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plus other resources.



A just weight  
and balance

are the  
LORD'S:

Thus saith the Lord...

## Acts 17:1-34

- As we continue traveling with Paul on his second missionary journey, we see him in three different cities,  
Thessalonica  
Berea  
Athens
  - and we see different reactions to the Gospel.

- **Thessalonica**  
was a busy city situated  
on the main highway to Rome.
- There were many Jews in the city,  
so Paul started  
(as was his policy)  
**in the synagogue,**  
reasoning with them  
**for three weeks.**  
**(Acts 17:2)**

- Some Jews believed;
- a multitude of Greeks  
(Jewish proselytes)  
believed;
- and many of the  
leading women.  
(Acts 17:12)

- His great success was not so much among the Jews as among the Gentiles proselytes.
- But, as is always the case, Satan brought opposition from the unbelievers.

- The Jews used “the rabble” from the marketplace to oppose Paul.
  - “certain lewd fellows of the baser sort” (KJV)
  - Who are ready instruments in the hands of evil men in power.
  - Whom the rich can purchase their services with cash.  
(Acts 17:5)

- Paul & Silas,  
had been staying with one Jason,
- So it was on his house  
that the mob centered its attack.
- If he is the same Jason  
mentioned in  
Romans 16:21,  
then he was a kinsman to Paul, which  
would explain his hospitality  
and the reason for the attack.



- The Jews stooped to the **lowest methods to hinder Paul.**
- **First** they stirred up the rabble.
  - Then, when they had dragged Jason and his friends **before the magistrates,** they charged the Christian missionaries with **preaching political insurrection.**

- They knew their charge to be a lie and yet it is couched in very suggestive terms.
  - **"Those who are upsetting the civilized world have arrived here."**
    - (King James Version: **"these men who have turned the world upside down"**).
- The Jews had not the slightest doubt **that Christianity was a supremely effective thing.**

- Note that their false accusation parallels **the one made against Christ.**

- **Jesus Before Pilate**

- **Luke 23:1**

**And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate.**

**23:2 And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this *fellow***

- **perverting the nation,**
- **and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar,**
- **saying that he himself is Christ a King.**

• If you read  
**1 & 2 Thessalonians**

(which Paul wrote  
from Corinth  
a little while later)  
you can see what

**a broad scope of doctrine**

Paul had given these people  
in just a few weeks.

- He told them of the kingdom of Christ,
  - The rise of the man of sin,
- And many other important matters.
  - Paul's ministry was very effective,  
for the enemy accused him of "turning the world upside down"!

- After the uproar in Thessalonica we find Paul and Silas in Berea.
- However, their stay was brief.

- Acts 17:13

**But when the Jews in Thessalonica heard that Paul had preached the word of God in Berea also, they came there and started exciting and stirring up the mobs.**

- Although his stay in Berea was brief **three things stand out** during his stay there.
- (# 1) **He set the people of Berea to searching the scriptures.**
  - The Jews were certain that Jesus was not the Messiah **because he had been crucified.**
- To them a man who had been crucified **was a man accursed.**  
{**Deuteronomy 21:23**}
- No doubt he reminded them of **Isaiah 53.**

- (# 2) The 2<sup>nd</sup> thing is the envy and bitterness of Jews.
- They not only opposed Paul in Thessalonica; they pursued him to Berea.
- The tragedy is that undoubtedly they thought that they were doing God's work by seeking to silence Paul.



- (# 3) The 3<sup>rd</sup> thing is the courage of Paul.
  - He had been imprisoned in Philippi;
- He had left Thessalonica in peril of his life, under cover of darkness; (**Acts 17:10**)
  - And once again in Berea he had to flee for his life.
- Most men would have abandoned a struggle which seemed bound to end in arrest and death.

- When David Livingstone, Scottish physician and missionary to Africa, was asked where he was prepared to go, he answered,
  - **"I am prepared to go anywhere, so long as it is forward."**
    - The idea of turning back never occurred to Paul either.

- **Acts 17:11**

**These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.**

**17:12 Therefore**

**many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.**

- Note the  
**“therefore”**  
in  
**Acts 17:12.**

- When people have the attitude spoken of in **Acts 17:11**,
  - they cannot help but **believe the Word!**
  - This is the attitude we should always have.

While Paul was busy  
**preaching the Gospel,**  
Satan was busy preaching  
his own  
**message of hate.**

So he sent some of his own  
**“missionaries” to Berea.**

How Satan hates the simple  
**preaching of the Word of God!**

• After the uproar in Berea  
Paul is forced to flee to Athens.

• Acts 17:16

his spirit was stirred in him,  
when he saw the city  
wholly given to idolatry.

17:17 Therefore  
disputed he

in the synagogue with the Jews,  
and with the devout persons,  
and in the market daily  
with them that met with him.

- **Athens**

was a center of

**religion** and **culture**,

- But all Paul could see was **sin** and **superstition**;
- One ancient writer said it was **easier to find a god** than a man in Athens.
- Paul disputed with the Jews in the synagogue, **but had little success.**

He then followed the  
pattern of the  
**Greek teachers**  
and took his message  
to the area  
where the men assembled  
**to discuss philosophy**  
or to transact business.



- When he fled from Berea, Paul found himself alone in Athens.

- But, with comrades or alone, Paul never stopped preaching Christ.

- Romans 1:16

**For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.**

- It was said that there were more statues of the gods in Athens than in all the rest of Greece put together.
- In the great city square people met to talk, for in Athens they did little else.
- And the philosophers soon discovered him.

## Two main philosophies

controlled Athens at that time.

### # 1

The Stoics

were materialistic

and almost fatalistic in their thinking.

Their system was built on

pride and personal independence.

Nature was their god,

and they believed that

all nature was gradually moving  
toward a great climax.

- (i) Stoics believed that everything was God.
  - God was a fiery spirit.
- That spirit grew dull in matter but it was in everything.
- What gave men life was that a little spark of that spirit dwelt in them and when they died it returned to God.

- (ii) Stoics believed that everything that happened was the will of God and therefore must be accepted without resentment.

- (iii) Stoics also believed that every so often the world disintegrated into an inferno and started all over again on the same cycle of events.

- **# 2 Then there were the Epicureans**
  - (i) They believed that **everything happened by chance.**
  - (ii) They believed that **death was the end of all.**
  - (iii) They believed that **the gods were remote** from the world and did not care.
  - (iv) They believed that **pleasure was the chief end of man.**

Paul  
was presented  
**with two extremes**  
in philosophy  
And he  
**confronted them both**  
**with the Gospel of Christ.**



- The Athenians scorned him, calling him a “**babbler**,” which means “**a seed picker**.”
  - They thought he was preaching two new gods when he spoke of “**Jesus and the resurrection**.”
    - The Greeks led him to **Mars’ Hill**.
- There Paul **preached** a great sermon.

- The Areopagus or Mars' Hill.
- It was the name both of the hill and the court that met on it.
  - The court was very select, perhaps only thirty members.
  - It dealt with cases of homicide and had the oversight of public morals.

- In the most learned city in the world and before the most exclusive of courts, **Paul had to defend his faith.**
- It might have **daunted** anyone else;
  - But Paul was **never** ashamed of the gospel of Christ.
- To him this was another God-given **opportunity to witness for Christ.**

- Unlike his discourses to the Jews, where he mainly appealed to the Old Testament.
  - He now refers to three Dispensations:
    - (1) The past dispensation of forbearance.
    - (2) The present dispensation of grace.
    - (3) The coming dispensation of judgment.

He began politely by saying,  
**“I see that you are very religious”**  
(not “too superstitious” as in KJV).  
(**Acts 17:22**)

He called attention to an altar dedicated  
**“TO THE UNKNOWN GOD,”**  
And he used this object  
to preach to them  
**the True God**  
about whom they were ignorant.  
(**Acts 17:23**)

- There were many altars to unknown gods in Athens.
- Six hundred years before this a terrible pestilence had fallen on the city which nothing could halt.
  - A Cretan poet, Epimenides, had come forward with a plan.

- A flock of black and white sheep were let loose throughout the city from the Areopagus.
- Wherever each lay down it was sacrificed to the nearest god;
- And if a sheep lay down near the shrine of no known god
- It was sacrificed to "The Unknown God."

- From this situation Paul takes his starting point.
- There are a series of four topics in his sermon.



# # 1. He is the Creator (Acts 17:24-25).

The Greeks believed different theories about creation, and even held to a form of evolution.

Paul clearly stated that God created everything and did not live in temples made by men.  
**(Acts 17:24)**

- (a) **God is not the made**  
but the maker;
- And he who made all things cannot be worshiped by anything **made by the hands of man.**
- It is all too true that men often worship **what their hands have made.**
- If a man's God be that to which he gives all his time, thought and energy, **many are clearly engaged**  
**in worshiping man-made things.**

- (b) God has guided history.  
(Acts 17:26)
- He was behind the rise and fall of nations in the days gone by.
- His hand is on the helm of things now.
- (c) God has made man in such a way that instinctively he longs for God and gropes after him in the darkness.  
(Psalms 107:9)

- (c) The days of ignorance are past.
- Searching in the shadows they could not know God
- So He excused their follies and their mistakes;
- But now in Christ the full blaze of the knowledge of God has come and the day of excuses is past.

- **Acts 17:30**

**And the times of  
this ignorance  
God winked at;**

- **but now commands  
all men every where  
to repent:**

- (d) The day of judgment is coming.
- Life is neither a progress to extinction, as it was to the Epicureans,
- Nor a pathway to absorption to God, as it was to the Stoics;
- It is a journey to the judgment seat of God where Jesus Christ is Judge.
  - 2Timothy 4:1  
I charge thee therefore before God,  
and the Lord Jesus Christ,  
who shall judge the living and the dead  
at his appearing and his kingdom;

- (e) The proof of the preeminence of Christ is the resurrection.
- It is no unknown God
- But a Risen Christ with whom we have to deal.

- **# 2. He is the Governor**  
(**Acts 17:26-29**).
  - He appoints the **boundaries of the nations.**
- Through His government of the nations,  
He seeks to make men **seek Him and find Him.**
  - Paul even quoted  
a Greek writer  
to show that God is **the sustainer of life.**  
{**Acts 17:28**}



- **This does not mean**  
the Greek poet was inspired,
- But rather that his statement  
**agreed with divine truth.**
- Again Paul diplomatically pointed out  
that their **temples** and **images** were  
**foolish** and **ignorant.**
- We need this reminder  
**today!**

### # 3. He is the Savior (Acts 17:30).

- Paul wipes away the great Greek culture by calling it “times of ignorance”!
- With all their wisdom and culture, the Greeks failed to find God.
  - 1Corinthians 1:20  
“has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?”

**# 4 . He is the Judge  
(Acts 17:31).**

God has appointed  
**a day of judgment,**  
and the Judge will be His Son,  
Jesus Christ.

**God proved this by**  
raising Him from the dead.

If we **obey** Christ today,  
He will save us;  
if we **reject** Him,  
tomorrow He will judge us.

- **It would seem on the whole**  
that Paul had less success  
in Athens  
than anywhere else.
- All the Athenians wanted  
**was to talk.**
- They did not want action  
**or conclusions.**
  - Just mental  
**acrobatics.**

- There were three main reactions.
- (# 1) Some mocked.
- They were amused  
by the passionate earnestness  
of this strange Jew.
- It is possible to make  
a jest of life;
- But those who do so will find that  
what began as comedy  
must end in tragedy.

- **(# 2) Some procrastinated.**

- **The most dangerous**  
of all days is  
when a man discovers  
how easy it is  
to talk about tomorrow.

- **Acts 26:27**

**King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that you believe.**

**26:28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.**

- (# 3) Some believed.
- The wise man knows  
that only  
the fool will reject  
God's offer.

- **Think**  
**On These Things**  
**(Philippians 4:8)**



**The doors of the church  
are open.**

**The Spirit and the Bride  
Say  
“Come”.**

**Revelation 22:17**

