algorithms amplify what already interests us, those ideas can quickly fill our feeds and begin to seem valid.

In light of so many competing opinions, how can we discern what is true, and how do we make that truth known to others? How does Paul’s instruction to Timothy in verse 2 apply to us?

In today’s highly polarized culture it is critical that we apply patience and care as we correct, rebuke and encourage others. Above all, we need the heart of God to love those who are in error, because we aren’t trying to be right, we are trying to restore relationships with God.

2. Who is God, Who are We?

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 human hands. 25 And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. 26 From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. 27 God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. 28 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.' 29 "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 human design and skill.

- Acts 17:24-29 NIV

Paul skillfully avoids debating the opinions held by the Athenians and instead points to what God says about himself in the Bible. He uses some common cultural references along the way, such as their idols of gold, silver and stone erected throughout the city. In contrast to the Greek gods who oversaw a single domain, such as war, love, hunting, wine, music... Paul refers to the one true God who made the world and everything in it, as well as the heavens. And contrary to their gods who demanded their worshippers to do their bidding, God gives us life, and breath and our very existence.

How does Paul’s description of God compare to the gods worshiped in Athens? What is the character and nature of God as Paul described Him in verse 27? How does Paul define our relationship to God?

30 In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. 31 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 everyone by raising him from the dead." - Acts 17:30-31 NIV

In verse 30 the tone changes. Paul now presents our responsibility to our Creator God. We are commanded to repent, which literally means to have a change of mind. Repenting involves a turning with penitence from sin to God. And Paul gives the reason for repenting; it is the coming judgment by Jesus who God raised from the dead. His resurrection demonstrates God’s approval and Jesus’ ‘authority over death.

Resurrection and judgment were not popular ideas among the Greeks. But they are inseparable parts of God’s plan for mankind. How do we respond to questions about how a loving God can also condemn the unrepentant?