

# Acts 17 Commentary

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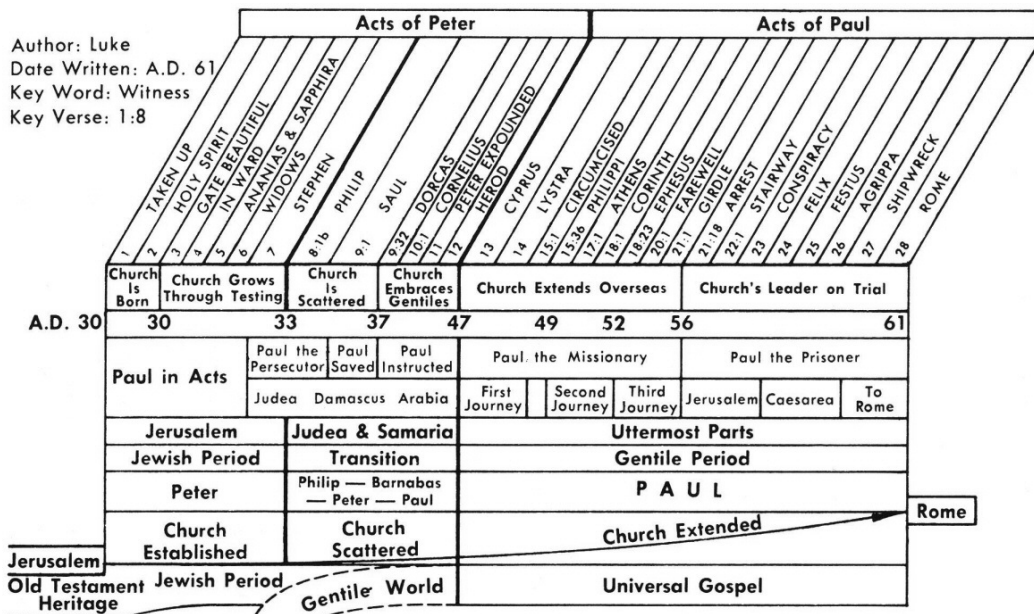
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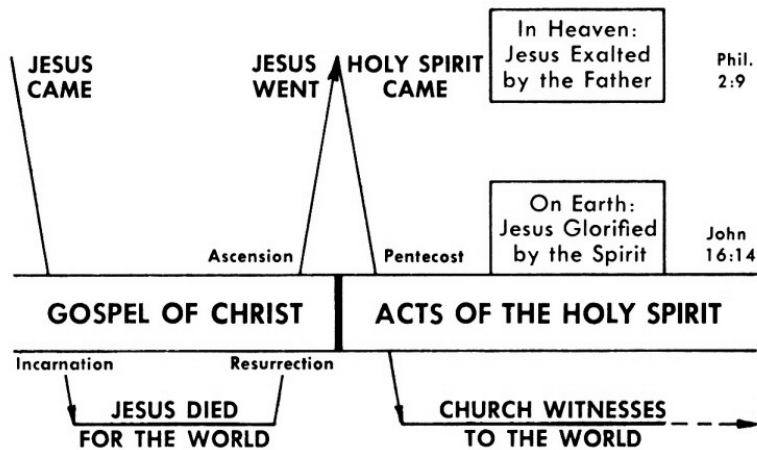
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Author: Luke  
 Date Written: A.D. 61  
 Key Word: Witness  
 Key Verse: 1:8



Click chart to enlarge  
 Chart from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission

### THE EXPANDING WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT-EMPOWERED CHURCH



Click chart to enlarge

Considering the fact that Acts 13 is such a strategic chapter in regard to world evangelism, take a moment and study Irving Jensen's chart at top of the page (click it to enlarge it which is what I have to do at age 72!). Notice the **bold vertical line** (|) at the end of Acts 12 and beginning of Acts 13 which Jensen estimates to be about year 47 (it could be a short time prior). Note the horizontal description of "Church" - **Church Established** in the first 13 years from Acts 1 through Acts 7, then the **Church Scattered** between Acts 8 through Acts 12, which occurred over a period of about 14 years (and remember all dates and times are at best approximations because Luke gives only a few events that allow us to give specific dates, such as the death of Herod in A D 44 in Acts 12:23) and lastly, beginning in Acts 13 (and until the end of this age), the **Church Extended**, this extension being the primarily the fruit of Paul's Three Missionary Journeys which "upset the world!" (Acts 17:6) Now, you have a good grasp of the chronological context of Acts 13. And as they say in the restaurant when your delicious meal is served "Enjoy!" The three missionary journeys are summarized below (this note will be repeated in subsequent chapters). Click links for the maps of each journey.

<a href="#">Paul's First Missionary Journey</a>	Acts 13:4-14:28
<a href="#">Paul's Second Missionary Journey</a>	Acts 15:36-18:22
<a href="#">Paul's Third Missionary Journey</a>	Acts 18:23-21:26

- Maps in table above are from the **Holman Bible Atlas** ([digital book](#); [Hardcover/Paperback version](#)) copyrighted © 1998 B&H Publishing Group, used by permission, all rights reserved. This is one of the best resources for Bible maps as the maps also include helpful short descriptions of the events portrayed on the maps. Please do not download for use on another website. Thank you.
- [Here is a map](#) with all three journeys on one map.

## THE ITINERARY OF PAUL'S THREE MISSIONARY JOURNEYS

FIRST	SECOND	THIRD
1. <a href="#">Antioch</a> Acts 13:1-3	1. <a href="#">Antioch</a> Acts 15:36-40	1. <a href="#">Antioch</a> Acts 18:23
2. <a href="#">Seleucia</a> Acts 13:4	2. <a href="#">Syria</a> Acts 15:41	2. <a href="#">Phrygia/Galatia</a> Acts 18:23-28
3. <a href="#">Salamis on Cyprus</a> Acts 13:5	3. <a href="#">Cilicia</a> Acts 15:41	3. <a href="#">Ephesus</a> Acts 19:1-41
4. <a href="#">Paphos on Cyprus</a> Acts 13:6-12	4. <a href="#">Derbe</a> Acts 16:1	4. <a href="#">Macedonia</a> Acts 20:1
5. <a href="#">Perga in Pamphylia</a> Acts 13:13	5. <a href="#">Lystra</a> Acts 16:1-5	5. <a href="#">Greece</a> Acts 20:2
6. <a href="#">Pisidian Antioch</a> Acts 13:14-50	6. <a href="#">Phrygia/Galatia</a> Acts 16:6	6. <a href="#">Macedonia</a> Acts 20:3-5
7. <a href="#">Iconium</a> Acts 13:51	7. <a href="#">Mysia</a> Acts 16:7	7. <a href="#">Philippi</a> Acts 20:6
8. <a href="#">Lystra</a> Acts 14:6-20	8. <a href="#">Troas</a> Acts 16:8-10	8. <a href="#">Troas</a> Acts 20:6-12
9. <a href="#">Derbe</a> Acts 14:20	9. <a href="#">Samothrace</a> Acts 16:11	9. <a href="#">Assos</a> Acts 20:13
10. <a href="#">Lystra</a> Acts 14:21	10. <a href="#">Neapolis</a> Acts 16:11	10. <a href="#">Mitylene</a> Acts 20:14
11. <a href="#">Iconium</a> Acts 14:21	11. <a href="#">Philippi</a> Acts 16:12	11. <a href="#">Samos</a> Acts 20:15
12. <a href="#">Pisidian Antioch</a> Acts 14:21	12. <a href="#">Amphipolis</a> Acts 17:1	12. <a href="#">Miletus</a> Acts 20:15-38
13. <a href="#">Pamphylia</a> Acts 14:24	13. <a href="#">Apollonia</a> Acts 17:1	13. <a href="#">Cos</a> Acts 21:1
14. <a href="#">Perga</a> Acts 14:25	14. <a href="#">Thessalonica</a> Acts 17:1-9	14. <a href="#">Rhodes</a> Acts 21:1
15. <a href="#">Attalia</a> Acts 14:25	15. <a href="#">Berea</a> Acts 17:10-14	15. <a href="#">Patara</a> Acts 21:1
16. <a href="#">Antioch</a> Acts 14:26	16. <a href="#">Athens</a> Acts 17:15-34	16. <a href="#">Tyre</a> Acts 21:3-6
	17. <a href="#">Corinth</a> Acts 18:1-17	17. <a href="#">Ptolemais</a> Acts 21:7
	18. <a href="#">Cenchreae</a> Acts 18:18	18. <a href="#">Caesarea</a> Acts 21:8-14
	19. <a href="#">Ephesus</a> Acts 18:19	
	20. <a href="#">Caesarea</a> Acts 18:22	
	21. <a href="#">Jerusalem</a> Acts 18:22	
	22. <a href="#">Antioch</a> Acts 18:22	

**Charles Swindoll** points out that "When we study the journeys of Paul in the book of Acts, we're not just reading the travel log of a man; we're observing the redemptive plan of God unfolding as He promised. Through the ministry of Saul of Tarsus, God's mission to reclaim His creation from the death grip of evil would move to its next stage. The plan of this mission was outlined in the Lord's promise at His ascension, where He said,

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses..."

1. In Jerusalem [Stage 1: Acts 2–7],
2. and in all Judea and Samaria [Stage 2: Acts 8–12],
3. and even to the remotest part of the earth [Stage 3: Acts 13–28]." (Acts 1:8-)

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### John Hannah's Outline for Second Missionary Journey

- C. The second missionary journey of Paul (Acts 15:36-18:22)
  1. The preparation for the ministry (Acts 15:36-16:5)
    - a. The conflict between Barnabas and Paul (Acts 15:36-40)
    - b. The confirmation of the churches (Acts 15:41-16:5)
  2. The ministry in Macedonia (Acts 16:6-17:15)
    - a. The call from Macedonia (Acts 16:6-10)
    - b. Arrival at Samothrace and Neapolis (Acts 16:11)
    - c. Ministry at Philippi (Acts 16:12-40)
      1. The conversion of Lydia (Acts 16:12-15)
      2. The demon possessed slave girl (Acts 16:16-18)
      3. The imprisonment of Paul and Silas (Acts 16:19-25)
      4. The release of Paul and Silas (Acts 16:26-27)

5. The conversion of the jailor (Acts 16:28-34)
6. The departure from the city (Acts 16:35-40)
- d. The ministry in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9)
  1. The message (Acts 17:1-3)
  2. The response of belief (Acts 17:4)
  3. The response of unbelief (Acts 17:5-9)
- e. The ministry in Berea (Acts 17:10-15)
  1. The ministry (Acts 17:11-12)
  2. The departure (Acts 17:13-15)
3. The ministry in Achaia (Acts 17:16-18:17)
  - a. The ministry in Athens (Acts 17:16-34)
    1. His message in Athens (Acts 17:16-30)
    2. The response in Athens (Acts 17:31-34)
  - b. The ministry in Corinth (Acts 18:1-17)
    1. Arrival in Corinth (Acts 18:1-4)
    2. His ministry to the Corinthians (Acts 18:5-11)
    3. The trial before Gallio (Acts 18:12-17)
4. The ministry on the return to Antioch (Acts 18:18-22)
  - a. In Cenchrrea (Acts 18:18)
  - b. In Ephesus (Acts 18:19-21)
  - c. In Antioch (Acts 18:22)

[Hannah's Bible Outlines](#) - Recommended Resource

**Acts 17:1 Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:**

- **Thessalonica** - Acts 20:4; 27:2; Philippians 4:16; 1Thessalonians 1:1; 2Thessalonians 1:1; 2Timothy 4:10)
- **where** - Acts 14:1; 15:21; 16:13
- Acts 17 - [William Ramsay - St Paul the Traveller](#)
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Acts 17:1-3, 10-11 Men Who Turned the World Upside Down, Part 1](#)- John MacArthur



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## ADVENTURE BEGINS IN THESSALONICA

**They** - Who is *they*? For one thing, it appears Luke is now not with them (**we** changed to **they**) and also Timothy is not mentioned again until Acts 17:14, so he may have remained in Philippi. Clearly, however the believers at Thessalonica must have known him or about him (cf 1Thes 3:2-6).

**Traveled through** ([1353](#)) ([diodeuo](#) from **dia** = through + **hodeuo** = to travel from **hodos** = way) means literally to make one's way

through, to go through or to travel through a place. To take the road through. In the only other NT use in Lk 8:1+ diodeuo ([imperfect tense](#)) describes Jesus doing this over and over, and thus emphasizes Jesus was on a mission to get out His message. Now Paul is imitating Jesus (cf 1 Cor 11:1) seeking to get out the Gospel of Jesus.

Paul and Silas undoubtedly took the Roman "superhighway" of the day, the [Via Egnatia](#) stretching from the Aegean coast of northern Macedonia to the western coast (in modern Albania) along the Adriatic Sea.

[Amphipolis](#) and [Apollonia](#) - Traveling SW from Philippi along the Egnatian Way Amphipolis was about 30 miles from Philippi, and Apollonia another 30 miles beyond. Forty miles beyond Apollonia was Thessalonica. Why Paul hurried through these two large cities (if he did) we do not know (and Amphipolis was larger than Philippi!) but it is surmised he did so because they had no synagogue which is even implied because that is the first thing Luke mentions about Thessalonica). And of course we must surely believe **he was sensitive to being led by the Holy Spirit** (Gal 5:18+, cf Lk 4:1+). And think about the beating that Paul and Silas had suffered in Philippi, and yet here we learn they were able to traverse about 100 in three days (if on foot this is an extremely brisk pace and has led some to speculate they traveled on horses).

**G Campbell Morgan** makes an astute observation regarding the passing of **Amphipolis and Apollonia** - One is growingly impressed in our study of the book, that we cannot tabulate rules or regulations as to spiritual conduct therefrom.

**Charles Swindoll** - In the second century BC, the Romans built a highway called the [Via Egnatia](#) from Dyrrachium on the Adriatic Sea to Byzantium (now called Constantinople) near the Black Sea, a distance of almost 700 miles. Nearly 20 feet wide and paved with hand-laid stone slabs, it carried Roman troops to battle, taxes to the capital city, and merchandise everywhere. And now it carried the Gospel into Greece. Paul followed the [Via Egnatia](#) a little more than 35 miles from Philippi to [Amphipolis](#), where the seat of Roman government administered its affairs in Macedonia. From there, he continued another 30 miles to [Apollonia](#), and then to **Thessalonica** 33 miles away. Each leg of his journey required a long day's walk but put him in a major city by nightfall. I offer this detail to make a point. Not long after his ordeal (**Ed:** In Philippi)—a public beating with rods and a night in jail—Paul walked nearly 100 miles in three days! Emerson wrote, "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm." Sir Edward Appleton, the Scottish physicist and Nobel Prize winner, said, "I rate enthusiasm even above professional skill." Paul's enthusiasm carried him beyond his own physical limitations to accomplish what God had set before him. I don't mean the enthusiasm of a cheerleader; I mean a throbbing, compelling, positive drive that can't be silenced until it is satisfied. (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary – Acts)

**Jack Arnold** - Paul passed by Amphipolis and Apollonia which were important cities. Why? Paul had a definite strategy in his evangelism. He evangelized key cities which had a Jewish synagogue. The Greek literally says, "Where there was the synagogue of the Jews." Apparently, Amphipolis and Apollonia had no Jewish synagogues. Paul always stuck with his game plan in evangelism; it was never a hit or miss situation. Apparently, Paul and his missionaries were not running frantically through the streets of Amphipolis and Apollonia trying to lead men to Christ since they only had a few hours in these cities. The text seems to imply that they did no evangelism in either city. Apparently, the Holy Spirit had directed them not to evangelize these cities. Why? Because it was the plan of God that the Thessalonians who were won to Christ by Paul would witness to those in Amphipolis and Apollonia. "For the word of the Lord (GOSPEL) has **sounded forth from you**, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, **so that we have no need to say anything**" (1 Th 1:8+) (**Ed:** God knew these cities would be reached by the converts Paul reached in Thessalonica!)

Following the famous [Via Egnatia](#) ([Map of the Via Egnatia](#), [Picture of the preserved pavement](#)), Paul and Silas went 100 miles from Philippi to Thessalonica.

**They came to Thessalonica** ([See notes and pictures](#)) - The city of Thessalonica, located on the Via Egnatia, was 267 miles from the Adriatic coast, about halfway along the Via Egnatia. It had become a "free city" in 42 B.C. and with its warm springs (Thermae) and public buildings around a market place (Agora), linked to a stoa, it was one of the most heavily populated cities of the area. This city was the capital of the province of Macedonia and had a population of some 200,000 (but see Robertson below). It was a major seaport city and an important commercial center, rivaled only by Corinth in this area of the world. Thessalonica was located on several important trade routes, and it boasted an excellent harbor. The city was predominantly Greek, even though it was controlled by Rome. Thessalonica was a "free city," which meant that it had an elected citizens' assembly, it could mint its own coins, and it had no Roman garrison within its walls. Modern Thessaloniki is still a significant city in Greece.

**A T Robertson** - There was a [synagogue](#) here in this great commercial city, still an important city called [Saloniki](#), of 70,000 population. It was originally called Therma, at the head of the Thermaic Gulf. Cassander renamed it Thessalonica after his wife, the sister of Alexander the Great. It was the capital of the second of the four divisions of Macedonia and finally the capital of the whole province. It shared with Corinth and Ephesus the commerce of the Aegean. One synagogue shows that even in this commercial city the Jews were not very numerous. As a political centre it ranked with Antioch in Syria and Caesarea in Palestine. It was a strategic centre for the spread of the gospel as Paul later said for it sounded (echoed) forth from Thessalonica throughout Macedonia and

Achaia (1 Thessalonians 1:8). ([Acts 17 - Word Pictures in the New Testament](#))

**NET Note** - Thessalonica (modern [Salonica](#)) was a city in Macedonia about 33 mi (53 km) west of [Apollonia](#). It was the capital of Macedonia. The road they traveled over was called the [Via Egnatia](#) ([Map of the Via Egnatia](#), [Picture of the preserved pavement](#)). It is likely they rode horses, given their condition in Philippi. The implication of Acts 17:1 is that the two previously mentioned cities lacked a [synagogue](#).

**Barclay** - The first verse of this chapter is an extraordinary example of economy of writing. It sounds like a pleasant stroll; but in point of fact Philippi was 33 Roman miles from Amphipolis; Amphipolis was 30 miles from Apollonia; and Apollonia was 37 miles from Thessalonica. A journey of over 100 miles is dismissed in a sentence. ([Acts 17 - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

**Wiersbe**: Paul knew that Thessalonica was a strategic city for the work of the Lord. Not only was it the capital of Macedonia, but it was also a center for business, rivaled only by Corinth. It was located on several important trade routes, and it boasted an excellent harbor. . . Paul labored at his tent making trade (Acts 18:3; 1 Th 2:9; 2 Th 3:7-10)

**Swindoll - Thessalonica** was an unusual city in terms of politics. Cassander, a general of Alexander the Great, founded the city in 315 BC over the town of Therma, which was named for the nearby hot springs. Later, in 42 BC, when Antony and Octavian battled Brutus and Cassius (two of the leading conspirators against Julius Caesar) for control of Rome, Thessalonica sided with Octavian. As a reward, the city was declared free, meaning exempt from taxes, and autonomous, meaning they had the right to appoint their own magistrates, five men who bore the unusual title of “politarch” because the people had democratically selected their own city’s rulers. When the province of Macedonia was divided into four districts, Thessalonica became the capital of the second. (Ibid)

**Where was a synagogue of the Jews** - This is crucial as there was not one in Philippi, but here the Jewish population was large enough for a synagogue.

**Synagogue ([sunagoge](#)) of the Jews** ([See Dictionary articles](#)) - Paul established the custom of preaching to the Jews first (Ro 1:16-note) whenever he entered a new city (he went to the synagogues in Pisidian Antioch, Acts 13:14,42; in Iconium Acts 14:1; in Thessalonica Acts 17:1, in Berea Acts 17:10, in Athens Acts 17:17; in Corinth Acts 18:4, in Ephesus Acts 18:19, 19:8) because he had an open door, as a Jew, to speak from the Scriptures and introduce the gospel of the Messiah. Furthermore, if he had preached to Gentiles first, the Jews would never have listened to him, their distaste for the Gentiles being so great.

**NET Note** - As synagogue was a place for Jewish prayer and worship, with recognized leadership (cf. Luke 8:41). Though the origin of the synagogue is not entirely clear, it seems to have arisen in the postexilic community during the intertestamental period. A town could establish a synagogue if there were at least ten men. In normative Judaism of the NT period, the OT scripture was read and discussed in the synagogue by the men who were present (see the Mishnah, m. Megillah 3–4; m. Berakhot 2).

**Wiersbe** comments on the strategic importance of Thessalonica noting - Not only was it the capital of Macedonia, but it was also a center for business, rivaled only by Corinth. It was located on several important trade routes, and it boasted **an** excellent harbor. The city was predominantly Greek, even though it was controlled by Rome. Thessalonica was a “free city,” which meant that it had an elected citizens’ assembly, it could mint its own coins, and it had no Roman garrison within its walls. (BEC)

**Jack Andrews on synagogue** - Paul went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day. Joseph Parker wrote, “Paul was not an occasional attendant. Jesus Christ did not go now and then to the synagogue. The first Christians lived in the Church, and only existed elsewhere.” John G. Butler wrote, “The early Christians would be astounded at the unfaithfulness of Christians in church attendance today. Especially would they be astounded if they knew of the great conveniences we have to get to church and of the comfort in which we can sit when in church. Our day will have much to answer for in regards to the great opportunities for worship which we often spurn in our unfaithfulness.” Paul and the missionaries would bless the synagogues with their presence. The men of God filled with the Spirit of God would bring the word of God and that would bless any place and any people. (Jack Andrews Expository Studies – Understanding Acts)

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### **John Kitto - Daily Bible Illustrations - Thessalonians and Bereans—Acts 17:1–15**

It appears probable that Luke and Timothy, not having been involved in the late transactions, were, for the benefit of the infant church, left behind at Philippi; or, at least, that they did not attend Paul and Silas from that place. Timothy, however, joined them soon, either at Thessalonica or Berea; but we do not again find Luke the companion of Paul, until four or five years after, when he left Greece on his final recorded visit to Jerusalem. This is inferred from his dropping the first person with Acts 16:10, and resuming it in Acts 20:5–6. If the plural sign be good to indicate Luke’s presence, the want of it must be no less good to show his absence.

The destination of Paul and Silas was Thessalonica, nearly a hundred miles west from Philippi, and the chief city of the second part of Macedonia. To this place they pursued the usual course by way of Amphipolis and Apollonia, cities about thirty miles apart, and nearly equidistant between Philippi and Thessalonica. As nothing is recorded of their proceedings, it is probable that they merely

passed a night at each of these places on their way. Amphipolis was then a large commercial city, but both it and Apollonia are now in ruins.

Thessalonica was a far more important place, rich and populous, with a very large proportion of Jews among its inhabitants. They were, as usual, attracted by the commercial advantages of the place; and the same attraction has secured to the city an extraordinarily large Israelitish population down to the present day, when, of its seventy thousand inhabitants, more than one-half are of the Hebrew race. This population renders it the third city of the Ottoman empire in Europe. It still preserves its ancient name, in the contracted form of Salonica; and rising up the slope of a hill upon the shore, presents, from the sea, an imposing appearance, which is not sustained by a nearer examination.

Paul and Silas remained here for three or four weeks, preaching not merely in the synagogues on the Sabbath-day, but teaching daily from house to house. As was his wont with Jewish congregations, Paul “reasoned with them out of the Scriptures;” proving first that the promised Messiah, whoever he was, must needs have suffered and risen from the dead; and then proceeding to declare that the Jesus whom he preached was that Messiah. The effect upon the different classes of hearers is pointedly indicated. “Some of them (the born Hebrews) believed and consorted with Paul and Silas, and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.” It would thus appear, as Paul’s own epistles to the Thessalonians intimate, that the basis of the church formed at this place was Gentile. From these epistles we gather some indications of his proceedings, which the Acts of the Apostles does not supply. It was here particularly that Paul manifested a marked carefulness in avoiding all appearance of living upon other men’s labors, as if he made a gain of godliness; while he felt and avowed that those who ministered in spiritual things had a right to a subsistence from those among whom they labored. But though he possessed this right, he did not choose to exercise it. By his own hard labor, night and day, upon the rough hair-cloth used in the making of tents, he was enabled to maintain the honest dignity of independence in being chargeable to no one, and to convince those to whom he presented the Gospel that he sought not theirs but them—thus maintaining his disinterestedness beyond all suspicion among the rich converts of Thessalonica. He, however, received once and again some aid from the small and therefore poor church at Philippi; for, from their tried love to him, and their established faith, it would have been churlish to refuse the aid which from the untried Thessalonians it would have been unsafe to accept. No man ever knew better than Paul how to show the right distinction at the right place.

The success at Thessalonica soon aroused the opposition of the Jews who believed not, and eventually they gave to their opposition the form which had been found effectual in other places. Fearing among the heathen to impart to their hostility a purely Jewish aspect, knowing that as such it would gain little attention from the heathen magistrates, they stirred up against Paul and Silas, by their vile insinuations and calumnies, the rabid passions of the worthless idlers and ignorant rabble, who have always abounded in the maritime towns of the Mediterranean; and soon gathering a company of these, they rushed with howling clamor, which presently set the town in an uproar, to the house where the apostles lodged. This was the dwelling of one Jason, who, if the same person who is mentioned by that name in Romans 16:21, was a relative of Paul. The apostle and his companion were providentially absent from the house; and being thus balked of their intended prey, the wild mob, having broken into the house, seized Jason himself, with some of the brethren who happened to be there, and dragged them along with swift violence before “the rulers of the city.” Here Jason especially was accused of harboring those, who, after having “set the world upside down,” had “come hither also,” illegally prating to them, the subjects of Caesar, about “another king, one Jesus.” The Jews had thus adroitly put into the mouths of their “rascal rabblement,” that charge of political sedition which has always been found more than any other effectual for engaging the attention of the magistracy. Here, however, the persons mainly implicated in the charge were not present, and all the magistrates could do was to take security from Jason and the others and allow them to depart.

Security, for what?

Not surely, as some suppose, that they would produce the accused the next day, for they would then have forfeited their bail by sending them away the ensuing night; but rather, perhaps, that they pledged themselves for their immediate departure from the city,—which, in general, was all that either the magistrates or the Jews in such cases desired. It has been suggested by some, however, that Jason pledged himself no longer to receive them into his house; and by others, that the undertaking was, that the peace of the city should not be disturbed; while yet others have been content to suppose that they made themselves responsible for the future good conduct of the accused. But all these latter alternatives seem to involve an admission to the discredit of Paul and Silas, to which, we should suppose, that Jason would not have been likely to consent.

What was the form of the security given we do not know. We always think of pecuniary pledges in such cases. It may have been so. But money was in those times less sufficient for all purposes,—less the representative of moral value, than it has since become; and it may be that the only security required from Jason and the others, was their word or signature.

During the following night Paul and Silas, at the instance of their friends, took their departure from the city; and passing fifty miles or more southward along the coast, tarried not till they reached Berea.

The Jews at this place were found to be more candid and well-disposed than those of Thessalonica; for they searched the

Scriptures diligently, to ascertain whether they, indeed, bore that testimony to the doctrine he taught, to which Paul habitually appealed in declaring the Gospel to Jewish hearers. Not but that the truth of the Gospel might be, and has been proved without such reference to the Old Testament. But in reasoning with Jews, it would be impossible, and if possible, unwise, to dispense with the advantage which the Old Testament gives; and all subsequent experience has proved that the old apostolic method is the most effectual of all others for the conversion of the Jews. The results of such an examination of the Scriptures as that which the Bereans instituted, cannot be doubted; and although Paul was soon obliged to leave the place, on account of the persecution raised against him by some Jews who arrived from Thessalonica, the prospects of a good harvest were here so promising, that he left Silas and Timothy behind him to cultivate the field. Timothy had joined them at this place or at Thessalonica, and we may suppose that it was not without a pang that Paul parted so soon again from one so beloved.

Conducted by the affectionate disciples at Berea, who were not to leave him till he was beyond the reach of danger, Paul proceeded towards Athens, going down to the sea, and then embarking in a vessel bound to that city. Here his escort left him and returned to Berea, with a message to Silas and Timothy to join him with all convenient speed.

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TODAY IN THE WORD Acts 17

What may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. - Romans 1:19

TODAY IN THE WORD

Intelligent design theory argues that the purpose and order evident in nature cannot explain themselves. Some natural systems are “irreducibly complex” and could never have evolved on their own. Mathematician and philosopher William Dembski of Baylor University has even put together a scientific method for determining the probability of whether an object is a product of design or random chance. Many Darwinian scientists, wary of the obvious supernatural implications, heap scorn on intelligent design theory as “creationism in a lab coat.”

Yet the evidence of the created world remains strong. Paul used creation as evidence for God's existence in today's reading, a point actually granted to him by his audience, the philosophers of the Athenian Areopagus. What they stumbled over and most couldn't believe was the miracle of the Resurrection.

Paul and his friends had gone on from Philippi to preach in Thessalonica and Berea. Although the Bereans studied the Scriptures intensely to test the gospel, some troublemaking Thessalonians followed Paul there in order to stir up trouble. Paul, the lightning rod, was sent away while Silas and Timothy remained, which is how Paul ended up alone in Athens. A city in decline at this point in history, Athens was still a philosophical and religious center and Paul, being who he was, engaged with it fully, witnessing wherever he could. His activities eventually got him invited to the Areopagus, a kind of philosophical debate society addicted to the newest ideas (v. 21).

These scholars were curious about Paul, but not respectful, referring to him as a “babbling,” implying he was someone who stitched together a philosophy from ill-fitting scraps picked up at random. Nonetheless, Paul made the most of his opportunity. He used a cultural entry point—their altar to an unknown god. His point about general revelation—creation and providence—argued that people need to seek God, and judgment awaits those who don't. The way to seek God is through repentance. When he asserted Christ's Resurrection as proof, however, only a few people then believed (cf. 1 Cor. 1:22-24).

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

By closely observing the culture around him, Paul found an entry point for sharing the gospel.

You can do the same! Watch a television news program tonight—millions of Americans do; it's a cultural fixture. Look for a news item that might provide an entry point for sharing the gospel, such as a science report (showing design in creation) or a war story (contrasting with the Prince of Peace). If you were chatting with a neighbor, how might you use this news as a conversational bridge to eternal truths?

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Acts 17:1-9; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-3

TODAY IN THE WORD

When Paul visited Thessalonica around 49-50 A.D. on his second missionary journey, the city was a center of travel, commerce and communication. Cassander, one of Alexander the Great's army officers, had founded the city in the fourth century B.C. and named it after his wife (one of Alexander's half-sisters).

As the capital city of the province of Macedonia, Thessalonica boasted a strategically-located harbor filled with ships from throughout the Roman Empire. The main highway from Rome to the East passed through the city as well, and the nearby hot springs of Therma were world-famous.

Paul, Silas and Timothy walked into this major port city of 200,000 people with a revolutionary message--the life-changing gospel of



Jesus Christ!

The story of Paul's experience in Philippi (Acts 16) is so familiar that we often forget to read on and find out where he went next. The answer is in Acts 17:1. He headed for Thessalonica, making that city only the second place in Europe where the gospel was preached!

The wounds on Paul's back from his beating in Philippi (Acts 16:23-24) may still have been hurting when he arrived in Thessalonica. He was treated roughly there, too (17:5), eventually having to leave town under cover of darkness (v. 10).

But some great things happened first! After Paul preached Jesus as the Messiah to the Jews for three Sabbaths, many people believed (vv. 2-4). Paul may have stayed several more months in Thessalonica, ministering among the Gentiles. However long his ministry, Paul planted a church there and felt a deep love for the Thessalonian believers.

#### APPLY THE WORD

Paul's threefold commendation in 1 Thessalonians 1:3 is one any sincere believer would be pleased to receive.

The Thessalonians were known for their diligent work in spreading the gospel and for their endurance under severe trial--all of which were inspired by their faith, love and hope in Jesus Christ.

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Acts 17:1-15; 1 Thessalonians 1:1

We boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring. - 2 Thessalonians 1:4

#### TODAY IN THE WORD

On November 9, 2007, Christianity Today interviewed Carl Moeller, president of Open Doors USA, part of the organization founded in 1955 by Brother Andrew. Moeller shared: "I just became aware of a story of a family in Indonesia whose daughter was one of three girls who were attacked by Muslim extremists in 2004. . . . [The mothers'] effort on behalf of the cause of Christ to forgive those who had done the most horrible things to their families and their daughters is a testimony of the way the Christians are called to respond. . . . When people die in the name of Jesus Christ, it presents a strong testimony to the culture. . . . The church is correspondingly growing."

For two thousand years, persecuted Christians have attested the reality of the gospel. Consider today's reading. Thessalonica was a commercial city located on a major Roman road. Paul's efforts here reflect his pattern of planting churches in strategic cities. Thessalonica had a large Jewish population and at least one synagogue. It's unclear how long Paul stayed in Thessalonica. Acts 17 mentions three Sabbaths, but it's likely that Paul was in Thessalonica a bit longer. The Philippians sent at least one monetary gift to Paul during this time (Phil. 4:16), which also suggests a longer stay. Paul's success in Thessalonica, however, was not without opposition. Some Jews became jealous of the number of Gentile converts to Christianity. Because Thessalonica was a free city, its rulers were eager to avoid any disturbance that would threaten its independence from Rome. The pledge required of Jason may have included some type of guarantee that Paul and Silas would leave the city.

The Thessalonian church was formed in such circumstances. Paul's two letters to this church—our focus this month—were likely written from Corinth around a.d. 50 or 51. Although he was forced to leave Thessalonica, Paul deeply cared about this young church, as these two letters reveal.

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY

The opening verse of 1 Thessalonians contains valuable insights. First, notice the importance of team ministry. Written by Paul, the letter's salutation shows the important part played by Silas and Timothy in the work of the gospel. Next, despite persecution, the position of the Thessalonians—in God and in Christ—was secure. Finally, consider the greeting "grace and peace." Grace is God's unmerited gift, which results in peace. Grace and peace come only from being in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Acts 17:1-34. TODAY IN THE WORD

Osaki Neesima was a bright Japanese student, sent to school to study the classics. One day he casually opened a Bible and read, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Osaki was stunned. He had searched in vain for God. He read more and prayed, "O unknown God, if you have eyes look upon me, if you have ears hear me, and lead me to yourself." Osaki heard that in America this God could be known, so he boarded a ship bound for Boston. The ship's owner adopted Osaki and gave him an education—and Osaki came to know the "unknown God" through faith in Christ.

This all happened in the last century, but it still qualifies as a modern-day version of the ancient Athenians' attempt to reach out to the true God, who was unknown to them. Making this God known was the reason Paul, Silas, Timothy, Luke and the other members of their missionary team set out in Gentile territory.

Thessalonica is another name that has a familiar New Testament ring to it. When Paul and Silas arrived, they headed for the synagogue, where they knew they would find an audience well-versed in the Scriptures. It was Paul's custom to begin there.

Paul's intention to go to the Gentiles did not mean he never shared the gospel with Jews again. In fact, he went to the Jews first in Corinth; and when they opposed him, he restated his plan to reach out to Gentiles (18:6). But Paul loved his people and longed to see them saved (Rom. 10:1).

The tenderness Paul felt toward the Thessalonian church (see 1 Thess. 2:6b-12) probably reflects the welcome he received among those who believed. But true to form, the unbelievers stirred up a riot. Paul and Silas moved on to Berea, where the real Bible students lived.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Today's text reminds us of how crucial it is to know our audience when it comes to sharing the gospel effectively.

**Acts 17:2 And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,**

- **as** - Luke 4:16; John 18:20
- **went** - Acts 17:10,17; 9:20; 13:5; 14:1; 18:4; 19:8
- **reasoned** - Acts 24:25; 28:23; 1 Samuel 12:7; Isaiah 1:18; Hebrews 7:1-10
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Acts 17:1-3, 10-11 Men Who Turned the World Upside Down, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur

### PAUL REASONS FIRST TO THE JEWS

The word **custom** means an accepted or habitual practice, a specific practice of long standing, typical mode of behaviour, the long-established habits.

In Romans 1:16 Paul wrote "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, **to the Jew first** and also to the Greek." Paul was passionate for his Jewish people to receive their Jewish Messiah as their Lord and Savior (cf Ro 9:1-3, Ro 10:1), which is one reason he also went into synagogues first if one was available. And don't forget the fact that his treatment in the synagogues was not always favorable, but Paul had counted to cost to suffer for Christ's sake (cf Php 1:29, read Acts 13:6ff+, Acts 13:45+, Acts 13:50+, Acts 14:2+, Acts 14:5-6+, Acts 14:19+). Clearly Paul was filled with Holy Spirit boldness (courage and confidence) or he would have given up long ago! It was not by his power, but by the Spirit that he pressed on (cf Zech 4:6, read Col 1:29+, 1 Cor 15:10+)! And the same Source is what every saint needs to lay hold of in order to run the race with endurance! (Heb 12:1+, cf 1 Cor 9:24+).

**According to Paul's custom** - Paul established the custom of preaching to the Jews first whenever he entered a new city (see above for cities he went first to the synagogue)

**Custom** (1486)(**etho**) is a verb which means to be in the habit of, to be accustomed, to carry out behavior based on tradition or custom, doing what one is accustomed to do, i.e., on the basis of habit or tradition. The **perfect tense** speaks of permanence, thus this was Paul's "enduring" custom.

**Etho** - 4x - accustomed(1), custom(3). - Matt. 27:15; Mk. 10:1; Lk. 4:16; Acts 17:2. Not in the Septuagint.

**A T Robertson - three sabbath days** - Probably the reference is to the first three Sabbaths when Paul had a free hand in the synagogue as at first in Antioch in Pisidia. Luke does not say that Paul was in Thessalonica only three weeks. He may have spoken there also during the week, though the Sabbath was the great day. Paul makes it plain, as Furneaux shows, that he was in Thessalonica a much longer period than three weeks. The rest of the time he spoke, of course, outside of the synagogue. Paul implies an extended stay by his language in 1 Thessalonians 1:8. The church consisted mainly of Gentile converts (2 Thessalonians 3:4, 2 Thessalonians 3:7, 2 Thessalonians 3:8) and seems to have been well organized (1 Thessalonians 5:12). He received help while there several times from Philippi (Philemon 4:16) and even so worked night and day to support himself (1 Thessalonians 2:9). His preaching was misunderstood there in spite of careful instruction concerning the second coming of Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:5; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12). ([Acts 17 - Word Pictures in the New Testament](#))

**Jack Arnold** - Paul spent three Sabbaths preaching to the Jews. This has caused some scholars to believe that Paul was in Thessalonica only three weeks and then left. He may have been in the city more than three weeks, but he was limited to three weeks ministry within the synagogue itself. Most scholars, however, feel that Paul was not in Thessalonica for more than six weeks. This is significant since the Epistles of First and Second Thessalonians were the first inspired letters written by Paul around A.D. 51 or 52. In these letters, we see how Paul taught these young believers doctrine and he assumed they understood what he

was saying. He wrote them about election, the death of Christ, the call to salvation, the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, the wrath of God, the kingdom, judgment on unbelievers, apostasy, the man of sin, the second coming of Christ and the resurrection of believers. The church at Thessalonica was a well-taught local church and grounded in sound doctrine. Some might say, "What did Paul do the rest of the week when he wasn't preaching on Saturday in the synagogue?" He made tents to earn a living (see 2 Th 3:7-9). He was also building up the Christians. (1 Th 2:7-12) Paul was an industrious servant of Christ. In a few short weeks he evangelized much of the city, established a local church and carried on an effective follow-up program. Paul worked hard at his ministry and so should every other man who claims to be a true minister of Jesus Christ. The ministry is not a job or a profession. It is a calling and way of life. ([Sermon](#))

**Reasoned with them from the Scriptures** - This indicates Paul had a [dialogue](#) with the Jews using the Scriptures. It was not a formal sermon but discussion where there were questions and answers. We all do well to emulate Paul's pattern but first we need to be sure we understand what we believe. And if we are reasoning with our Jewish friends, we need to be facile with the Old Testament passages, especially those directly predicting the Messiah. Are you ready to make a defense of the Gospel? As Peter writes...

Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, **always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks** you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;(1 Peter 3:15+)

**NET NOTE** on **reasoned** (dialegomai) which NET translates "**addressed**" - Although the word dielexato (from dialegomai) is frequently translated "reasoned," "disputed," or "argued," this sense comes from its classical meaning where it was used of philosophical disputation, including the Socratic method of questions and answers. However, there does not seem to be contextual evidence for this kind of debate in Acts 17:2. As G. Schrenk (TDNT 2:94-95) points out, "What is at issue is the address which any qualified member of a synagogue might give." Other examples of this may be found in the NT in Matt 4:23 and Mark 1:21.

**Reasoned** ([1256](#)) (dialegomai from **diá** = denoting transition or separation + **légo** = speak; English = [dialogue](#); noun derived = **dialektos** = speaking a specific language of a country) means to engage in an interchange of speech. It means to think different things with oneself, to mingle thought with thought and so to ponder or revolve in one's mind. To reason as one might do using thoughtful arguments to persuade another. To carry on a reasoned discussion as Paul did with the Jews (interestingly each time in the synagogue) here in Thessalonica, in Athens (Acts 17:17), In Corinth (Acts 18:4) and in Ephesus (Acts 18:19). Some sources even consider dialegomai to be a technical term for Paul's teaching in the synagogues. It is used of speaking to someone in order to convince them (by reasoning) (Heb 12:5). The use in Mk 9:34 conveys the sense of a discussion which was also a dispute.

Clearly **dialegomai** in Paul's proclamation and defense of the Gospel in the book of Acts for Luke records that Paul **reasoned** in Thessalonica (Acts 17:2), Athens (Acts 17:17), Corinth (Acts 18:4), Ephesus (Acts 18:19; 19:8, 9), Troas (Acts 20:7, 9), and finally, before the Roman governor, Felix, in Caesarea Maritima (Acts 24:25).

**Gary Hill** notes that **dialegomai** is from "**diá**, "through, across to the other side," which intensifies *légō*, "speaking to a conclusion") – properly, "getting a *conclusion across*" by exchanging thoughts (sound logic) – "mingling thought with thought, to ponder (*revolve in the mind*)" (J. Thayer)." ...usually of believers exercising "**dialectical** reasoning" – i.e. the process of *giving and receiving* information to *reach deeper understanding*. This "going back-and-forth" to *think through* thoughts and ideas enables believers to rapidly grow in knowing the Lord (His word, will). Indeed, this is one of the most telling characteristics of the *growing* Christian! (Discovery Bible)

**Cleon Rogers** - to reason, to discuss, to argue, to dispute, to revolve in the mind, to teach w. the method of question and answer, to give a discourse, but always w. the idea of intellectual stimulus

**Swindoll** on **dialegomai** - Greek philosophers used this term in a technical sense, believing the use of logic and reason to be the means by which one may connect with the **logos**, the divine mind, the realm of pure idea. For example, "in Socrates, Plato and Aristotle there is developed the art of persuasion and demonstration either in the form of question and answer (Socrates), the establishment of the idea by pure thought (Plato), or the investigation of the ultimate foundations of demonstration and knowledge (Aristotle)." Ancient Jews didn't "reason" in this technical sense, but they recognized [disputation](#) as a time-honored theological method. In the first century, however, Greek influence undoubtedly found its way into synagogues within predominantly Gentile cities. Acts uses the term dialegomai for Paul's practice of engaging unbelievers in apologetic and evangelistic encounters.

**Dialegomai** was used by classic Greek poets in a neutral sense (to hold a conversation, to chat), but Greek philosophers used dialegomai to mean conversation with teaching as its end. It describes speaking to someone in order to convince but not in the sense of a formal sermon but in a discussion format. It meant to engage in speech interchange (being able to answer questions about one's faith - see 1Pe 3:15-note) and in context referred to a reasoned discussion as when one instructs someone about something.

**A T Robertson** - **dialegomai** is old verb in the active to select, distinguish, then to revolve in the mind, to converse (interchange of ideas), then to teach in the Socratic ("dialectic") method of question and answer (cf. dielegeto in Acts 16:17), then simply to

discourse, but always with the idea of intellectual stimulus. With these Jews and God-fearers Paul appealed to the Scriptures as text and basis (apo) of his ideas. ([Acts 17 - Word Pictures in the New Testament](#))

**Cleon Rogers** on **dialegomai** - to reason, to argue, to dispute, to revolve in the mind, to teach w. the method of question and answer, to give a discourse, but always w. the idea of intellectual stimulus; to contend, to dispute, to discuss, to conduct a discussion. The prep. in the compound recalls the two parties in a conversation (New Linguistic & Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament)

**Dialogue** (Webster) - A conversation or conference between two or more persons; particularly, a formal conversation in theatrical performances; also, an exercise in colleges and schools, in which two or more person carry on a discourse.

**TDNT** - dialegomai. From the basic sense "to converse," we go to **a.** "to negotiate," **b.** "to address," **c.** "to speak." The LXX uses the word for **a.** "to speak" (Is. 63:1), and **b.** "to treat with" (Ex. 6:27) of even "contend with" (Jdg. 8:1). In Josephus dialegomai means **a.** "to discuss," **b.** "to make a statement," and **c.** "to treat of something." In Philo it refers either to conversation or to divine or human speech. Discussion is not at issue in the NT, where 1. Heb. 12:25 has in view God's address, 2. Acts 17:2; 18:4, 19 the public lectures Paul gave, and 3. Mt. 9:34 and Jude 1:9 disputing in the former case that of the disciples among themselves, in the latter the dispute between Michael and the devil about the body of Moses.

**Liddell-Scott** - to pick out one from another, to pick out, to converse with, hold converse with, to discuss a question with another, to argue with one against doing, to discourse, argue, to use a dialect or language

**Dialegomai** - 13x in 13v - **NAS Usage:** addressed(1), argued(1), carrying on a discussion(1), discussed(1), discussing(1), reasoned(2), reasoning(4), talking(2). There are only 4 uses in the Septuagint - Ex 6:27; Jdg 8:1; Esther 5:2; Isa 63:1;

Mark 9:34 But they kept silent, for on the way they had **discussed** with one another which of them was the greatest.

Acts 17:2 And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths **reasoned** with them from the Scriptures,...17 So he was **reasoning** in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present.

**Comment:** The idea of **dialegomai** is not a formal sermon but a discussion ("give and take"), during which one fields questions from the hearers. Beloved, an effective witness includes the ability to be able to give an answer to questions about what we believe. Do you feel confident in this "job description?" (cf 1Pe 3:15-note).

Acts 18:4 And he was **reasoning** in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks....19 They came to Ephesus, and he left them there. Now he himself entered the synagogue and **reasoned** with the Jews.

Acts 19:8 And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, **reasoning** and persuading them about the kingdom of God. 9 But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, **reasoning** daily in the school of Tyrannus.

**Comment:** The idea of **dialegomai** is not merely lecturing but of responding to one's questions and challenges.

Acts 20:7 On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began **talking** to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight....9 And there was a young man named Eutychus sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep; and as Paul kept on **talking**, he was overcome by sleep and fell down from the third floor and was picked up dead.

Acts 24:12 "Neither in the temple, nor in the synagogues, nor in the city itself did they find me **carrying on a discussion** with anyone or causing a riot...25 But as he was **discussing** righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, "Go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you."

Hebrews 12:5-note and you have forgotten the exhortation which is **addressed** to you as sons, "MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM;

**Comment** - The utterance of Scripture is treated as the voice of God conversing with men!

Jude 1:9-note But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and **argued** about the body of

Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

**Moulton and Milligan** have this example - "you know how I conversed with you about the sesame"...These instances will suffice to show that has in the vernacular the use seen in Mk 9:34. Elsewhere in the NT, as Bp E. L. Hicks points out in CR i. p. 45, "it always is used of addressing, **preaching**, lecturing," a use which he shows to be predominant in inscriptions.

**Jack Arnold** - Paul did not depend upon human reasoning or sentimental emotionalism to win his hearers but on the Bible alone. Paul did not throw out the intellect but he reasoned from the Scriptures, showing the logic and consistency of the Christian position over against Judaism and the pagan Greek and Roman philosophies and the mystery cults of that day. Paul appealed to the heart and the conscience through the mind. He knew people had to have right information before they could make an intelligent commitment to Christ. (Ibid)

**Reasoning with them from the Scriptures** - This is more than just reading or quoting Messianic prophecies. **Reasoning** requires logical argumentation, graciously presented, based on thorough study of the Word of Truth, a firm persuasion in the divine authority of the Scriptures on the part of both speakers and hearers, and a full filling with your Paraclete, your Helper, the Holy Spirit, Who alone can enable natural men to carry out such supernatural work for the glory of the King.

**Three Sabbaths** - We do not know exactly how long Paul remained in Thessalonica, but it was long enough to receive financial help twice from the church in Philippi (Php 4:15, 16-note). 1Thess 1:1-10 describes how God blessed Paul's apparently brief ministry and how the message spread from Thessalonica to other places. It was not a long ministry, but it was an effective one.

During the week Paul apparently labored as tentmaker ("by trade they were tent-makers" Acts 18:3) for in his first letter to the Thessalonians he reminded them...

For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. (1Th 2:9-note, cf ; 2 Th3:7, 8, 9, 10)

We do not know how long Paul remained in Thessalonica, but it was long enough to receive financial help twice from the church in Philippi

And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone 16 for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. (Phil 4:15, 16-note).

In summary Paul approached the Jews in the following manner...

- 1) Reasoned with them - dialogued with them from the Scriptures
- 2) Explained (from the Scriptures)
- 3) Gave evidence (from the Scriptures) - he was laying down alongside, setting before them one OT Messianic prophecy after another to prove that Jesus was the Messiah.
- 4) Proclaimed Jesus is the Messiah

Paul was careful to give evidence of the Messiah's suffering and resurrection which is the heart of the gospel (see 1Cor 15:1, 2, 3, 4, 5) Not surprisingly the sermons in Acts place great emphasis on the Resurrection.

**John Stott** wrote that "Christianity is in its very essence a resurrection religion...The concept of resurrection lies at its heart. If you remove it, Christianity is destroyed."

**Sabbaths** (4521)(**sabbaton** from **shabath** - 07676 = to cease from work, intermission - see note on **shabath**) in this context refers to the seventh day of the week held sacred by the Jews.

**Scriptures** (1124)(**graphe** from **grapho** = to write; English = graphite - the lead in a pencil!) means first a writing or thing written, a document. The majority of the NT uses refer to the Old Testament writings in a general sense of the whole collection when the **plural**. So shame on those like [Andy Stanley who seek to minimize the importance of the Old Testament](#) in the church today. The Bereans (Acts 17:11 below) would have very likely have left a church like Andy Stanley's! (Just a speculative thought!) Paul would certainly have argued strongly to the contrary as the OT Scriptures were the foundation of his preaching and teaching! (And that is not speculative!)

PAUL'S PATTERN: TO THE JEW FIRST	
LOCATION	REFERENCE

1. Damascus	1. Acts 9:20+
2. Jerusalem	2. Acts 9:28-29+
3. Salamis	3. Acts 13:5+
4. Pisidian Antioch	4. Acts 13:14+
5. Iconium	5. Acts 14:1+
6. Philippi	6. Acts 16:13+
7. Thessalonica	7. Acts 17:1-2+
8. Berea	8. Acts 17:10+
9. Athens	9. Acts 17:16-17+
10. Corinth	10. Acts 18:1-4+
11. Ephesus	11. Acts 18:19; 19:8+
12. Rome	12. Acts 28:17+

**Acts 17:3 explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ."**

- **explaining and giving evidence** - Acts 2:16-36; 3:22-26; 13:26-39
- **that the Christ had to suffer** - Luke 24:26,27,32,44,46; 1Corinthians 15:3,4; 1Thessalonians 1:5,6
- **This Jesus** - Acts 2:36; 9:22; 18:28; Galatians 3:1
- **whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ** - Acts 1:4
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Acts 17:1-3, 10-11 Men Who Turned the World Upside Down, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur

CSB explaining and showing that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead, and saying: "This is the Messiah, Jesus, whom I am proclaiming to you."

ESV explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ."

KJV Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

NET explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and to rise from the dead, saying, "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ."

NIV explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ," he said.

NLT He explained the prophecies and proved that the Messiah must suffer and rise from the dead. He said, "This Jesus I'm telling you about is the Messiah."

YLT opening and alleging, 'That the Christ it behoved to suffer, and to rise again out of the dead, and that this is the Christ -- Jesus whom I proclaim to you.'

## **JESUS IS THE MESSIAH THE OT PREDICTED WOULD SUFFER AND RISE**

While Luke does not state it, clearly Paul was appealing to the Old Testament Messianic prophecies which like a blinking red neon sign point to one Person in history, the Jewish Messiah named Jesus. As explained below as Paul opened the Scriptures, the Spirit opened the hearts of some of the Jews to hear (Lk 24:45) at the same time opening their hearts to believe the Good News of Jesus their Messiah. Notice that in this single passage Christ or Jesus is mentioned three times! What a pattern for all of us! Be filled with the Spirit and you will not be afraid to speak the Name "Jesus!" (cf Acts 4:12, Jn 20:31).

**Bob Utley** - The Bible is divine revelation, not human discovery. Spiritual truth is a gift from God to blinded, sinful humanity.

**Thomas Constable** observes that "Luke described Paul's method of evangelizing in Thessalonica as reasoning (Gr. dielexato, cf. Acts 17:17; 18:4, 19; 19:8-9; 24:25) from the Scriptures, explaining (dianoigon), giving evidence (proving, paratithemenos), and

proclaiming (katangelo). These terms imply that Paul dealt carefully with his hearers' questions and doubts. He showed that the facts of gospel history confirmed what the Scriptures predicted. His subject was Jesus whom Paul believed was the Christ. His Jewish hearers needed convincing that their Scriptures taught that Messiah would suffer death and rise from the grave (cf. Acts 3:18; 13:30, 34; Luke 24:13-27; 1 Cor. 15:1-4). Paul used the Old Testament to prove that Jesus was the Messiah (Christ)." (Constable's Notes on the Bible)

**Jack Arnold** - Paul took no other books but the Bible, for he believed in the inspired Bible and so did the Jews, and they would recognize no other authority. Today we need more preachers who will expound the Scriptures verse by verse to people so they can understand the meaning of the text and get a grounding for some kind of biblical and systematic theology. There is not one pulpit in a hundred in America which seeks to teach books of the Bible in a verse by verse method. About five years ago I was called by the Irving Bible Church in Irving, Texas (just outside of Dallas, near Texas Stadium) to candidate for that pulpit. They would have paid me over \$4,000.00 more than I was being paid at Grace Church, and there were over 500 people in that congregation. It was very tempting. I prayed about it. God definitely spoke to me the fact that He had called me to Grace Church and my work was not finished here. He also spoke to me about the fact that at that time there was no church in the Valley with an expository, verse by verse ministry of the Word, and Dallas had all kinds of these preachers and teachers. I phoned them back and said, "No, thank you." They thought I was a little crazy but I had peace. (Ibid)

**Explaining** (1272)(**dianoigo** from **dia** = through, between, used here as an intensive + **anoigo** = to open, remove that which obstructs) means to open completely that which was closed (open wide, like "double folding doors" or as when Stephen in his last moments before martyrdom saw "the heavens **opened up**" Acts 7:56). **Dianoigo** can speak of opening one's understanding to what before had been hidden or closed to their intellect. To open the sense of Scripture and thus to *explain* the Scripture. To thoroughly disclose or cause one to thoroughly understand.

**Albert Barnes** says **dianoigo** "means to explain what is concealed or obscure." **Dianoigo** is one of those truly "supernatural" words, a word that speaks of the Spirit's enabling power! It is used by Mark to describe the miraculous giving of hearing by Jesus (Mk 7:34, 32-33). The remainder of the NT uses are by Dr. Luke to describe the opening of the womb (context = miraculous birth of Jesus) (Lk 2:23+), the supernatural opening of one's (spiritual) eyes ("the eyes of our heart") to recognize the Messiah (Lk 24:31), the opening of one's mind to Scriptural truth, explaining the truth, (and unless this occurs, we cannot truly understand it naturally, because it is supernatural!) (Lk 24:45, cp Lk 24:32), the opening of heaven to Stephen so that he could see Jesus (Acts 7:56), the supernatural opening of Lydia's heart to receive the Gospel preached by Paul (Acts 16:14) We see an OT parallel when Elisha prayed for his servant's (spiritual) eyes to be opened and given "supernatural vision." (2Ki 6:17) Note that the idiomatic phrase "a male that **opens** the womb" (Lk 2:23) speaks of the first-born male.

**Dianoigo** in this verse is a [present tense](#) participle which emphasizes the continuing action and describes the means or methods of Paul's reasoning and argumentation.

The **KJV** translates **dianoigo** in Acts 17:3 as "opening," which is more literally correct. The present tense pictures Paul as continuing opening the truths of the OT Scriptures to them. The Jews in the Synagogue had the Scriptures (Old Testament), but the true meaning of the text remained closed until Paul enabled by the Spirit "opened" the familiar passages that revealed that Jesus was the Messiah.

**THOUGHT** - Dear pastor, Paul's practice necessitates that first of all we preach and teach the Scriptures with the mindset of the Reformers - "**Sola Scriptura!**" As we work through explaining and exhorting verse by verse (expository style), our "**Enabler**," the Holy Spirit, will teach us as we teach others, opening individual passages and words as to their meaning and their practical application. **Every teacher of spiritual truth** must recognize that whereas he may teach the Word of God to others and seek to help them apply it to their lives, only God Himself can open the pupils' spiritual eyes (the "pupils" of the pupils, so to speak) and thus enable them to be receptive to the truth. Read Mt 11:27.

**John Trapp** says "Man's heart is naturally locked up and barricaded against God, till he, by his mighty Spirit, make forcible entrance, beating the devil out of his trenches, 2Cor. 10:4 (cp what the devil does when the Word is sown - Lk 8:5, 10-12)."

**Thayer** says **dianoigo** is "occasionally in secular authors from Plato...down; to open by dividing or drawing asunder (dia), to open thoroughly (what had been closed)." Liddell-Scott adds "to open and explain."

Jesus had thoroughly, totally opened the minds of the two on the road to Emmaus by "dividing" their mind that was previously closed and the Word that was previously closed and causing them to understand spiritual truths otherwise hidden to the natural mind (Lk 24:32) and He did the same for His disciples (Lk 24:45+) and for Lydia's heart Acts 16:14+. Paul speaking but his words were went forth in the power of the Spirit as Jesus had promised in Acts 1:8.

In the **Septuagint (Lxx)**, **dianoigo** is used to describe Sheol "opening wide" it's mouth (a dramatic picture of it being unavoidable or

inescapable!) or of men "opening wide" their mouth to speak against the Jews (Lam 2:16, 3:46), of Ezekiel's spiritual feeding (Ezek 3:2), of "gates of rivers" opened to flood and destroy (Nah 2:6), of God opening His eyes to smite Judah's enemies (Zech 12:4), of a (supernatural) fountain opened "in that day" (the **Millennium**), a fountain "for sin and impurity." (Zech 13:1)

**Roy Zuck - Dianoigo** means "to open," and was the word used by our Lord when He healed a deaf man's ears (Mark 7:34). In a more figurative sense, this verb is used of the opening of one's eyes, mind, and heart so the person may understand spiritual truths. This stresses the divine element essential in Bible teaching. Only Christ could open the eyes of the Emmaus disciples so they would know that He was the One with them (Luke 24:31). Only Christ could open the Scriptures to them so they would appreciate them and know their meaning (Luke 24:32). Only Christ could open the minds of His disciples so they could understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45). Only God could open the heart of Lydia, that is, "rouse in (her) the faculty of understanding or the desire of learning." **Every teacher of spiritual truth must recognize that whereas he may apply the Word of God to others and seek to help them apply it to their lives, only God Himself can make the pupils' hearts open or receptive to the truth.** (Bib. Sac. Vol. 122, No. 486, p 157).

**A T Robertson** - Opening the Scriptures, Luke means, as made plain by the mission and message of Jesus, the same word (dianoigō) used by him of the interpretation of the Scriptures by Jesus (Luke 24:32) and of the opening of the mind of the disciples also by Jesus (Luke 24:45) and of the opening of Lydia's heart by the Lord (Acts 16:14). One cannot refrain from saying that such exposition of the Scriptures as Jesus and Paul gave would lead to more opening of mind and heart. ([Acts 17 - Word Pictures in the New Testament](#))

**Dianoigo** was used occasionally in secular authors from Plato, et al, meaning to open by dividing or drawing asunder (dia), to open thoroughly (what had been closed);

**Dianoigo** - 8x in 8v - translated in NAS - explaining(2), opened(5), opens(1).

Mark 7:34 and looking up to heaven with a deep sigh, He said to him (to the deaf man - Mk 7:32-33), "**Ephphatha!**" that is, "**Be opened** (aorist active imperative)!"

Luke 2:23+ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "EVERY firstborn MALE THAT **OPENS** THE WOMB SHALL BE CALLED HOLY TO THE LORD "),

**Comment: Dianoigo** is used somewhat literally because the uterus has to "open" (the cervix has to dilate) in order to allow passage through the birth canal for the newborn male, specifically the firstborn male.

Luke 24:31+ Then their eyes were **opened** and they recognized Him (**Ed: Note that this is a clear reversal of their spiritual state in** Lk 24:16!; and He vanished from their sight. **32** They said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was **explaining** (Note [imperfect tense](#) = over and over Jesus was explaining - what a teaching session this must have been!) the Scriptures to us?"

Luke 24:45+ Then He **opened** (**dianoigo** - aorist active indicative) their minds to understand (**suniami** = put the pieces together so to speak, make sense out of) the Scriptures,

**Tim Keller** in a sermon in 1994 spoke of the use of **dianoigo** to describe **spiritual illumination** writing that "The reason He (THE SPIRIT) does it is because we're spiritually blind. Let's take a moment to define that. In Lk 24:45, it says, "Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures." The word opened is significant. As you know, this was originally written in Greek. The word opened is a translation of a particular Greek word. There were two different Greek words that could be used here. One is **anoigo**. One is **dianoigo**. The little word dia is the word for through. Anoigo means to open something like a door, something that already has a latch, something that already has a provision for opening. You use the Greek word anoigo with a door. Dianoigo doesn't just simply mean to open. It means to break open. It means to bust open. It means to break in. You wouldn't use the word dianoigo with a door unless it was a locked door. You use the word dianoigo with something like a mountain. "I opened the mountain with my tunnel." It means to break through. Two different Greek words. Which one do you think Luke uses? You can just take a guess.

He will not talk about the human mind or the human soul like a door. He talks about the human mind or the human soul like a mountain: layers and layers of obstacles to the truth, impenetrable. What Luke is saying is the natural human mind, until Jesus gets to it, is spiritually blind. What does that mean? One illustration you can use is you think of the eye itself. Very often, as a person gets older, something develops on the eye called a cataract. A cataract is a clouding up or a misting up, an opaqueness that develops where there should be transparency.



That's a perfect analogy, a much better analogy than other kinds of analogies to explain the human soul. God made the human soul with a transparency. We are different than the animals. We are different than the plants. We honor the animals, and we honor the plants as part of God's creation, but they're not in the image of God. What does that mean? They don't have a spiritual faculty. They don't have a capacity for truth. They don't have a capacity for reason. They don't have a capacity for a real, personal connection with Jesus, with God.

The Bible says naturally, because of sin, there is an opaqueness over top of our soul so that it has to be broken through. Another way to put it is we have cataracts on our soul. You can rub your eye all you want. That will not get rid of cataracts. You can rub it and rub it and rub it. You can wash it and wash it and wash it. That will not get rid of cataracts. There needs to be a medical intervention. Somebody who has skills you don't have. There needs to be a surgeon. That's exactly what Jesus is.

You think all you need is the truth. You say, "I just need somebody to inform me. That's all I need." You don't realize the depth of your blindness. You don't just need the light. You need eyes. You need someone to take the opaqueness off. That's what the surgeon does. That's what the medical intervention does. That's what you need more than anything else. You say, "What do you mean by opaqueness? What is it?" The spiritual blindness is not a lack of reason. It's very possible for a person who is totally spiritually blind to read the Bible and accept it, to say, "Yes, I see Jesus died for my sins. I think that's great. I like that. That's important. I believe it."

To be spiritually blind doesn't mean you can't intellectually comprehend something from the Bible. In fact, it's natural and normal for people, when they become Christians, to say, "Last year I became a Christian, but there was never a time in my life where I didn't actually believe in the basic propositions of the Christian faith." It's very typical for a person to say, "I became a Christian last year, but there was never a time in which I didn't believe in the resurrection, I didn't believe in the crucifixion, I didn't believe in the basic propositions of the Christian faith." What do they mean when they say they became a Christian?

Here's what they mean. The opaqueness is not an inability to comprehend. It's not an inability to reason. It's not a rational inability. It's not some kind of operation of the mind. Jean Piaget talks about the various operations that develop as a kid gets older. You have sensorimotor development, six stages of it. You have concrete operations and abstract operations. He's talking about the various sorts of mental abilities and logical operations and transactions you do mentally. When we talk about spiritual blindness, we're not talking about any of that.

Spiritual blindness is not the inability to see the truth, but it's the inability to value it, to appreciate it. The problem with that word is, in English, appreciate is a fairly wimpy word. There's a song where it says, "Heavenly Father, we appreciate you." Have you ever sung it? It sounds so wimpy, "We appreciate you," but it's not. It's a good word, and here's why. I'm going to keep with it. This is the heart of what this opaqueness is and what spiritual blindness is. The word depreciate means something loses its value. Therefore, it loses its economic power. It loses its clout. It loses how much it can influence.

If you get a diamond, it's valuable. What does that mean? You can get things done with it. There's value to it. You have a diamond, and you can go places. You can do things. You can get things for it. That's valuable. When something depreciates, it loses value. When something appreciates, it gains value. The word appreciate, in the English language, can also mean what increases is your realization of the value of something, your realization of the power of something, your realization of the influence of something.

When a person says, "I became a Christian last year, though I've always believed, intellectually, in the Bible and, intellectually, in the Christian faith. Last year, I saw." What does she mean when she talks like that? Here's what she means. "I always knew Jesus died for me," says a new Christian. "But I never realized I need to know Jesus loves me more than anything else in the world. I need to know that deep down underneath it I didn't believe I'm loved. One day, last year, I realized what Jesus did for me is the thing I need most of all. It revolutionized me when I realized it. When I saw the value of what he's done for me, I suddenly realized I don't have to be like this. This is the root of all my problems."

That kind of language means the cataracts have come off. She saw, but she didn't see. Suppose I could send you back in a time machine. There's nothing a stock analyst would rather have than a trip back about five years. Isn't that right? Just go back five years, ten years, whatever. You're back in time now, and sit down with the Wall Street Journal. You start to read the stock stuff. You're sitting alongside your stock analyst friends. Of course, they're there from their own time, and they don't know what you know.

They don't know anything about the future.

You're going down the list and, all of a sudden, you come to Microsoft. You say, "Oh my gosh, it's selling for that! Hmm, if I buy a thousand shares of that, I'll be a 'quadrillion-zillionaire' in seven years. I will do everything I can. I'm going to borrow. I'm going to beg. I'm going to do anything I can to buy everything." You know what they don't know. They go down all these little lines, and one of the jumps out at you. It says Microsoft. Why?

You can appreciate it. You know the value of it. You know the influence of that information. There's information on that line. Nobody else can see what it means. Nobody else can see the significance of the information. Nobody can see that knowing that will make all the difference. They can't appreciate it. They're blind. They don't have eyes, but you do. What does it mean to become a Christian? It means to look at stuff you've looked at for years and, suddenly, it jumps out at you.

You say, "What's the matter with me? How could I have never seen the power of this? How could I have never seen the meaning of this? How could I have never seen the value of this?" That's what spiritual blindness is. I know there are people in this room who say, "Of course I'm a Christian. I've always believed," yet that's never happened to you. You have no idea what that experience is like. You're spiritually blind. You need to have someone break through. Break through, dianoigo, open.

Some years ago, there were two women I was counseling back in my first church in a little town. I didn't know much about counseling. They both came to me within a week of each other, and they had the same problem. They were facing a very devastating loss in their lives. They came to a pastor. Actually, there were no counselors in town. People came to pastors back then because there was nobody else to talk to about their problems. They came in at various times. In both cases, I laid out a passage of Scripture and then I gave them a book. Same passage, same book, same basic theme.

Maybe a month later, I saw both of them. The one woman came back and said, "Do you know what? When I began to see what God has given me, what I have in Jesus, I began to realize if I have that, then I can bear the loss of this." I could see she was healing. The other woman, same age, same situation, same Bible passage, same book. I remember she came back and she said, "Yeah, that's very nice. I guess I believe it. But what good is that if I have lost the thing I've lost?" She was inconsolable. She was broken, from what I can tell, permanently.

What was the difference between them? Illumination. The same truth, but the one woman was able to appreciate the truth. She was able to see the value of the truth. She was able to sense the power of the truth. The other woman did not. Let me tell you what illumination means. You say, "I want peace." Friends, until the goodness of God is more real to you than all of the threats around you, you will never have peace. You'll be worried sick. You say, "I wish I could forgive the person who's hurt me." Until the forgiveness of God is more real to you than all of the injustice that's been done to you, you will never be able to overcome your bitterness.

It's a matter of illumination. It's a matter of appreciation of the truth, because we're blind. Do you want to overcome guilt? The truth of what he's done for you has to break through. Do you want to overcome worry? The truth of how good he is has to break through. Do you want to deal with boredom? The truth has to break through, and so on, and so on. We're blind. (Jesus As Prophet-part 2 - Understanding Jesus-Jan 16, 1994)

Acts 7:56+ and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens **opened up** (**Note:** Perfect tense - He saw them opened and they remained open! What a welcome home after being stoned to death! Sounds like what Peter desires for all saints - read 2 Pe 1:10-11+) and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

Acts 16:14+ A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord **opened** her heart (~ her soul) to respond to the things spoken by Paul.

Acts 17:3 (**Context** - Acts 17:1-2 - "He reasoned with them from the Scriptures" - **this refers not to the NT but the OT - could you explain Jesus to others from JUST the Old Testament?**) **explaining** and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ."

**Comment:** The implication of Paul's explaining is that it was accomplished supernaturally, not naturally, a good pattern for all who would seek to proclaim the Living Word in **power** and in the **Spirit** (cp this "dynamic" [**dunamis**] combination in 1Thes 1:5-**note**).

Genesis 3:5 "(Satan is speaking) For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes **will be opened** (Lxx = dianoigo), and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

7 Then the eyes of both of them **were opened**, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

Exodus 13:2 "Sanctify to Me every firstborn, the first offspring (**Lxx = dianoigo** - idiom [+ metra = womb] "opening the womb" = first-born) of every womb among the sons of Israel, both of man and beast; it belongs to Me."

12 you shall devote to the LORD the first offspring (**Lxx = dianoigo** - idiom [+ metra = womb] "opening the womb" = first-born) of every womb, and the first offspring (**Lxx = dianoigo** - idiom [+ metra = womb] "opening the womb" = first-born) of every beast that you own; the males belong to the LORD.

13 "But every first offspring (**Lxx = dianoigo** - idiom [+ metra = womb] = "opening the womb" = first-born) of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, but if you do not redeem it, then you shall break its neck; and every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem.

15 'It came about, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the LORD killed every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore, I sacrifice to the LORD the males, the first offspring **Lxx = dianoigo** - idiom [+ metra = womb] = "opening the womb" = first-born) of every womb, but every firstborn of my sons I redeem.'

Exodus 34:19 "The first offspring **Lxx = dianoigo** - idiom [+ metra = womb] = "opening the womb" = first-born) from every womb belongs to Me, and all your male livestock, the first offspring from cattle and sheep.

Numbers 3:12 "Now, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the sons of Israel instead of every firstborn, the first issue **Lxx = dianoigo** - idiom [+ metra = womb] = "opening the womb" = first-born) of the womb among the sons of Israel. So the Levites shall be Mine.

Numbers 8:16 for they are wholly given to Me from among the sons of Israel. I have taken them for Myself instead of every first issue **Lxx = dianoigo** - idiom [+ metra = womb] = "opening the womb" = first-born) of the womb, the firstborn of all the sons of Israel.

Numbers 18:15 "Every first issue **Lxx = dianoigo** - idiom [+ metra = womb] = "opening the womb" = first-born) of the womb of all flesh, whether man or animal, which they offer to the LORD, shall be yours; nevertheless the firstborn of man you shall surely redeem, and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem.

1 Kings 4:20 Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand that is on the seashore in abundance; they were eating and drinking and rejoicing.

2 Kings 6:17 Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, I pray, **open** (Lxx = dianoigo) his eyes that he may see." And the LORD **opened** (Lxx = dianoigo - **Perhaps this is a prayer we dare pray for ourselves and those for whom we are called to intercede - that the Spirit would open eyes to see supernaturally God's truth which is closed to natural vision!**) the servant's eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

20 When they had come into Samaria, Elisha said, "O LORD, **open** the eyes of these men, that they may see." So the LORD opened their eyes and they saw; and behold, they were in the midst of Samaria.

Job 27:19 "He lies down rich, but never again; He **opens** his eyes, and it is no longer.

Job 29:19 'My root is spread out (Lxx - dianoigo = "opened up") to the waters, And dew lies all night on my branch.

Job 38:32 "Can you **lead forth** (Lxx - dianoigo = "open up") a constellation in its season, And guide the Bear with her satellites?

Proverbs 20:13 Do not love sleep, or you will become poor; **Open** your eyes, and you will be satisfied with food.

Proverbs 31:20 She extends her hand to the poor, And she stretches out (Lxx = dianoigo = "she opens up her hands completely" - a picture of her generosity and benevolent spirit) her hands to the needy....26 She **opens** (Lxx = dianoigo) her mouth in wisdom, And the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

Isaiah 5:14 Therefore Sheol has enlarged its throat and **opened** its mouth without measure; And Jerusalem's splendor, her multitude, her din of revelry and the jubilant within her, descend into it.

Lamentations 2:16 All your enemies Have **opened** their mouths wide against you; They hiss and gnash their teeth. They say, "We have swallowed her up! Surely this is the day for which we waited; We have reached it, we have seen it."

Lamentations 3:46 All our enemies have **opened** their mouths against us.

Ezekiel 3:2 So I **opened** my mouth, and He fed me this scroll.

Ezekiel 20:26 and I pronounced them unclean because of their gifts, in that they caused all their **firstborn** (**Lxx = dianoigo** - idiom [+ metra = womb] "opening the womb" = first-born) to pass through the fire so that I might make them desolate, in order that they might know that I am the LORD."

Ezekiel 21:22 "Into his right hand came the divination, 'Jerusalem,' to set battering rams, **toopen** the mouth for slaughter, to lift up the voice with a battle cry, to set battering rams against the gates, to cast up ramps, to build a siege wall.

Ezekiel 24:27 'On that day your mouth will be **opened** to him who escaped, and you will speak and be mute no longer. Thus you will be a sign to them, and they will know that I am the LORD."

Hosea 2:15 "Then I will give her her vineyards from there, And the valley of Achor as a door of hope (Lxx uses dianoigo to translate as "to open her understanding"). And she will sing there as in the days of her youth, As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.

Nahum 2:6 The gates of the rivers are **opened** And the palace is dissolved.

Habakkuk 3:14 You pierced with his own spears The head of his throngs. They stormed in to scatter us; Their exultation was like those Who devour the oppressed in secret. (Septuagint = 3:14 Thou didst cut asunder the heads of princes with amazement, they shall tremble in it; they **shall burst [dianoigo]** their bridles, they shall be as a poor man devouring in secret.)

Zechariah 11:1 **Open** your doors, O Lebanon, That a fire may feed on your cedars.

Zechariah 12:4 "In that day," declares the LORD, "I will strike every horse with bewilderment and his rider with madness. But I will watch over the house of Judah, while I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness. (LXE In that day, saith the Lord Almighty, I will smite every horse with amazement, and his rider with madness: but **I will open** mine eyes upon the house of Juda, and I will smite all the horses of the nations with blindness.)

Zechariah 13:1 "In that day a fountain **will be opened** for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity.

**Giving evidence** is the idea of placing beside so what Paul was doing was presenting persuasive evidence to the listeners.

**Giving evidence** (KJV = "alleging")([present tense](#) = continually) ([3908](#))([paratithemi](#) from **para** = beside + **tithemi** = place) means to place or lay down alongside, to prove by presenting the evidence. The food for example would be set beside the guest, since the tables were at their side! Here Paul is setting beside his audience a veritable banquet of truth from the Scriptures which were the **Old Testament!** The apostle was setting before them one Old Testament proof after another ([present tense](#)) that Jesus is the Messiah (Jn 20:31).

**Larkin** writes "**Proving (paratithemi)** was "demonstrating by setting evidence side by side"—God's authoritative Word (such as Ps 2; 16; 110; Isa 53) next to the premise that it was the divine plan that the Christ must suffer and rise from the dead (compare Lk 9:22, 44; 17:25; 18:31-33; 24:26, 46; Acts 2:31; 3:18; 13:27-29). Paul's argumentation aimed to overcome Jewish preconceptions about the Messiah as a victorious king with an eternal reign who neither suffers nor rises from the dead. (The IVP New Testament Commentary Series - Acts)

**G Campbell Morgan** on **giving evidence** (paratithemi - literally placing beside) - The word (paratithemi) does not mean stating dogmatically. It means setting out in order, and displaying. Paul took up the Scriptures, and opened them, and explained them; and he did so by a sequence of arrangement, laying out before them the relation of this part to that, and of that to the other; of the law to the prophets, and of the law and the prophets to the hagiographa, the psalms, or devotional writings.

**Robertson** - Paul was not only "[expounding](#)" the Scriptures, he was also "[propounding](#)" (the old meaning of "allege") his doctrine or **setting forth alongside the Scriptures** (paratithemenos), quoting the Scripture to prove his contention which was made in much conflict (1Th 2:2), probably in the midst of heated discussion by the opposing rabbis who were anything but convinced by Paul's

powerful arguments, for the Cross was a stumbling-block to the Jews (1 Cor 1:23). ([Acts 17 - Word Pictures in the New Testament](#))

**THOUGHT** - The Jews (and the Gentile God fearers) in the synagogue already had a general belief in the Old Testament Scriptures, a truth which Paul proceeded to take advantage of in order to prove the promised Messiah must die and rise again, and that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Not only did Paul use the **OT predictive prophecy** but also his **personal witness** of the historical fulfillment of Jesus' bodily resurrection (for he had seen the risen Christ in Acts 9:3-6+). Paul's approach is an excellent pattern for leading to Christ if they already believe in the God of creation and accept the Bible as His inspired word. For those who are skeptical a different approach is seen when Paul preached to pagan Greeks in Athens (Acts 17:15-34).

**G Campbell Morgan** - Two facts he declared in that synagogue. He first declared that according to their Scriptures, Messiah must suffer and rise. Taking up the Old Testament, he showed them that their own Scriptures declared that their own Messiah must die and rise again. That was the first burden of his teaching. The order in which it is stated here reveals to us the fact that before he told the story of Christ, he made them see what their own Scriptures taught about their own Messiah; and this was exactly what the Jew had entirely failed to grasp, or had completely forgotten. With the ancient prophecies in our hands, with the one prophecy of Isaiah for instance, it seems as though it were impossible for men ever to have studied them without seeing that the pathway of the Servant of God toward His triumph must be that of travail; but the Jew had failed to see it. There were in those days interpreters of the prophecies, scribes and teachers, rabbis, who had discovered a difficulty, and who were teaching that two Messiahs would come for the fulfillment of the ancient ideal; one who should be a suffering Messiah; and another who should be a Messiah winning battles, and establishing the throne....Paul's work was now to declare to these Jews that the Scriptures taught that the Messiah must suffer, and that He must rise again. One wonders what particular passage he took, whether the prophecy of Isaiah, or those still more mystic and profound words in Hosea. (Acts of the Apostles)

**Christ had to suffer** - Had is **dei** which speaks of necessity. He must suffer! Why was it necessary? Because Messiah had to perfectly fulfill the OT prophecies and those prophecies had said He would suffer (see sample below from Isaiah 53) and die and after that would be resurrected (cf Acts 2:31+, Acts 4:2, 33+).

Isaiah 53:4+ Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him **stricken, Smitten** of God, and **afflicted**. 5 But He was **pierced through** for our transgressions, He was **crushed** for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His **scourging** we are healed (spiritually, not physically). 6 All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has **caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him**. 7 He was **oppressed** and He was **afflicted**, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to **slaughter**, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth.

The prevalent Jewish view of the Messiah pictured a conquering King who would restore Jewish fortunes, defeat Jewish enemies, and usher in His kingdom on earth (see [Jewish Tradition Of Two Messiahs](#)). But the thought that the Messiah would come to suffer and die at the hands of His own people (cf 1 Th 2:15) was incomprehensible to most Jews. To counter this incorrect belief by the Jews regarding their Messiah, Paul resorted to the OT Scriptures that spoke of Messiah's suffering (Isaiah 53+, Psalm 16, Psalm 22, Daniel 9:24, 25, 26, 27-note, etc)

**Christ** ([5547](#)) see [Christos](#). The definite article is used here of "the Christ," the one and only Christ which corresponds with the Hebrew designation of the Messiah. Several modern translations (NLT, CSB, NAB) actually translate it with the phrase "the Messiah."

**NET Note** on **the Christ** - Or "Messiah"; both "Christ" (Greek) and "Messiah" (Hebrew and Aramaic) mean "one who has been anointed." **The Christ** had to suffer and to rise from the dead. These two points (suffering and resurrection) would have been among the more controversial aspects of Paul's messianic preaching. The term translated "had to" (**dei**) shows how divine design and scripture corresponded here.

**John Phillips** wrote, "Division would rise as (Paul) showed from the Scriptures that the Bible had predicted the coming of a suffering Savior; that the cross had to come before the crown; that Christ had to redeem before He could reign. ...The Jewish ideal was not a redeemer but a ruler, one who would smash the power of Rome and make Jerusalem the capital of a new world empire." (Exploring Acts)

#### Related Resources:

- [The Jewish Tradition Of Two Messiahs](#)
- [The Amazing Prophecy Of Names - A study of Isaiah's names for the Savior](#)
- [Messianic Prophecies](#)
- [Messiah - Anointed One](#)

- **Messiah** = [messias](#) - used only twice in the NT

**Jack Andrews** - Paul proclaimed in the synagogues before the Jews and Gentile God-fearers that the Messiah had to suffer. Question: Why did Jesus have to suffer? Jesus suffered on the cross for our sins. When must tell sinners that Jesus died for their sins. It was for my sins, your sins, and the world's sins that Christ suffered. We cannot water down the message, negate the message, or brush over the message. Sinners need to hear that they are sinners, lawbreakers, condemned before God. They will never appreciate and appropriate the sacrifice of Jesus for their sins if they never acknowledge and accept their true condition in sin. John MacArthur wrote, "Some Christians believe it is all-important not to offend nonbelievers. Accordingly, they focus their gospel presentations only on what Christ has to offer the sinner to improve his life in time and eternity. To declare to the non-Christian that his sinful life is an offense to a holy God and call him to mourn and repent is considered poor marketing technique. Such an imbalanced approach to evangelism finds no support in Scripture. The true gospel (must) offend the nonbeliever by confronting him with his sin and judgment." I say "AMEN!" to that. (Jack Andrews Expository Studies – Understanding Acts)

**Suffer** (3958)(**pascho**) means essentially what happens to a person experience. It means to undergo something; to experience a sensation, to experience an impression from an outside source, to undergo an experience (usually difficult) and normally with the implication of physical or psychological suffering. **Pascho** can refer to experiencing something pleasant, but in the present context (and most NT contexts) it refers to experiencing something trying, distressing or painful.

Luke's uses of **pascho** - Lk. 9:22; Lk. 13:2; Lk. 17:25; Lk. 22:15; Lk. 24:26; Lk. 24:46; Acts 1:3; Acts 3:18; Acts 9:16; Acts 17:3; Acts 28:5;

**Robertson** says (Christ's suffering) "is Paul's major premise in his argument from the Scriptures about the Messiah, the necessity of his sufferings according to the Scriptures, the very argument made by the Risen Jesus to the two on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:25-27). The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah was a passage in point that the rabbis had overlooked. Peter made the same point in Acts 3:18 and Paul again in Acts 26:23. The minor premise is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. ([Acts 17 - Word Pictures in the New Testament](#))

**Robertson** goes on to add that "Paul's major premise in his argument from the Scriptures about the Messiah, the necessity of his sufferings according to the Scriptures, the very argument made by the Risen Jesus to the two on the way to Emmaus (Luke 24:25, 26, 27). The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah was a passage in point that the rabbis had overlooked. Peter made the same point in Acts 3:18 and Paul again in Acts 26:23.

**Rise again** (450)(**anistemi** from **ana** = up, again + **histemi** = stand, to cause to stand) means literally to get up, to stand up, to stand again, to cause to rise (thus "to raise"), to stand or be erect (Acts 9:41). To rise from a lying or reclined position. To stand straight up from a prostrate position (Acts 14:10). Most uses of anistemi denote the act of getting up from a seated or reclined position.

**Robertson** - The actual resurrection of Jesus was also a necessity as Paul says he preached to them (1Thessalonians 4:14) and argued always from Scripture (1 Corinthians 15:3-4) and from his own experience (Acts 9:22; Acts 22:7; Acts 26:8, Acts 26:14; 1Corinthians 15:8).

**Luke's** uses of **anistemi** -

Lk. 1:39; Lk. 4:16; Lk. 4:29; Lk. 4:38; Lk. 4:39; Lk. 5:25; Lk. 5:28; Lk. 6:8; Lk. 8:55; Lk. 9:8; Lk. 9:19; Lk. 10:25; Lk. 11:7; Lk. 11:8; Lk. 11:32; Lk. 15:18; Lk. 15:20; Lk. 16:31; Lk. 17:19; Lk. 18:33; Lk. 22:45; Lk. 22:46; Lk. 23:1; Lk. 24:7; Lk. 24:12; Lk. 24:33; Lk. 24:46;

Acts 1:15; Acts 2:24; Acts 2:32; Acts 3:22; Acts 3:26; Acts 5:6; Acts 5:17; Acts 5:34; Acts 5:36; Acts 5:37; Acts 6:9; Acts 7:18; Acts 7:37; Acts 8:26; Acts 8:27; Acts 9:6; Acts 9:11; Acts 9:18; Acts 9:34; Acts 9:39; Acts 9:40; Acts 9:41; Acts 10:13; Acts 10:20; Acts 10:23; Acts 10:26; Acts 10:41; Acts 11:7; Acts 11:28; Acts 12:7; Acts 13:16; Acts 13:33; Acts 13:34; Acts 14:10; Acts 14:20; Acts 15:7; Acts 17:3; Acts 17:31; Acts 20:30; Acts 22:10; Acts 22:16; Acts 23:9; Acts 26:16; Acts 26:30

**Related Resource:**

- Discussion of Question - Is Resurrection Found in the Old Testament?
- [Does the Old Testament Teach Resurrection Hope?](#) - Mitchell Chase
- ["From Dust You Shall Arise:" Resurrection Hope in the Old Testament](#) - Mitchell Chase
- [Does the Bible Teach the Resurrection of the Dead?](#) - Don Stewart
- [Where do the Hebrew Scriptures prophesy the death and resurrection](#) - Gotquestions

**Larkin** points out that "Witness must always be pursued in this way. There is a time for dialogue, a time to deal carefully with the questions and doubts of those who hear our witness. But there must also be proclamation. The gospel is, after all, good news from God about what he has done in Christ, not the distillation of the best of human religious reflection." (Ibid)

**Proclaiming** (2605) (**kataggello** from **kata** = an intensifier, down + **aggelos** = messenger and **aggello** = to declare, report) literally means to "declare down". It means to announce, with focus upon the extent to which the announcement or proclamation extends and so to proclaim throughout. It means to declare plainly, openly and loudly! It was used of solemn religious messages and to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah was the most solemn message one could preach! The word often emphasizes the elevated and solemn style of the proclamation. Outside the NT **kataggello** was used in reference to broadcasting official reports and announcing athletic games or religious festivals. The writings of Luke and Paul use the word with special theological meaning, describing the kind of "proclaiming" that eliminates excuses and produces a transformation. If there is widespread preaching and teaching, no one may claim ignorance as the reason for unbelief.

**Kataggello** is in the [present tense](#) indicated that Paul continually proclaimed "the Christ" ("the Messiah").

Luke's uses of **kataggello** - Acts 3:24; Acts 4:2; Acts 13:5; Acts 13:38; Acts 15:36; Acts 16:17; Acts 16:21; Acts 17:3; Acts 17:13; Acts 17:23; Acts 26:23;

**Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ** - This is the Messiah! "This is the conclusion of Paul's line of argument and it is logical and overwhelming. It is his method everywhere as in Damascus, in Antioch in Pisidia, here, in Corinth. He spoke as an eye-witness." (Robertson)

**Haddon Robinson** once said regarding fear of a boring sermon "I fear preaching in such a way that when people hear about God, they'll want only to yawn." God deliver us from dry and windy messages devoid of Christocentricity! It was said of the Prince of Preachers C H Spurgeon that the Bible was the foundation of his sermons and the crucified Christ was the superstructure. No matter which text Spurgeon preached, he always **made a beeline for the cross**. Near the end of his ministry Spurgeon said, "Oh, that my memorial might be, 'He preached Christ crucified'!"

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#### **F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily - It behoved the Christ to suffer. (R.V.)**

This is what our Lord was constantly insisting upon during the closing days of his earthly ministry. "Behoved it not," He asked, "the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?" The Jewish nation rejected Him because his conception of Messianic power was so foreign to theirs; but in doing so, doomed themselves to rejection from the purposes of God, at least during the present dispensation.

It behoved Him, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest. How could He have sympathised with the anguish of human hearts, if He had not drunk deeply of the cup of sorrow? How could He have led his flock through the thorny brake, if he had not gone to and fro with his bare feet? In that He bath suffered, He is able to succor.

It behoved Him, that He might be the sacrifice for sin. The conscience demands that forgiveness should be consistent with righteousness. It was necessary, therefore, if Jesus was to bring us forgiveness, that He should be prepared to make reparation and atonement for sin. He must shed his blood, that He may cleanse his people from their sins: He must be willing to be their scapegoat; He must offer Himself without spot to God, that He may cleanse our consciences from dead works to serve the living God.

It behoved Him, that He might reign for evermore. It is a fundamental principle in God's universe, that suffering, humbly and resignedly borne, leads to royalty and reigning. He who can stoop most profoundly can rise to reign most gloriously. As is the descent, so is the ascent. In proportion to the submission to take the form of a servant is the exaltation to the right hand of power.

**Acts 17:4 And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women.**

NLT Acts 17:4 Some of the Jews who listened were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with many God-fearing Greek men and quite a few prominent women.

- **Some** Acts 17:34; 2:41,42,44; 4:23; 5:12-14; 14:1,4; 28:24; Pr 9:6; 13:20; Song 1:7,8; 6:1; Zech 2:11; 8:20-23; 2 Cor 6:17,18
- **Joined** - 2 Corinthians 8:5
- **Silas** Acts 15:22,27,32,40
- **God fearing** - Acts 17:17; Acts 13:43; 16:3; 18:4; 19:10; 21:28
- **Leading women** - Acts 17:12; 13:50

- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Acts 17:1-3, 10-11 Men Who Turned the World Upside Down, Part 1](#)- John MacArthur
- [Acts 17:4-9, 12-15 Men Who Turned the World Upside Down, Part 2](#)- John MacArthur

## THE FRUIT OF PAUL'S PREACHING THE GOSPEL

**Some of them** - Jews and **God-fearing Greeks** (Gentiles). Paul's mention of the Gentile conversions in 1 Th 1:9 substantiates that most of the converts in Thessalonica were Gentiles.

**Jack Arnold** - It says, "**some**" were persuaded, not all. The majority of Jews stayed in their unbelief, for religious people are the hardest to reach for Christ. This is also true even today. The minority believe in Christ, the majority will not. (Ibid)

**Were persuaded** ([3982](#))(**peitho**) means literally to persuade or induce by words to believe (Acts 19:26, Mt 27:20, Ro 14:14). In short, some believed. The preacher is not responsible for the fruit, only for the sowing of the seed of the Word. Are you sowing the pure Word? If not why do you wonder why you see no conversions, no transformed marriages, no personal revivals, no new baptisms? They were persuaded particularly by kind words (Ro 2:4-note) or motives. Some were persuaded to receive a belief-- They were convinced, ultimately the job of the Holy Spirit (1Pe 1:2-note; 2Th 2:13, John 16:7-11)

**Peitho in Acts** -

Acts 5:36; Acts 5:37; Acts 5:40; Acts 12:20; Acts 13:43; Acts 14:19; Acts 17:4; Acts 18:4; Acts 19:8; Acts 19:26; Acts 21:14; Acts 23:21; Acts 26:26; Acts 26:28; Acts 27:11; Acts 28:23; Acts 28:24;

Now don't forget, while Paul did his part to present the evidence that Jesus was the Messiah, he did so in reliance of the power of the Holy Spirit and so too must we when we present the Gospel. It is not our persuasive arguments that will win anyone to Christ, but God's powerful Spirit and powerful Word! We are simply players in His grand plan of redemption and have a once in a lifetime privilege to share the Gospel with men and women who otherwise will spend eternity in torment away from the presence of the Lord! We must have a sense of urgency about eternity, something I fear the church in America as sadly lost!

As Paul affirms "my message and my preaching were **not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.**" (1 Cor 2:4)

**God-fearing Greeks** - "These "God-fearers" among the Gentiles were less under the control of the jealous rabbis and so responded more readily to Paul's appeal. In 1 Thessalonians 1:9 Paul expressly says that they had "turned to God from idols," proof that this church was mainly Gentile (cf. also 1 Thessalonians 2:14)." (Robertson)

**God-fearing** (devout)(present tense = continually) ([4576](#))(**sebomai**) were God-fearers, worshipers of God, unconverted Gentiles who were attracted to the legacy of Israel, accepting Judaism's belief in one God, attending Synagogu, but did not become full blown proselytes and thus did not assume all the obligations of the Jewish law such as male circumcision (Acts 16:14; 18:7; cf. Acts 13:43, 50; 17:4, 17).

**Joined (proskleroo)** is used only here and means to give or assign by lot, such as one's destiny. They attached themselves to or "threw in their lot" with Paul and Silas -- they "won the lottery" so to speak! Eternal life in Christ!

**Along with a large number** - Literally "not a few" so is translated as "quite a few" which is the actual meaning of the expression in the context. Clearly the Gospel message crossed class lines from low to high in society. And it still does. It is a myth that the Gospel is only for the poor and uneducated. It is for those who have hearts to hear and heed the Word of the Cross (1 Cor 1:18)!

**Jack Arnold on large number of leading women** - The gospel had a real appeal to women, especially women of the upper classes who were prominent citizens in the Greek cities. There is a reason for this magnetic appeal Christ had to women. These were educated women who knew the Greek philosophies and had been in the religious cults. They knew that these man-made philosophies were empty, vain and dead, offering nothing for the inward spirit. These philosophies and mystery cults were totally humanistic, full of voluptuous and degrading sexual practices which left these women devastated and filled with self-loathing. They were disgusted with free sex and they turned to Jesus Christ for forgiveness, who, in turn, gave them a sense of self-worth and value as human beings. Paul was the ideal evangelist because he knew how to reach people where they were and to bring them to the Living Christ for new life. (Ibid)

**Vincent on leading woman** - The position of women in Macedonia seems to have been exceptional. Popular prejudice, and the verdict of Grecian wisdom in its best age, asserted her natural inferiority. The Athenian law provided that everything which a man might do by the counsel or request of a woman should be null in law. She was little better than a slave. To educate her was to advertise her as a harlot. Her companions were principally children and slaves. In Macedonia, however, monuments were erected to



women by public bodies; and records of male proper names are found, in Macedonian inscriptions, formed on the mother's name instead of on the father's. Macedonian women were permitted to hold property, and were treated as mistresses of the house. These facts are borne out by the account of Paul's labors in Macedonia. In Thessalonica, Berea, and Philippi we note additions of women of rank to the church; and their prominence in church affairs is indicated by Paul's special appeal to two ladies in the church at Philippi to reconcile their differences, which had caused disturbance in the church, and by his commending them to his colleagues as women who had labored with him in the Lord (Philemon 4:2, Philemon 4:3). ([Acts 17 - Vincent's Word Studies](#))

**Robertson on leading women** - Literally, **"And of women the first not a few."** That is, a large number of women of the very first rank in the city, probably devout women also like the men just before and like those in Acts 13:50 in Antioch in Pisidia who along with "the first men of the city" were stirred up against Paul. Here these women were openly friendly to Paul's message, whether proselytes or Gentiles or Jewish wives of Gentiles as Hort holds. It is noteworthy that here, as in Philippi, leading women take a bold stand for Christ. In Macedonia women had more freedom than elsewhere. It is not to be inferred that all those converted belonged to the higher classes, for the industrial element was clearly large (1 Thessalonians 4:11). In 2 Corinthians 8:2 Paul speaks of the deep poverty of the Macedonian churches, but with Philippi mainly in mind. Ramsay thinks that Paul won many of the heathen not affiliated at all with the synagogue. Certain it is that we must allow a considerable interval of time between Acts 17:4, Acts 17:5 to understand what Paul says in his Thessalonian Epistles. ([Acts 17 - Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament](#))

As an aside when Paul was in Thessalonica, he received financial support from the Christians in Philippi. They helped with this successful work among the Thessalonians.

You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for **even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.**(Philippians 4:15-16+)

**Acts 17:5 But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people.**

KJV - But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

- **Becoming jealous** - Acts 17:13; 7:9; 13:45; 14:2,19; 18:12; Proverbs 14:30; Isaiah 26:11; Matthew 27:18; 1 Corinthians 3:3; Galatians 5:21,26; James 4:5
- **Taking along**- Judges 9:4; Job 30:1-10; Psalms 35:15; 69:12
- **Set the city** - Acts 19:24-34,40
- **Jason** - Acts 17:7; Romans 16:21
- **William Ramsay** [The Riot at Thessalonica](#)
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Acts 17:1-3, 10-11 Men Who Turned the World Upside Down, Part 1](#)- John MacArthur
- [Acts 17:4-9, 12-15 Men Who Turned the World Upside Down, Part 2](#)- John MacArthur

CSB But the Jews became jealous, and when they had brought together some scoundrels from the marketplace and formed a mob, they set the city in an uproar. Attacking Jason's house, they searched for them to bring them out to the public assembly.

ESV But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd.

KJV But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

NET But the Jews became jealous, and gathering together some worthless men from the rabble in the marketplace, they formed a mob and set the city in an uproar. They attacked Jason's house, trying to find Paul and Silas to bring them out to the assembly.

NIV But the Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd.

NLT But some of the Jews were jealous, so they gathered some troublemakers from the marketplace to form a mob and start a riot. They attacked the home of Jason, searching for Paul and Silas so they could drag them out to the crowd.

YLT And the unbelieving Jews, having been moved with envy, and having taken to them of the loungers certain evil men, and having made a crowd, were setting the city in an uproar; having assailed also the house of Jason, they were seeking them to bring them to the populace,

## RESISTANCE TO THE GOSPEL SPIRITUAL JEALOUSLY

**But** - Always pause and ponder this **term of contrast**, asking how is the writer "changing direction." In this case we see some Jews accepted the Gospel of Jesus which Paul proclaimed but others became jealous and rejected the Gospel and the Gospel proclaimer!

The Jews felt strong envy and resentment against Paul and his message. As happened in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:45, 50), Iconium (Acts 14:2, 5), and Lystra (Acts 14:19) on the first missionary journey, here Paul is again opposed by a mob incited by jealous Jews.

Note that the KJV (based on the Textus Receptus) adds the phrase "**But the Jews which believed not** ([apeitheo](#))". While this is undoubtedly true, this phrase is not found in the modern transcripts so most modern translations lack this phrase.

**Jack Andrews** observes these antagonistic Jews "were moved in a wrong way in the wrong direction. Whenever we are overcome with envy and jealousy we are always going in a bad direction."

**G Campbell Morgan** observes that "the work in Thessalonica was not one of triumph only. It was one of trial, springing out of the jealousy of the Jews. The word "jealousy" is a very awkward word here. It should read springing out of the zeal of the Jews; for it is the very word that Paul used concerning them in his Roman letter, "I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." (Ro 10:2+)

**Jealous** ([2206](#)) (**zeloo** from **zelos** = zeal in turn from **zeo** = boil; source of our English word "zeal") means to be fervent, to be heated, to "boil" with envy, to be jealous and reflects an attitude of misplaced zeal.. It can be used commendably to refer to a striving for something or showing zeal. The only other use of zeloo by Luke (in all of his writings) is in Acts 7 where he describes the patriarch's jealousy against Joseph (Acts 7:9+).

As Paul explained in Romans his hope was that the salvation of Gentiles would provoke the Jews into studying the Scriptures and discovering their promised Messiah "But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if somehow I might **move to jealousy** my fellow countrymen and save some of them." (Ro 11:13-14+) Unfortunately, in this case, the conversions provoked them to the "wrong kind" of jealousy, the kind that resulted in persecution.

**Robertson** - Both our English words, zeal and jealousy, are from the Greek **zelos** In Acts 13:45 the Jews (rabbis) "were filled with jealousy" (eplēsthēsan zēlou). That is another way of saying the same thing as here. The success of Paul was entirely too great in both places to please the rabbis. So here is jealousy of Jewish preachers towards Christian preachers. It is always between men or women of the same profession or group. In 1 Thessalonians 2:3-10 Paul hints at some of the slanders spread against him by these rabbis (deceivers, using words of flattery as men-pleasers, after vain-glory, greed of gain, etc.). ([Acts 17 - Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament](#))

**Barclay** - As usual Paul began his work in the synagogue. His great success was not so much among the Jews as among the Gentiles attached to the synagogue. This infuriated the Jews for they looked on these Gentiles as their natural preserves and here was Paul stealing them before their very eyes. 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," they said, "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. T. R. Glover quoted with delight the saying of the child who remarked that the New Testament ended with Revolutions. When Christianity really goes into action it must cause a revolution both in the life of the individual and in the life of society. ([Acts 17 - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

Other descriptions of **spiritual jealousy** in Acts

(Acts 5:17) But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and

they were **filled with jealousy**. (**ACTION** described in Acts 5:18).

**Comment** - Remember that what "**fills**" you will end up **controlling** you! (cp continually filled with the Spirit - Eph 5:18 and subsequent actions in Eph 5:18-6:18)

(Acts 7:9) "The patriarchs **became jealous** of Joseph and (**ACTION**) sold him into Egypt. Yet God was with him,

(Acts 13:45) But when the Jews saw the crowds, **they were filled with jealousy** and (**ACTION**) began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming.

**John MacArthur** one of the best modern expositors of the Word (and one who has experienced the conflict) writes "Those who courageously proclaim the right message and win converts will face conflict. Success will be accompanied by opposition. Paul and his companions were no exception. The unbelieving Jews at Thessalonica were enraged by the success of the gospel. They "loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil" (John 3:19). "Becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, they formed a mob and set the city in an uproar" ironically, the very thing they accused the missionaries of doing (Acts 17:6)."

**Jack Andrews** - The people in opposition to the work of God were **unbelievers**. That is always the case. Those who do not believe are always trying to hinder those who do believe. **John G. Butler** wrote, "Unbelief is intentional, obstinate, not something caused by a lack of facts. Hence, we should not be surprised that unbelief motivates to strong action against the work of God. Furthermore, all of this reveals to us that those in church who are a continual pain in the neck to the work of the church are probably unbelievers. Such may be deacons, Sunday school teachers, or holders of other important offices of leadership in the church. But their cantankerous spirit nullifies their claim of being a true believer." (Ibid)

**Taking along** (4355) (**proslambano** from **prós** = to, toward, interactively with intensifying + **lambáno** = to take, lay hold of with initiative) means literally to take to or toward, to aggressively receive with strong personal interest.

**Merrill Unger** has an interesting one on the **marketplace men** - Loungers of the type employed here by the Jews to attack Paul and Silas were common in the agora or forum of Graeco-Roman cities. They invariably assembled around the rostrum where an orator was speaking, and applauded or heckled according to who paid them . ([Historical Research and the Church at Thessalonica](#))

**Jack Arnold** - The Jews were jealous of the success Paul was having among the attenders at the synagogue. They were crying, "Sheep stealers!" Jealousy over another's education, wealth, personality or social standing is bad, but the most ugly jealousy of all is in the area of religion. These angry Jews went to the marketplace where the loafers, hoods and social misfits and outcasts hung out. The Jews probably paid them to incite a riot in the city against Paul and his missionary band. The devil never gives up. When he is defeated by Scripture and logic, he turns to violence to stamp out Christianity. These young radicals knew how to manipulate a crowd to irrational actions. The crowd, at a fever pitch and emotional high, went to the home of Jason where Paul was staying. (Ibid)

**Some wicked men from the marketplace** - "The **agora** or market-place was the natural resort for those with nothing to do (Matthew 20:4) like the court-house square today or various parks in our cities where bench-warmers flock. Plato (Protagoras 347 C) calls these ἀγοραῖοι — agoraioi (common word, but in N.T. only here and Acts 19:38) idlers or good-for-nothing fellows. They are in every city and such "bums" are ready for any job. The church in Thessalonica caught some of these peripatetic idlers (2 Thessalonians 3:10.) "doing nothing but doing about." So the Jewish preachers gather to themselves a choice collection of these market-loungers or loafers or wharf-rats. The Romans called them subrostrani (hangers round the rostrum or subbasilicari). Gathering a crowd (ochlopoiēsantes). Literally, making or getting (poieō) a crowd (ochlos), a word not found elsewhere. Probably right in the agora itself where the rabbis could tell men their duties and pay them in advance. Instance Hyde Park in London ([See Speakers' Corner](#)) with all the curious gatherings every day, Sunday afternoons in particular." (Robertson)

**Men from the marketplace** (60) (**agoraios** from **agora** = marketplace; cf [Agora](#) in Wikipedia) strictly speaking means belonging to the marketplace and refers to those who habitually idled around the marketplace (agora). We might call them loafers or bums! They were usually unemployed and loitered about the marketplace and they were looked down upon by the Greco-Roman society as worthless people. Also used with a different sense in Acts 19:38 where it means the days when courts of justice are in session (court days, sessions).

**Cleon Rogers** - The agora was originally an open place where the king met the people; it later became the open place where the citizens gathered; then it indicated the open place around which important government buildings were located, as well as stores, where one could buy the necessities of life, it corresponded to the [Latin Forum](#). Business was usually carried from 9:00 A.M. to 12 noon on the market days ([Nundinae](#))

**Wicked** (Evil, worthless) (4190) (**poneros** from **poneo** = work or toil; cf [poneria](#) derived from **poneros**) means that these were not

just folks shopping in the "mall" so to speak but were overtly evil men with malignant character, and were generally morally and socially worthless. **Ponerōs** denotes determined, aggressive, and fervent evil that actively opposes what is good giving us a good picture of these men. **Ponerōs** is not just bad in character (like kakos), but bad in effect (injurious)! They were the type of men who would not hesitate to inflict harm. The Jews knew exactly what they were doing!

**Formed a mob** (3793)(**ochlopoieo** from **ochlos** = crowd + **poieo** = to make) used only here and means to gather a crowd, create a tumult, start a riot.

**Set in an uproar** (**imperfect tense** - over and over, ongoing)(2350)(**thorubeo** from **thorubos** = noise of an uproar, clamor, commotion, tumult) means to make an uproar, cause a disturbance, throw into a tumult. In the middle voice it has a different sense meaning to make a noise or disturbance, especially the noise made in lamenting the dead (Matt. 9:23; Mark 5:39; Acts 20:10).

The cognate **thorubos** is used in Acts 20:1; 21:34; 24:18.

**Thorubeo** - 4x in NT - make a commotion(1), noisy disorder(1), set(1), troubled(1), uproar(1). - Matt. 9:23; Mk. 5:39; Acts 17:5; Acts 20:10

**G. Campbell Morgan** rightly declared that "the measure of our triumph in work for God is always the measure of our travail. No **propagative** work is done save at cost; and every genuine triumph of the Cross brings after it the travail of some new affliction, and some new sorrow. So we share the travail that makes the Kingdom come." (The Acts of the Apostles).

**Attacking the house of Jason** - The began setting upon or **attacking** the house which is the verb **ephistēmi** meaning to take a stand against, rush at, and in this case because Jason was Paul's host.

**Attacking** (2186)(**ephistemi** from **epi** = upon + **histemi** = to stand) means to stand by or near, approach and in this context to approach with intent to harm. The idea is a sudden arrival, often with hostile intent as in this context (cf similar sense in Lk 20:1; Acts 4:1; 6:12; 23:27),

**NET Note** postulates - The attack took place at Jason's house because this was probably the location of the new house church.

**Seeking** (2212)(**zeteo**) they were repeatedly (**imperfect tense**) trying to find the location of the missionaries. They sought to persecute the preachers. This is always Satan's aim. As one godly preacher once told me "Preach the Word and duck!"

**Bring them out** - Who? Paul and Silas - a veritable old-time "lynching party!" This reminds me of Acts 20:24 where Paul said "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God."

**The people** (1218)(**demos**) means people, populace, crowd, "the mass of the people assembled in a public place." (Thayer) **Demos** describes "(1) a gathering of people for any purpose, people, populace, crowd Acts 12:22). (2) In a Hellenistic city, a convocation of citizens called together for the purpose of transacting official business, popular assembly (Acts 17:5)" (BDAG)

**Friberg** - 1) as the population of a city people, populace; (2) as the populace gathered for any purpose mob, crowd (Acts 17.5); (3) as the citizens gathered to transact business (popular) assembly (Acts 19.30) (Analytical Lexicon)

**Demos** - only 4x - Usage: assembly(2), people(2). = Acts 12:22; Acts 17:5; Acts 19:30; Acts 19:33

**Demos** - 220x in 155v in Septuagint -

Num. 1:20; Num. 1:22; Num. 1:24; Num. 1:26; Num. 1:28; Num. 1:30; Num. 1:32; Num. 1:34; Num. 1:36; Num. 1:38; Num. 1:40; Num. 1:42; Num. 2:34; Num. 3:15; Num. 3:18; Num. 3:19; Num. 3:20; Num. 3:21; Num. 3:24; Num. 3:27; Num. 3:29; Num. 3:30; Num. 3:33; Num. 3:35; Num. 3:39; Num. 4:2; Num. 4:18; Num. 4:22; Num. 4:24; Num. 4:29; Num. 4:33; Num. 4:34; Num. 4:36; Num. 4:37; Num. 4:38; Num. 4:40; Num. 4:41; Num. 4:42; Num. 4:44; Num. 4:45; Num. 4:46; Num. 11:10; Num. 13:2; Num. 18:2; Num. 23:10; Num. 26:5; Num. 26:6; Num. 26:7; Num. 26:12; Num. 26:13; Num. 26:14; Num. 26:15; Num. 26:16; Num. 26:17; Num. 26:18; Num. 26:20; Num. 26:21; Num. 26:22; Num. 26:23; Num. 26:24; Num. 26:25; Num. 26:26; Num. 26:27; Num. 26:28; Num. 26:29; Num. 26:30; Num. 26:31; Num. 26:32; Num. 26:34; Num. 26:35; Num. 26:36; Num. 26:37; Num. 26:38; Num. 26:39; Num. 26:40; Num. 26:41; Num. 26:42; Num. 26:43; Num. 26:44; Num. 26:45; Num. 26:47; Num. 26:48; Num. 26:49; Num. 26:50; Num. 26:57; Num. 26:58; Num. 27:1; Num. 27:4; Num. 36:6; Num. 36:8; Num. 36:12; Jos. 7:14; Jos. 7:17; Jos. 13:15; Jos. 13:23; Jos. 13:24; Jos. 13:28; Jos. 13:29; Jos. 13:31; Jos. 15:1; Jos. 15:12; Jos. 16:5; Jos. 16:8; Jos. 17:2; Jos. 18:11; Jos. 18:20; Jos. 18:21; Jos. 18:28; Jos. 19:8; Jos. 19:10; Jos. 19:16; Jos. 19:23; Jos. 19:24; Jos. 19:31; Jos. 19:47; Jos. 21:4; Jos. 21:7; Jos. 21:10; Jos. 21:20; Jos. 21:26; Jos. 21:33; Jos. 21:34; Jos. 21:40; Jdg. 13:2; Jdg. 17:7; Jdg. 18:2; Jdg. 18:11; Jdg. 18:19; Neh. 4:13; Dan. 8:24; Dan. 9:16; Dan. 11:23; Dan. 11:32;

**Acts 17:6 When they did not find them, they *began* dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also;**

- **Began dragging** - Acts 6:12,13; 16:19,20; 18:12,13
- **These** Acts 12:28-31; 22:22,23; 24:5; 28:22; 1Kings 18:17,18; Exodus 3:8,9; Jeremiah 38:2-4; Amos 7:10; Luke 23:5
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Acts 17:1-3, 10-11 Men Who Turned the World Upside Down, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Acts 17:4-9, 12-15 Men Who Turned the World Upside Down, Part 2](#) - John MacArthur

## **MOB VIOLENCE HITS THE STREETS**

**When they did not find them** - This implies that they made a careful search for them. They looked but to no avail. Paul and his associates were not to be found. For some reason God sheltered them at this time.

**Jack Arnold** - Paul and the missionaries were gone. God providentially protected them from the lynch mob. Perhaps they had received word of this mob action and went into hiding or perhaps God just had them step out for a moment to miss the action. (Ibid)

**They *began* dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities** - Similar to the scene in Acts 16, Satan stirs up the crowd to seek to silence the saints. Things have not changed much in 2000 years (No prayer before sporting events, you can't teach the Bible in schools, etc, etc). Today the enemy is silencing the Gospel proclamation from many pulpits for they have substituted the message of a "social gospel" that deals with temporal, physical needs but tragically largely (many times totally) ignores the eternal, spiritual needs of men and women dead in their trespasses and sins and under God's imminent judgment (cf Eph 2:1, Jn 3:18, 36, Ro 1:18).

**Robertson** on **began dragging** - imperfect active, vivid picture, they were dragging (literally). See **Note** on Acts 8:3+ (**Ed**: What "goes around, comes around!"); and Note on Acts 16:19+. If they could not find Paul, they could drag Jason his host and some other Christians whom we do not know.

**Jack Andrews** - This word (**began dragging**) gives the picture of leaving a trail behind where the person had been dragged through. This word lets us know that Jason did not volunteer to go with the mob and stand before the rulers. He was not asked to go, he was made to go. He was not given a formal invite, but he was forced to go!

**Dragging** (4951)(**suro**) means to draw, pull, draw, drag away, lead by force (against their will), "as moving someone or something along by force drag (away), pull (along), draw (Acts 14.19); of a fish net drag in (Jn 21.8); of stars sweep away out of the sky (Rev 12.4) **Suro** may involve the notion of violence. Of dragging a heavy object with great effort.

**Suro** - 5x in 5v - Usage: dragged(1), dragging(3), swept away(1).

John 21:8 But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not far from the land, but about one hundred yards away, **dragging** the net full of fish.

Acts 8:3 But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and **dragging** off men and women, he would put them in prison.

Acts 14:19 But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and **dragged** him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.

Acts 17:6 When they did not find them, they began **dragging** Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also;

Revelation 12:4-[note](#) And his tail **swept away** a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.

**Suro** is used 6 times in the Septuagint -

Dt 32:24 ("crawling things") 2 Sam. 17:13 (will drag the city - figuratively of course); Isa. 3:16; Isa. 28:2; Isa. 30:28; Mic. 7:17;

**Suro** in classic Greek - The term *surō* denotes an effort to draw or drag away someone or something. Its use in classical Greek

includes persons "crawling" and waves or rivers "sweeping away" objects (*Liddell-Scott*). It is found in Josephus and other Greek literature (along with some compound forms) with the literal meaning. Metaphorically, *surō* is used to mean "to be dragged" or "drawn." It is also used in references to taxes "to be attached" to land.

**Brethren** (80)(**adelphos**) means literally of the same womb, and in this context presumably refers to Christians, those who were born again.

**Shouting** (994)(**boao**) means crying for help or as in this context crying out in a tumultuous way with a high, strong voice.

**City authorities** (4173)(**politarches** from **pólis** = city + **árcho** = rule) describes a magistrate who formed part of a town or city council and so a city official. The word Politarch was a special title used by Macedonians for chief magistrates here and in a few other cities. Only found in Acts 17:6 and Acts 17:8.

**BDAG** on **politarches** - No precise job description is extant, but administration of security measures, as indicated Aeneas Tact. 26, 12 and suggested by the circumstances recorded Acts 17:5-13, was certainly assigned to such office, which predates 167 BC. A number of p. (five or six in Thessalonica) formed the city council in Macedonian cities, and occasionally in others

**Louw-Nida** on **politarches** - a public official responsible for administrative matters within a town or city and a member of the ruling council of such a political unit—'city official.'

At this point the historicity of Acts has been attacked on the ground that the city authorities at Thessalonica were not called "**politarchs**." To the contrary archaeologists have found inscriptions ([see picture](#)) from which referring to politarch. The inscription begins "In the time of the politarchs...."

**Wikipedia** - One of the earliest extant inscriptions to use the term "Politarch" was located on the Vardar Gate in [Thessaloniki](#) ([see picture](#)). The Gate was unfortunately destroyed in 1876 but the inscription, which dates to the 2nd Century AD, can now be seen in the British Museum in London.

**Cleon Rogers** on **politarches** - ruler of the city. Used mainly of the Macedonian title for the non-Roman magistrates of a city (generally five in number), whose duties were, among other things, to confirm decisions made by the Demos, and to maintain peace and order in their city. The title is found in numerous inscriptions, the majority of which come from northern Greece and some 40% from the city of Thessalonica

Apologetic note by **Blaklock** - Since the term (**politarches**) was unknown elsewhere, the critics of Luke once dismissed it as a mark of ignorance. Sixteen epigraphical examples now exist in modern Salonica, and one is located in the British Museum on a stone which once formed part of an archway. It was evidently the Macedonian term. It was Luke's general practice to use the term in commonest use in educated circles. Hence he called the officials of Philippi 'praetors', and an inscription has similarly established the fact that this was a courtesy title given to the magistrates of a Roman colony." ([See note in Wikipedia](#))

**UPSHOT?** The Bible is once again shown to be historically reliable!

**Vincent** on **rulers of the city**- Another illustration of Luke's accuracy. Note that the magistrates are called by a different name from those at Philippi. Thessalonica was not a colony, but a free city (see on colony, Acts 16:12), and was governed by its own rulers, whose titles accordingly did not follow those of Roman magistrates. The word occurs only here and Acts 17:8, and has been found in an inscription on an arch at Thessalonica, where the names of the seven politarchs are mentioned. The arch is thought by antiquarians to have been standing in Paul's time. ([Acts 17 - Vincent's Word Studies](#))

## **UPSETTING THE STATUS QUO OF THE GODLESS WORLD SYSTEM**

In short the Gospel is not [politically correct](#)! Indeed the Gospel of salvation upsets lost sinners destined from eternal torment, because it confronts them head on with the choice to choose death or choose life, to be eternally cursed or eternally blessed (read Dt 30:19). Unregenerate hearts do not want to hear that they need a spiritual heart transplant (cf Ezek 36:26-27+). So yes this "upsets the world!" If you want to see how modern Luke's description is, just mention the Name "Jesus Christ" in a conversation (and not as a curse word which is what the upset world usually does with the Name above all names!). Unless you are in a "holy huddle" you will almost certainly upset your audience! The irony is that these Gospel proclaimers were actually turning the world right side up! When Adam and Eve sinned in the perfect garden, the world was instantly turned upset down! Sin is deceiving (Heb 3:13) and sinners think their version of the world is right-side up when in fact is upset down in the sight of a holy and righteous God!

**R. Kent Hughes** wrote, "So when men and women in Thessalonica were turned around by Christ, everyone else saw them as upside-down. A believer lives right-side-up in a topsy-turvy world." (Preaching the Word - Acts)

**These men** - Who? The proclaimers of the Gospel. Today that should apply to every saint, for we should all be proclaiming the Gospel with our lives and our lips. The world is flailing around in a stormy sea and going to hell and we sit comfortably and apathetically in the Ark of the Covenant with life preservers (named "Gospel") and refuse to through them to those around us who are drowning in their sins and will soon cease breathing and sink to the dark, dreary bottom of the sea (so to speak)! Ruth Graham said saints are those who

Pascal on these men as "upsetters" - The serene beauty of a holy life is the most powerful influence in the world next to the might of God.

The men that move the world  
are the ones who do not let the world move them!

**Who have upset the world** - KJV has a vivid picture "these that have turned the world upset down" They were lying! A false accusation! On the other hand, in another sense the Gospel was certainly "upsetting the world" but it was doing so in a good way for those who received it by faith! Indeed, the recipients of the good news did change kingdoms - from darkness to light, from the dominion of Satan to God (Acts 26:18-note)

**Gilbrant** adds that "The accusation that Paul and Silas had turned the inhabited world upside down has been a thrill and a challenge to true believers ever since. The world turned upside down is at last right side up. (The Romans used "the world" [the inhabited world] to mean the Roman Empire.) (Complete Biblical Library Commentary)

**Upset** (387) (anastatoo from **anastatos** = made to rise up and depart from **anistemi** = to stand up) means to disturb, disquiet, unsettle, to disturb the balance or stability of, to incite to revolt, to cause to rebel, to instigate an uprising, to stir up sedition (Acts 21:38). Used in a letter of a bad little boy whose mother said, "He drives me mad." Used only 3x - Acts 17:6, 21:38 ("stirred up"), Gal 5:12 ("troubling you").

**Gilbrant** - Anastatoō is a compound comprised of the preposition ana , "up," and the verb histemi, "to cause to stand." The picture is of agitating or stirring up, provoking one to rise up in excitement. The action is most commonly applied to a state of mind as is the case in the papyri of the Koine Greek period. However, a remote meaning comes to us through the classical usage of the word anastatōsis. This noun refers not only to an "unsettling" or "disturbance" but in some instances a "destruction." The latter connotation is found in the **Septuagint's** single usage of anastatoō in Daniel 7:23. In the interpretation of Daniel's dream the fourth beast represents a fourth kingdom which will devour the earth. It is said "to trample (anastatōsei) it and destroy it." The destructive sense is clear as our word translates the Aramaic word dūsh, which means "to trample" or "thresh." In the **New Testament** anastatoō appears only three times (Acts 17:6; 21:38; Galatians 5:12). The Jews may well have had the destructive sense of anastatoō in mind when they accused Paul of "turning the world upside down" (KJV). It appears they perceived that Paul's preaching was not only stirring up, or upsetting to humanity, but destructive as well. It would not be difficult to read the same sense behind Paul's words in Galatians 5:12. To be sure, the Judaizers were "troubling" the Church with their errant doctrine, but who can deny that Paul saw their heresy as destructive to true faith. (See Galatians 1:6,9; 2:15-21; 3:1-7; 5:1-4.) Again, it is easy to see the commander's words to Paul (Acts 21:38) in this light. He was no doubt relieved to learn that Paul was not the troublesome Egyptian insurrectionist whose revolt had been so destructively unsettling for Rome. ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**Robertson on the world** - The use of oikoumenēn (supply genō or chōran the inhabited earth, present passive participle of oikeō) means the **Roman Empire**, since it is a political charge, a natural **hyperbole** in their excitement, but the phrase occurs for the Roman Empire in Luke 2:1. It is possible that news had come to Thessalonica of the expulsion of the Jews from Rome by Claudius ([note](#)). There is truth in the accusation, for Christianity is revolutionary, but on this particular occasion the uproar (Acts 17:5) was created by the rabbis and the hired loafers. The verb **turned upside down anastatoō** (here first aorist active participle) does not occur in the ancient writers, but is in **Lxx** and in Acts 17:6; Acts 21:38; Galatians 5:12. It occurs also in Harpocration (a.d. 4th cent.) and about 100 b.c. exanastatoō is found in a fragment of papyrus (Tebtunis no. 2) and in a Paris Magical Papyrus I. 2243f. But in an Egyptian letter of Aug. 4, 41 a.d. (Oxyrhynchus Pap. no. 119, 10) "the bad boy" uses it = "he upsets me" or "he drives me out of my senses" (anastatoi me). It is not a "Biblical word" at all, but belongs to the current Koiné. It is a vigorous and graphic term. ([Acts 17 - Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament](#))

**World** (3625) (**oikoumene** the feminine participle present passive of **oikeo** = to dwell or abide) describes the inhabited portion of the earth, exclusive of the heavens above and hell below. The Romans used **oikoumene** in their secular writings to refer to the Roman Empire, for to them their empire equated with the whole world.

**McGee** - Now don't put that down as an oratorical gesture or hyperbole. When they said that these men were turning the world upside down, that is exactly what they meant. When Christianity penetrated that old Roman Empire it was a revolution. It had a tremendous effect. ([McGee, J V: Thru the Bible Commentary](#))

**William Barclay** on **upset the world** - 'Those,' they said, 'who are upsetting the civilised world have arrived here.' That is one of the greatest compliments which has ever been paid to Christianity....When Christianity really goes into action it must cause a revolution both in the life of the individual and in the life of society."

**Jack Andrews** - The missionaries and early church had the power of God upon them and God used them to shake up the world. Why does God not use us like he did these missionaries? Richard Owen Roberts wrote, "The sobering truth is that the greatest hindrance to the growth of Christianity in today's world is the absence of the manifest presence of God from the church. The Lord has been so deeply grieved by the refusal of the church to faithfully proclaim the whole counsel of His Word in the power of the Holy Spirit that He has largely withdrawn from the church and left her to her own devices." (Jack Andrews Expository Studies – Understanding Acts)

**John Phillips** wrote, "Wherever Paul went, things happened. Souls were saved, people took sides, feelings were stirred, decisions were made, the lines were drawn. Paul did not slip into town, hold a few quiet meetings, enjoy some good home cooking, pick up a generous honorarium, and slip back out of town again without the city knowing or caring that the gospel had been preached at all. Everybody knew when Paul came to town. Passions were stirred, things happened, the place was turned upside down." (Exploring Acts)

**Guzik** - God willing and blessing, people would say such things about the effectiveness of Christians today!. Jesus did not come only to be our teacher, but to turn our world upside-down. The powerful and the eminent of this world are at the top of the power pyramid and look down on the weak and insignificant; but Jesus comes and turns that pyramid around and says, If you want to come to Me, you have to come like a little child. As Paul says, God has chosen the foolish and weak things of the world to confound the wise (1Corinthians 1:27), and so God turns the world's power-pyramid upside down. Jesus gave a great example of this upside-down thinking when He spoke of a rich man who amassed great wealth, and all he could think about was building bigger barns to store all his wealth. We would make the man a civic leader or recognized him as a prominent man; Jesus turned it all upside down and called the man a fool, because he had done nothing to get his life right with God. (Luke 12:16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21) Actually, God was working through Paul and Silas to turn the world right side-up again. But when you yourself are upside-down, the other direction appears to be upside-down!

**Jack Arnold** - In a book entitled, [The Cost of Commitment, Dr. John White](#), a psychiatrist and minister in Canada, said, "It would be foolish of us to assume that our present luxurious freedom will continue indefinitely. (Freedom is the delayed end result of the Reformation, with its biblical view of man. As the biblical influence wanes, it is likely that freedom will not continue.) There are signs that the conditions necessary for tolerance and freedom are already being eroded. Democracy is a fragile flower of late bloom (it was in its present form completely unknown to the Greeks) liable to be withered by scorching winds of impatient hate. It is therefore important that we all ask ourselves: Am I willing to risk imprisonment and death for Christ? Many professing believers are not willing . . . If you are faithful in little things while freedom lasts, chances are that you will be faithful when the big tests come. There is valuable training in faithfulness where you are now. If you are open and honest--true to yourself and true to Christ--your life will provoke hostility in some and will powerfully attract others. To some it will be a "savour of life unto life" and to others "of death unto death." If you are faithful to Him it may make you unpopular and unprosperous . . . I do not wish to be an alarmist about what it costs to be faithful to Christ yet I feel I must point both to Scripture and to the course of church history. I want to awaken the Western Church with the blast of a trumpet, warning her that the normal conditions under which the Church bears witness are not those we now experience, but are conditions inimical to Christian witness. I believe that the darkness may be descending again, and I fear that few of us are prepared for it. We belong to a long tradition of martyrdom, but we have become soft and ill-prepared.

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**English Evangelist** - It was said of the apostles, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither" (Acts 17:6).

There is a story told of an eccentric English evangelist who took that text for one of his open-air sermons in a new place. He began by saying, "First, the world is wrong side up. Second, the world must be turned upside down. Third, we are the men to set it right."

In the man's quaint phrases, this is really the purpose of the gospel. It is God's way of making things right.

A. B. Simpson

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**Robert Morgan** - The first Christians were walking torches who weren't afraid to share their faith, spread their news, praise their Lord, and set their world on fire. They'd discovered a secret that had turned them inside out. Gone were their inhibitions, failures, sins, and temporal concerns. The risen Christ was living within them, walking among them, and working through them. They were filled with the Spirit and they shared the Word with boldness, though it sometimes brought the lash down on their backs and the government down on their heads.

They didn't expect to be here long, so they made the most of every opportunity.

It was said of them, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here too." It was an unintended compliment.

There are still Christians like that, but the majority of us are content with being middle-of-the-rovers whose lukewarm Laodicean faith won't even cause the world to tilt a little.



The gospel isn't going to turn the world upside down until it turns us inside out and right-side up, and we'll not set others on fire until we ourselves become walking torches.

The Christians who have turned the world upside down  
have been men and women with vision in their hearts  
and the Bible in their hands.

—T. B. Maston

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Acts 17:28 = "For in Him we live and move and have our being"

When life gets heavy, humor lightens the load. I have heard, for example, that in Russia peasant farmers enjoy telling this story: A commissar came to a farmer one day and inquired about the year's potato crop. "Oh, it was wonderful," replied the farmer. "Good, good," said the official. "Just how big was it?" "Oh, it was so big it reached up to the very foot of God." The commissar's countenance changed. With a scowl, he said, "But comrade, this is a communist state and we are atheists. You must not forget, there is no God!" "That's right, commissar, that's what I mean. No God—no potatoes."

A deep truth lies hidden in this humorous tale. God is the source of all things—whether we admit it or not. The apostle Paul went so far as to tell his pagan audience, "For in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). And he focused the great creating and sustaining work of God in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ (Col. 1:16-18). Without Him, we could not draw a single breath, our bodies could not function, and we would have no provision for our daily sustenance.

Atheists may have convinced themselves that God does not exist. Yet we who are His children through faith in His Son know otherwise. But do we show it by the way we live? That is the key question. Each day we must depend on Him, so that we recognize every blessing as coming from His gracious hand. —D. J. De Haan

However long the chain of secondary causes, the first link is always in God's hand

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**Spurgeon in his introduction to a sermon [The World Turned Upside Down](#) on Acts 17:6 wrote -**

THIS is just an old version of an oft-repeated story. When disturbances arise in a state, and rebellions and mutinies cause blood to be shed, it is still the custom to cry, "The Christians have done this." In the days of Jesus we know that it was laid to the charge of our blessed and divine Master, that he was a stirrer of sedition, whereas he himself had refused to be a king, when his followers would have taken him by force to make him one, for he said, "My kingdom is not of this world;" yet was he crucified under the two false charges of sedition and blasphemy. The same thing occurred with the Apostles. Wherever they went to preach the gospel, the Jews who opposed them sought to stir up the refuse of the city to put an end to their ministry; and then, when a great tumult had been made by the Jews themselves, who had taken unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city in an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring him out to the people, then the Jews laid the tumult and the uproar at the door of the Apostles, saying "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." This plan was followed all through the Roman empire, until Christianity became the state religion. There was never a calamity befel Rome, never a war arose, never a famine or a plague, but the vulgar multitude cried, "The Christians to the lions! The Christians have done this." Nero himself imputed the burning of Rome, of which he himself doubtless was the incendiary, to the Christians. The believers in Jesus were slandered as if they were the common sewer, into which all the filth of sin was to be poured; whereas, they were like Solomon's great brazen sea, which was full of the purest water, wherein even priests themselves might wash their robes. And you will remark, that to this day the world still lays its ills at the door of the Christians. Was it not the foolish cry a few months ago, and are there not some weak-minded individuals who still believe it, that the great massacre and mutiny in India was caused by the missionaries. Forsooth, the men who turned the world upside down had gone there also; and because men broke through all the restraints of nature and of law, and committed deeds for which fiends might blush, this must be laid at the door of Christ's holy gospel, and the men of peace must bear on their shoulders the blame of war! Ah! we need not refute this: the calumny is too idle to need a refutation. Can it be true, that he whose gospel is love should be the fomentor of disturbance? Can it be fair for a moment to lay mutiny and rebellion at the door of the gospel, the very motto of which is, "Peace on earth, good will towards men?" Did not our Master say, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's?" Did he not himself pay tribute though he sent to the fish of the sea, to get the shekel? And have not his followen at all times been a peaceful generation?—save only and except where the liberty of their conscience was touched, and then they were not the men to bow their knees to tyrants and kings, but with brave old Oliver they did bind their kings in chains, and their nobles in fetters of iron, as they will do again, if their liberty ever should be infringed, so that they should not have power to worship God as they ought.

We believe that what these Jews said of the Apostles, was just a downright wilful lie. They knew better. The Apostles were not the disturbers of states. It is true, they preached that which would disturb the sinful constitution of a kingdom, and which would disturb the evil practices of false priests; but they never meant to set men in an uproar. They did come to set men at arms with sin; they did draw the sword against iniquity; but against men as men, against kings as kings, they had no battle; it is with iniquity and sin, and

wrong everywhere, that they proclaimed an everlasting warfare. But still, brethren, there is many a true word spoken in jest, we say, and surely there is many a true word spoken in malice. They said the Apostles turned the world upside down. They meant by that, that they were disturbers of the peace. But they said a great true thing; for Christ's gospel does turn the world upside down. It was the wrong way upwards before, and now that the gospel is preached, and when it shall prevail, it will just set the world right by turning it upside down. (See entire sermon [The World Turned Upside Down](#))

**Acts 17:7 and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another King, Jesus."**

- **and these** - Acts 16:21; 25:8-11; Ezra 4:12-15; Daniel 3:12; 6:13; Luke 23:2; John 19:12; 1Peter 2:15
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Acts 17:1-3, 10-11 Men Who Turned the World Upside Down, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Acts 17:4-9, 12-15 Men Who Turned the World Upside Down, Part 2](#) - John MacArthur

## OPEN TREASON: ANOTHER KING - JESUS!

**Jason has welcomed them** - Much as Lydia had welcomed the missionaries in Acts 16:15, 40.

**Welcomed** (Received) (5264) ([hupodechomai](#) from **hupo** = under + [dechomai](#) = receive, welcome) means to admit under (hupo = under) one's roof, to welcome, receive, entertain as a guest. The idea is to receive one hospitably and kindly.

The Jews despised Rome and the rule of Caesar but saw the fact that the missionaries proclaimed Christ as King to be to their advantage. What hypocrites these antagonistic Jews were!

**Larkin** notes "The charges are threefold: public disturbance—causing *trouble all over the world*; harboring disturbers of the peace; and *defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus*. The forties had been a turbulent decade for Rome in dealing with the Jews. In A.D. 41 Emperor Claudius wrote a threatening letter to the Alexandrians, saying he would take measures against Jews who were "stirring up a universal plague throughout the world" (Sherwin-White 1963:51). In A.D. 44 there were public disturbances in Palestine in the wake of Herod Agrippa I's death. In A.D. 49 Claudius expelled Jews from Rome because of public disturbances in the Jewish community at the instigation of "Chrestus" (Suetonius *Claudius* 25.4; see comment at Acts 18:3). Though the Jews themselves had caused the uproar at Thessalonica, their trumped-up charges of public disturbance made sense within the Empire's current political climate. (IVP New Testament Commentary Series – Acts)

**They all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar** - Basically they are proposing a charge of [treason](#). It was not just political but religious treason because of the [Roman imperial cult](#).

**Decrees** (1378)([dogma](#) from [dokéo](#) = to think) refers to a fixed and authoritative decision or requirement (see the "decree" [dogma] of the emperors in Lu 2:1, Acts 17:7).

**Caesar** - Family name of Julius Caesar assumed by following emperors as a title. Some Pharisees and Herodians asked Jesus about the propriety of paying taxes to Caesar. In reply, the Lord said that those things pertaining to Caesar should be rendered to Caesar and those things pertaining to God should be rendered to Him (Matthew 22:15-21). In this passage, the name Caesar is virtually a symbol for civil authority. Originally, Caesar was the family name of the founder of the Roman Empire. Julius Caesar was assassinated on March 15, 44 B.C. His successors kept Caesar's memory alive, and eventually his name came to be used as a title. Caesars mentioned or referred to in the New Testament include Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius, and probably Nero. See Rome; Roman Empire. (Holman Bible Dictionary)

### Related Resources:

- [Caesar - Title](#)
- [Julius Caesar](#)
- Nave Topical Bible [Caesar](#)
- Thompson Chain Reference [Caesar](#)
- American Tract Society [Caesar](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Caesar](#)
- CARM Theological Dictionary [Caesar](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Caesar](#)

- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Caesar](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Caesar](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Caesar](#)
- Morrish Bible Dictionary [Caesar](#)
- Hawker's Poor Man's Dictionary [Caesar](#)
- Wilson's Bible Types [Caesar](#)
- Webster Dictionary [Caesar](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary [Caesar](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Caesar](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Caesar](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Caesar \(2\)](#)

**Larkin** - The charge of defying Caesar's decrees is best understood against this background. "Augustus and Tiberius had been very sensitive about the activities of astrologers and other prognosticators and had issued decrees forbidding predictions and inquiries affecting the affairs of state or the emperor's personal well being" (Bruce 1988:325; Dio Cassius Roman History 56.25.5-6; 57.15.8; Tacitus Annals 6.20; 12.52; compare 14.9). Paul's eschatology could be easily twisted into declarations about a coming monarch who will displace Caesar (1 Thess 1:9-10; 2 Thess 2:5-8). Since Thessalonica would want to maintain its status as a free city through loyalty to the emperor, and since the local officials are charged with preserving order and making sure the imperial decrees are respected, the charges understandably throw the crowd and the city officials into turmoil (tarasso, Acts 17:13; compare Acts 12:18; Acts 19:23). (Ibid)

**Saying there is another king Jesus** (Basilea heteron legontes einai Iēsoun) - To acknowledge any other king but Caesar was one of the most serious crimes in the Roman Empire. It was for allegedly claiming to be a rival earthly ruler to Caesar that the Romans crucified Jesus (cf. John 19:12, 19:15). Failure to worship Caesar surely led to Paul's execution. The fact that the Jews were "zealous" to safeguard the government of Caesar shows how much they hated the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for they clearly had little or no love for the Roman Empire.

**Robertson** - (Basilea heteron legontes einai Iēsoun) Note the very order of the words in the Greek indirect discourse with the accusative and infinitive after legontes Basilea heteron comes first, a **different king, another emperor** than Caesar. This was the very charge that the smart student of the Pharisees and Herodians had tried to catch Jesus on (Mark 12:14). The Sanhedrin made it anyhow against Jesus to Pilate (Luke 23:2) and Pilate had to notice it. "Although the emperors never ventured to assume the title **rex** (king) at Rome, in the Eastern provinces they were regularly termed **basileus** (king)" (Page). The Jews here, as before Pilate (John 19:15), renounce their dearest hope of a Messianic King. It is plain that Paul had preached about Jesus as the Messiah, King of the Kingdom of God over against the Roman Empire, a spiritual kingdom, to be sure, but the Jews here turn his language to his hurt as they did with Jesus. As a matter of fact Paul's preaching about the kingdom and the Second Coming of Christ was gravely misunderstood by the Christians at Thessalonica after his departure (1Thessalonians 4:13-5:4-note; 2Thessalonians 2). The Jews were quick to seize upon his language about Jesus Christ to his own injury. Clearly here in Thessalonica Paul had faced the power of the Roman Empire in a new way and pictured over against it the grandeur of the reign of Christ. ([Acts 17 - Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament](#))

**Vincent** - The charge at Philippi was that of introducing new customs; but as Thessalonica was not a colony, that charge could have no force there. The accusation substituted is that of treason against the emperor; that of which Jesus was accused before Pilate. "The law of treason, by which the ancient legislators of the republic had sought to protect popular liberty from the encroachments of tyranny, ... was gradually concentrated upon the emperor alone, the sole impersonation of the sovereign people. The definition of the crime itself was loose and elastic, such as equally became the jealousy of a licentious republic or of a despotic usurper" (Merivale, "History of the Romans under the Empire"). ([Acts 17 - Vincent's Word Studies](#))

Regarding another king **Wiersbe** remarks that "The Greek word translated "**another**" means "another of a different kind," (**Ed**: heteros not allos) that is, a king unlike Caesar. When you read Paul's two Thessalonian letters, you see the strong emphasis he gave in Thessalonica on the kingship of Christ and the promise of His return. Of course, our Lord's kingdom is neither political nor "of this world" (John 18:36-37), but we cannot expect unsaved pagans to understand this. The kingship of Jesus Christ is unlike that of the rulers of this world. He conquers with ambassadors, not armies; and His weapons are truth and love. He brings men peace by upsetting the peace and turning things upside down! He conquers through His cross where He died for a world of lost sinners. He even died for His enemies! (Ro 5:6, 7,8, 9, 10-see **notes** Romans 5:6; 5:7; 5:8; 5:9; 5:10)

**Another** (2087)(**heteros**) has the basic meaning of the other of two or more but specifically different.

**Guzik** - Even the unfounded accusation of political revolution had a compliment hidden inside. Even the evil men from the marketplace understood that Christians taught that Jesus was a king, that He had the right to rule over His people. Why is it that all

too many churchgoers miss this message today?

**NET Note** - The charges are serious, involving [sedition](#) (Luke 23:2). If the political charges were true, Rome would have to react.

**Larkin** - Although the persecutors had been the real disturbers of public order, the gospel always has an unsettling, even revolutionary effect on those who hear it. It calls for a repentance that means bowing to King Jesus in total allegiance. Totalitarian rulers, whether Caesar or modern-day overlords, cannot peacefully coexist with King Jesus or his kingdom subjects. Paul was the ideal evangelist because he would not compromise the truth of Jesus Christ and was willing to suffer for his convictions. He understood that the gospel causes a spiritual revolution in all who truly are saved. **Children often come up with deep truth without realizing it. A little girl said to her mother, "The Bible begins with Genesis and ends with Revolution."** Out of the mouth of babes comes truth. (Ibid)

**Jack Arnold** - The Jews then accused Paul of rebellion, sedition and treason. They claimed that Paul was preaching another king than Caesar, and he was. Paul preached Christ, the King of Kings, but His kingdom was a spiritual kingdom, not a political kingdom. "Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm'" (Jn. 18:36). Paul taught submission to human government. This, however, does tell us that Paul preached Jesus Christ as King, Lord, Master and Ruler, and we should do the same today. (Ibid)

### Acts 17:8 They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things.

- Matthew 2:3; John 11:48
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Acts 17:1-3, 10-11 Men Who Turned the World Upside Down, Part 1](#)- John MacArthur
- [Acts 17:4-9, 12-15 Men Who Turned the World Upside Down, Part 2](#)- John MacArthur

**They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things** - Defiance of Caesar stirred up the crowd! Their accusation raised the fear that their city might become known for opposition against Caesar and Rome and that was not a good thing!

**Stirred up** (5015)(**tarasso**) literally means to stir up or agitate to and fro like water in a glass sharply jarred. To confuse, to throw into confusion, to unsettle, to trouble. To shake back and forth. Used of political agitators who cause confusion and turmoil. Used of mental and spiritual agitation. Most of the NT uses of tarasso are figurative and describe the state of one's mind as stirred up, agitated or experiencing inward commotion.

**Tarasso** in Acts - Acts 15:24; Acts 17:8; Acts 17:13

**Robertson** - **tarassō** old verb to agitate. The excitement of the multitude "agitated" the politarchs still more. To the people it meant a revolution, to the politarchs a charge of complicity in treason if they let it pass. They had no way to disprove the charge of treason and Paul and Silas were not present. ([Acts 17 - Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament](#))

**City authorities** - see [note](#) on Acts 17:6.

**Crowd** (3793)(**ochlos**) is generally a multitude or a throng of people milling around or closely pressed together,

**NET Note** - "They troubled the crowd and the city officials"; but this could be understood to mean "they bothered" or "they annoyed." In reality the Jewish instigators managed to instill doubt and confusion into both the mob and the officials by their false charges of treason. Verse 8 suggests the charges raised against Paul, Silas, Jason, and the others were false.

### Acts 17:9 And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them.

- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Acts 17:1-3, 10-11 Men Who Turned the World Upside Down, Part 1](#)- John MacArthur
- [Acts 17:4-9, 12-15 Men Who Turned the World Upside Down, Part 2](#)- John MacArthur

**"BAIL BOND"  
POSTED**

**And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others**- The city authorities were reasonable and unlike Philippi did not toss them in a dungeon.

**Pledge (2425)(hikanos)** is strictly that which reaches or arrives at a certain standard in this context refers to a pledge, bail or bond representing an amount of money needed for release from custody and which would be forfeited by Jason should Paul and his companions cause more trouble. As a result, they had no choice but to leave Thessalonica. If trouble continued, Jason would lose his money. If it did not, he would receive it back.

**Robertson** - When they had taken security (labontes to hikanon). A Greek idiom = Latin satis accipere, to **receive the sufficient** (bond), usually money for the fulfilment of the judgment. Probably the demand was made of Jason that he see to it that Paul and Silas leave the city not to return. In 1Thessalonians 2:17-note. Paul may refer to this in mentioning his inability to visit these Thessalonians again. The idiom lambanein to hikanon now is found in two inscriptions of the second century a.d. (O. G. I. S. 484, 50 and 629, 101). In Vol. III Oxyrhynchus Papyri no. 294 a.d. 22 the corresponding phrase dounai heikanon ("to give security") appears. ([Acts 17 - Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament](#))

**Guzik** points out that "In general, Roman officials did not care what the people believed. Yet when the public order was disrupted by riots, they came down with an iron hand. If things got out of hand, it wouldn't be long until the Emperor dispatched his legions to restore order, and no one wanted that. So Jason had to post the bond even though he did not start the riot." (The Enduring Word Bible Commentary – Acts)

**Released (630)(apoluo** from **apó** = marker of dissociation, implying a rupture from a former association, separation +**luo** = loose) is used often of sending a person or a group away from someone (Mt 14:15, 22, 23, 32, etc).

**Apoluo** frequently has the sense of to let loose from or to release (as from under arrest or from another's custody), as it is used here in Acts 17:9. To let go free or set at liberty. **Apoluo** is used in all four Gospels describing the **release** of Barabbas instead of Jesus (Jn 18:39, Mt 27:15, 17, 21, etc, cf Acts 16:35)

**Apoluo** frequently is means to **divorce** (let go free or release a wife Mt 5:31, 32; 19:3; and a husband in Mk 10:12). **Apoluo** is never used in the marriage context with the meaning of just to separate (as the term is commonly used today) or to break an engagement, but always means full fledged **divorce**.

**Apoluo** was used in secular Greco-Roman writings of discharge from the military, of release from jail or of setting a debtor free (these latter meanings also commonly found in the NT writings). To dismiss (as innocent) - As legal term, to grant acquittal, set free, release, pardon. **Apoluo** in Luke 6:37 is used with the sense of forgive. Thus most versions like NET, NIV, KJV, ESV translate it as "forgive" = "forgive, and you will be forgiven." Figuratively of setting someone "free" of illness (Luke 13:12 "Woman, you are **freed** from your sickness.") To let loose from, to loose or unbind a person or thing. To free from, relieve from, with the gen. of sickness Lk 13:12 To forgive a debt and thus release from the obligation to pay it off - Mt 18:27 To release persons accused or imprisoned Mt 27:15; Mk15:6; Lk 22:68; Jn 19:10; Ac 4:21; 26:32; 28:18

#### Summary of apoluo...

1. Dismiss, let go away (Mt 14:15);
2. Send, cause another to depart (Ac 15:30)
3. Set free, release (Lk 23:22)
4. Divorce (Mt 1:19)
5. Forgive, grant clemency, pardon (Lk 6:37)
6. Go away, leave (Ac 28:25)

**NAS** translates **apoluo** as - dismissed(1), divorce(3), divorced(2), divorces(5), freed(1), leaving(1), let...go(2), pardon(1), pardoned(1), **release**(20), released(8), releasing...to depart(1), send..away(9), sending...away(1), sending away(1), sends...away(1), sent...away(6), sent away(2), set free(1).

**Friberg** (summary) - (1) of a prisoner or debtor set free, release, pardon (MT 27.15); (2) of divorce send away, dismiss, let go (MT 1.19; 19.3); (3) of a crowd or assembly dismiss, send away (MT 14.15); (4) middle go away, depart (AC 28.25); (5) euphemistically, for death let die, let depart (LU 2.29)

**BDAG** (summary) -

1. As legal term, to grant acquittal, set free, release, pardon someone, a prisoner (Mt 27:15-26; cp. Mk 15:6-15; Lk 23:16-25; J

18:39; 19:10, 12; Ac 3:13; 5:40; 16:35f; 26:32; 28:18. **2.** to release from a painful condition, free, pass. be freed (2Mac 12:45; Lk 13:12.

**3.** to permit or cause someone to leave a particular location let go, send away, dismiss; of a crowd Mt 14:15, 22; 15:32, 39; Mk 6:36, 45; 8:9; dismiss the assembly Ac 19:40. Also of individuals Mt 15:23; Lk 8:38; 14:4; Lk 22:68 (send them away) to their homes Mk 8:3. let (them) go into the building Passive - be dismissed, take leave, depart, of a cavalryman's discharge (on the desire for departure.

**4.** to grant a request and so be rid of a person, Mt 15:23

**5.** to dissolve a marriage relationship, to divorce one's wife, or betrothed (Dt 24:1ff; Mt 1:19; 5:31f, 19:3, 7-9; Mk 10:2, 4, 11; Lk 16:18. Of the woman divorce her husband Mk 10:12. This is in accord not w. Jewish but w. Gr-Rom. custom

**6.** middle voice to make a departure from a locality, go away - Ex 33:11; Ac 28:25;

**Apoluo** - 66x in 61v (only 4x in Septuagint - Ge 15:2, Ex 33:11, Nu 20:29, Ps 34:1) -

Matthew 1:19 And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to **send** her **away** secretly.

Matthew 5:31 "It was said, 'WHOEVER **SENDS** HIS WIFE **AWAY**, LET HIM GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE';

32 but I say to you that everyone who **divorces** his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a **divorced** woman commits adultery.

Matthew 14:15 When it was evening, the disciples came to Him and said, "This place is desolate and the hour is already late; so **send** the crowds **away**, that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves."

22 Immediately He made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side, while He **sent** the crowds **away**.

23 After He had **sent** the crowds **away**, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone.

Matthew 15:23 But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came and implored Him, saying, "**Send** her **away**, because she keeps shouting at us."

32 And Jesus called His disciples to Him, and said, "I feel compassion for the people, because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not want to **send** them **away** hungry, for they might faint on the way."

39 And **sending away** the crowds, Jesus got into the boat and came to the region of Magadan.

Matthew 18:27 "And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and **forgave** him the debt.

Matthew 19:3 Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, "Is it lawful for a man to **divorce** his wife for any reason at all?"

7 They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND **SEND** her **AWAY**?"

8 He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to **divorce** your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way.

9 "And I say to you, whoever **divorces** his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."

Matthew 27:15 Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to **release** for the people any one prisoner whom they wanted.

17 So when the people gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to **release** for you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?"

21 But the governor said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to **release** for you?" And they said, "Barabbas."

26 Then he **released** Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.

Mark 6:36 **send** them **away** so that they may go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat."

45 Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side to Bethsaida, while He Himself was **sending** the crowd **away**.

Mark 8:3 "If I **send** them **away** hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way; and some of them have come from a great distance."

9 About four thousand were there; and He **sent** them **away**.

Mark 10:2 Some Pharisees came up to Jesus, testing Him, and began to question Him whether it was lawful for a man to **divorce** a wife.

4 They said, "Moses permitted a man TO WRITE A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND **SEND** her **AWAY**."

11 And He said to them, "Whoever **divorces** his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her;

12 and if she herself **divorces** her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery."

Mark 15:6 Now at the feast he used to **release** for them any one prisoner whom they requested.

9 Pilate answered them, saying, "Do you want me to **release** for you the King of the Jews?"

11 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to ask him to **release** Barabbas for them instead.

15 Wishing to satisfy the crowd, Pilate **released** Barabbas for them, and after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.

Luke 2:29 "Now Lord, You are **releasing** Your bond-servant to depart in peace, According to Your word;

**NET Note** - Undoubtedly the background for the concept of being the Lord's slave or servant is to be found in the Old Testament scriptures. For a Jew this concept did not connote drudgery, but honor and privilege. It was used of national Israel at times (Isa 43:10), but was especially associated with famous OT personalities, including such great men as Moses (Josh 14:7), David (Ps 89:3; cf. 2Sa 7:5, 8) and Elijah (2Kgs 10:10); all these men were "servants (or slaves) of the Lord."

**Comment:** Simeon's life had been devoted (as the Lord's slave) to the expectant appearance of the Messiah and His salvation, but now that the expectation had been fulfilled, his task had come to an end. The implication is that Simeon's "release" from life was drawing near. Oh, to finish my life with such a sense of having accomplished my Master's will for my short life!

Luke 6:37 "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; **pardon**, and you will be **pardoned**."

Luke 8:38 But the man from whom the demons had gone out was begging Him that he might accompany Him; but He **sent** him **away**, saying,

Luke 9:12 Now the day was ending, and the twelve came and said to Him, **Send** the crowd **away**, that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside and find lodging and get something to eat; for here we are in a desolate place."

Luke 13:12 When Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are **freed** from your sickness."

Luke 14:4 But they kept silent. And He took hold of him and healed him, and **sent** him **away**.

Luke 16:18 "Everyone who **divorces** his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries one who is **divorced** from a husband commits adultery."

Luke 23:16 "Therefore I will punish Him and **release** Him."

18 But they cried out all together, saying, "Away with this man, and release for us Barabbas!"

20 Pilate, wanting to **release** Jesus, addressed them again,

22 And he said to them the third time, "Why, what evil has this man done? I have found in Him no guilt demanding death; therefore I will punish Him and **release** Him."

25 And he **released** the man they were asking for who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, but he delivered Jesus to their will.

John 18:39 "But you have a custom that I **release** someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I **release** for you the King of the Jews?"

John 19:10 So Pilate said to Him, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to **release** You, and I have authority to crucify You?"

12 As a result of this Pilate made efforts to **release** Him, but the Jews cried out saying, "If you **release** this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar."

Acts 3:13 "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to **release** Him.

Acts 4:21 When they had threatened them further, they **let** them **go** (finding no basis on which to punish them) on account of the people, because they were all glorifying God for what had happened;

23 When they had been **released**, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them.

Acts 5:40 They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then **released** them.

Acts 13:3 Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they **sent** them **away**.

Acts 15:30 So when they were **sent away**, they went down to Antioch; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter.

33 After they had spent time there, they were **sent away** from the brethren in peace to those who had sent them out.

Acts 16:35 Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their policemen, saying, "**Release** those men."

36 And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The chief magistrates have sent to **release** you. Therefore come out now and go in peace."

Acts 17:9 And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they **released** them.

Acts 19:40 "For indeed we are in danger of being accused of a riot in connection with today's events, since there is no real cause for it, and in this connection we will be unable to account for this disorderly gathering."

41 After saying this he **dismissed** the assembly.

Acts 23:22 So the commander **let** the young man **go**, instructing him, "Tell no one that you have notified me of these things."

Acts 26:32 And Agrippa said to Festus, "This man **might have been set free** if he had not appealed to Caesar."

Acts 28:18 "And when they had examined me, they were willing to **release** me because there was no ground for putting me to death.

25 And when they did not agree with one another, they *began leaving* after Paul had spoken one parting word, "The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers,

Hebrews 13:23 Take notice that our brother Timothy **has been released**, with whom, if he comes soon, I will see you.

**Acts 17:10 The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.**

- **the brethren** - Acts 17:14; 9:25; 23:23,24; Joshua 2:15,16; 1 Samuel 19:12-17; 20:42
- **Berea** - Acts 17:13; 20:4
- **went** - Acts 17:2; 14:6,7; 1 Thessalonians 2:2
- William Ramsay [Berea](#)
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries



- [Acts 17:1-3, 10-11 Men Who Turned the World Upside Down, Part 1](#)- John MacArthur
- [Acts 17:4-9, 12-15 Men Who Turned the World Upside Down, Part 2](#)- John MacArthur

## ESCAPE BY NIGHT TO A CITY "OFF THE BEATEN PATH"

This is Paul's second nocturnal escape in Acts, the first being in Acts 9:25+ when "his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a large basket."

**And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea** - They did not hold a prayer meeting. They did not presume on God's protection. They acted intelligently based on the facts using good judgment. And in so doing they acted in a way that would result in Jason receiving back the money he had put up as a pledge.

**Immediately by night** (euthēōs dia nuktos). Paul's work had not been in vain in Thessalonica (1Th 1:7-note.; 1Th 2:13-note, 1Th 2:20-note). Paul loved the church here. Two of them, Aristarchus and Secundus, will accompany him to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4) and Aristarchus will go on with him to Rome (Acts 27:2). Plainly Paul and Silas had been in hiding in Thessalonica and in real danger. After his departure severe persecution came to the Christians in Thessalonica (1 Th 2:14-note; 1 Th 3:1-5-note; 2 Th 1:6). It is possible that there was an escort of Gentile converts with Paul and Silas on this night journey to Berea which was about fifty miles southwest from Thessalonica near Pella in another district of Macedonia (Emathia). There is a modern town there of some 6,000 people. ([Acts 17 - Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament](#))

**Immediately** (2112)(**eutheos** from euthus = straight, immediate) is an adverb which generally means at once, right away, forthwith, straightaway, without an interval of time or a point of time subsequent to a previous point of time. Note that the actual interval of time depends on the nature of the events and the manner in which the sequence is interpreted by the writer.

Luke's uses of **eutheos** in Acts - Acts 9:18; Acts 9:20; Acts 9:34; Acts 12:10; Acts 16:10; Acts 17:10; Acts 17:14; Acts 21:30; Acts 22:29;

Paul later wrote that his return to the city was hindered

For we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—and yet **Satan hindered us**. (1 Th 2:18)

Paul's return may have been hindered, but the Gospel was not hindered (remember it is the power of God)...

You (BELIEVERS AT THESSALONICA) also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. 8 **For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything** (PAUL DID NOT NEED TO COME BACK - GOD'S WORD SOUNDED FORTH!). 9 For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, (1 Th 1:6-9+)

**Guzik** comments that "Paul only spent a few weeks in Thessalonica (Acts 17:2) and it seems he wished he could have taught them more. He decided to teach them more in a written letter, and many believe that 1 Thessalonians was his first letter written to a congregation." (Enduring Word Bible Commentary – Acts)

**To Berea** ([See note; Wikipedia](#)) - Berea (population about 6000 compared to 200,000 for Thessalonica) was about 45-50 miles away from Thessalonica on the eastern slopes of a mountain on the way to Achaia, the province that corresponds to southern Greece today. Timothy is not mentioned and presumably must have remained at Philippi (he is not mentioned at Thessalonica although Paul did later send him to them 1 Th 3:2ff).

**Larkin** - They travel west-southwest along the Via Egnatia some twenty miles and then leave it and head south thirty more miles to Berea. This strategic withdrawal into the third district of Macedonia and to a city that Cicero labeled "**off the beaten track**" (Against Piso 36.89) is not a retreat but a means of further advance.

**G Campbell Morgan** - There is a difference between these two places, not merely between the Jews inhabiting them, but between the two places themselves, Thessalonica and Berea. Thessalonica was on the **highway**; Berea was on the **by way**.

**And when they arrived** - Emphasizing that they did arrive safely and unscathed.

**They went into the synagogue of the Jews** - Berea though considerably smaller than Thessalonica still had enough Jews for a synagogue and as was his custom, Paul made a beeline for the place of Jewish worship. Paul did not take a rest break but sought to

preach the Gospel posthaste! We always see an urgency about Paul's zeal to proclaim the Word of God that men might be saved by faith in Jesus. God give us all such a persistent, consistent zeal to preach Your Word! Amen

**Matthew Henry** wrote, "That command of Christ to His disciples, 'When they persecute you in one city flee to another,' intends their flight to be not so much for their own safety (flee to another, to hide there) as for the carrying on of their work (flee to another, to preach there)."

The Jack Andrews Expository Studies - The Jack Andrews Expository Studies – Understanding Acts - Volume 5.

**Acts 17:11** Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.

**Greek:** [houtoi de esan](#) (3PIAI) [eugenesteroi ton en Thessalonike](#), [hoitines edecanto](#) (3PAMI) [ton logon meta pases prothumias](#), [kath' hemeran anakrinontes](#) (PAPMPN) [tas graphas ei echoi](#) (3SPAQ) [tauta houtos](#)

**Amplified:** Now these [Jews] were better disposed and more noble than those in Thessalonica, for they were entirely ready and accepted and welcomed the message [concerning the attainment through Christ of eternal salvation in the kingdom of God] with inclination of mind and eagerness, searching and examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

**NET:** These Jews were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they eagerly received the message, examining the scriptures carefully every day to see if these things were so.

**Phillips:** The Jews proved more generous-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they accepted the message most eagerly and studied the scriptures every day to see if what they were now being told were true.

- **More noble-minded** - Proverbs 1:5; 9:9; Jer 2:21; John 1:45, 46, 47, 48, 49
- **They received** - Acts 2:41; 10:33; 11:1; Job 23:12; Proverbs 2:1, 2, 3, 4, 5; 8:10; Matthew 13:23; 1Th 1:6; 2:13; 2Th 2:10; Jas 1:21; 1Pe 2:2
- **Examining the Scriptures daily** - Ps 1:2,3; Ps 119:97,100,148; Isa 8:20; 34:16; Luke 16:29; 24:44; John 3:21; John 5:39; 2Ti 3:15, 16, 17; 1Pe 1:10, 11, 12; 2Pe 1:19, 20, 21; 1John 4:5,6
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Acts 17:1-3, 10-11 Men Who Turned the World Upside Down, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Acts 17:4-9, 12-15 Men Who Turned the World Upside Down, Part 2](#) - John MacArthur

## THE BEREAN MINDSET

**Now these** (Berean Jews) **were more noble minded** - Paul had been overjoyed and filled with gratitude to God at the way the people in Thessalonica had received the Word (1Th 2:13-note), so these "noble Bereans" must have really encouraged his heart. What noble minded means is reflected in their handling of the word of God (1) received the word with great eagerness (2) Examining the Scriptures daily. Would Paul describe you as "noble minded"?

**Jack Arnold** - Berea was a city about 50 miles southwest of Thessalonica. It was an out-of-the-way city not on the Egnatian Way. This was a beautiful city in the mountains and had many gorgeous gardens, due to the abundance of water in this area. Above all, Berea was a city where the aristocracy lived. It was like a retirement center for wealthy military, political and educational leaders. When Paul arrived in Berea, he went immediately into the synagogue, keeping with his game plan. It says of the attenders of the synagogue in Berea that they were "more noble-minded" than the synagogue attenders in Thessalonica. The Greek literally says "more noble." This means that the Bereans were of a more noble class than those in Thessalonica; that is, this refers to social nobility. However, it also means that they were more noble in quality of mind and heart. They were more generous, liberal and gracious in their feelings and more ready to inquire candidly into the truth of the doctrine Paul and Silas were advancing. The Bereans were highly educated people and they were open-minded to what Paul had to say. The synagogue attenders in Thessalonica were uncritical in their thinking, prejudiced to the truth, more emotional and impulsive towards the gospel. The Bereans were much more willing to deal objectively with the facts of the gospel as they were proclaimed by Paul. (Ibid)

**Guzik** comments that "When Paul preached, they had open hearts; but also clear heads. Many people have clear heads but closed hearts, and never receive the word with all readiness. It was both of these things that made the Bereans more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica."

**Noble minded** (2104) (**eugenes** from **eu** = well + **genos** = family, race) means literally of high or noble birth, but in this context is used figuratively to describe men and women possessing that type of attitude ordinarily associated with well-bred persons, being open, tolerant, generous.

The word is used not only for noble birth but also for noble sentiments, character, morals; thus the Jews of Berea were more noble in character than those of Thessalonica in their welcome and cordial treatment of the apostles

**Eugenes** is the source of the English word "**eugenics**" (from Greek **eugenes** - well-born, from **eu-** + **genes** = born) which is the study of methods of improving the quality of the human race, especially by selective breeding! The Nazi physicians took this horrible practice to demonic levels!

**Noble** (Webster) = possessing outstanding qualities; of high birth or exalted rank; possessing superiority of mind or character or morals or ideals

**Friberg** (summary) - (1) as having a high status, especially socially well-born, noble, important (Lk 19:12); substantively nobleman, important person (1Cor 1:26); (2) as a commendable attitude open-minded, without prejudice;

**BDAG** (summary) 1. pertaining to being of high status, well-born, high-born = 1 Cor 1:26. a certain nobleman Lk 19:12. 2. pertaining to having the type of attitude ordinarily associated with well-bred persons, noble-minded, open-minded = these were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica Ac 17:11

**Liddell-Scott** - well-born, of noble race, of high descent, Lat. *generosus*, is a mark of nobility, 2. noble-minded, generous, 3. of animals, high-bred, noble, 4. of outward form, noble, nobly, bravely

**Eugenes** is used not only for noble birth but also for noble sentiments, character, morals. The implication is that the Berean Jews were more noble in character than those in Thessalonica in their welcome and cordial treatment of the apostles.

**Eugenes** is used only 3 times in the NT and is translated in the NAS as more noble-minded(1), noble(1), nobleman\*(1). There is one use in Job 1:3 and the rest in the apocryphal Septuagint - 2 Macc 10:13; 4 Macc 6:5; 9:13, 24, 27; 10:3, 15; Job 1:3; Luke 19:12; Acts 17:11; 1 Cor 1:26

Luke 19:12 So He said, "A **nobleman** went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and then return.

Acts 17:11 Now these were more **noble-minded** than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.

1 Corinthians 1:26 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many **noble**;

Job 1:3 His possessions also were 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and very many servants; and that man was the **greatest** (Lxx = *eugenes*; most noble) of all the men of the east.

#### Related Resource:

- [ON THE CHARACTER OF THE BEREANS](#) - Thomas Reade's [SPIRITUAL EXERCISES OF THE HEART or CHRISTIAN RETIREMENT](#)

## THE BEREAN'S "WELCOME MAT"

**They received** (1209) (**dechomai**) means to to receive something offered or transmitted by another (Luke 2:28) and speaks of a ready reception of what is offered. To take something into one's hand and so to grasp (Luke 22:17). To be receptive to someone (Mt 10:14, 40). To take a favorable attitude toward something (Mt 11:14).

Jesus used **dechomai** to describe the way that humble, childlike believers (Matt. 18:5), faithful preachers of the gospel (Matt. 10:14), and the gospel itself (Luke 8:13; cf. Acts 8:14; 17:11) should be received.

**Dechomai** means to accept deliberately and readily, receive kindly and so to take to oneself what is presented or brought by another. It means to welcome as a teacher, a friend, or a guest into one's house. The word describes accepting persons with open arms, minds, and hearts, even going beyond normally expected gracious hospitality. The term was often used of welcoming honored guests and meeting their needs with special attention and kindness.

The Bereans deliberately and readily accepted THE WORD (**ton lógos** = "the specific Word"...not just "any" word! The specific Word

in context represents the **Gospel** - see the effect of their reception in the next verse). The Bereans took the precious word to themselves, welcoming it as what it was, the word of life (this same phrase is found in Php 2:16- (see note), and in 1 Jn 1:1 refers to Jesus Himself cf Deut 32:47), as one would welcome a guest or friend or wise counselor to their house ("...they will receive [dechomai] me into their homes." Lk 16:4) Rahab the harlot welcomed (dechomai) the spies in [He 11:31-note]. They had the right kind of soil as Jesus described in Luke 8...

And the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance. (Lk 8:15, compare to Lydia who heard [was listening] in Acts 16:14)

**The Word**, the [logos](#), the Word of God, the Word of Truth, the Word of Life, the Word of the Gospel, the Word of the Cross (1 Cor 1:18).

**John Butler** comments on the fact that the Bereans received **the Word** "That is a better reception than we are giving the Word in our country. Our courts instead of receiving the Word are forbidding it in our schools, and the Biblical nativity scenes on government property and they are assaulting the ten commandments from being placed on government property. Unlike Berea, there is little welcome of the Word in our land." (Sermon Starters)

**With** (3326) (**meta**) means in the midst of or in the company with prothumia, a good attitude to manifest when the "guest" is the Living Word! They were eager but not [gullible](#), naive and easily deceived or tricked.

## THE BEREAN'S "PROMPTNESS"

**Promptness** is the characteristic of doing things without delay, the quality of being performed or executed without delay, the quality or state of being quick or ready to act or respond.

**THOUGHT** - This is an excellent description of the Bereans and should be the description of all God's children who should be "like newborn babies, (WHO) long for ([epipotheo](#)) the **pure** ([adolos](#) = undiluted, no additives, not devotionals, not books about the Book, not sermons about the Book, etc! SIMPLY THE BOOK AND NOTHING BUT THE BOOK SO HELP YOU GOD!) milk of the Word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation." (1 Peter 2:2+) Note very carefully the parallel picture -- no consistent intake of pure milk by a newborn baby will lead to a malnourished infant predisposed to all manner of physical ailments, and by the same token this same result will be true spiritually for all of God's children who fail to regularly take in pure milk (their marriages will be negatively impacted, their ability to lead their families will be negatively impacted, their work decisions will be negatively impacted, etc, etc). In short they will experience NO growth in Christ-likeness and like a bicycle that is not being pedaled, they will topple over and are a set-up for backsliding! (See [Backsliding](#)) Not only that but they will not experience daily "revival" which comes about from daily "re-Bible!" (reading the Bible)! Ps 119:25 is a prayer we all need to pray (frequently if not daily) "Revive me according to Your word." Beloved, could it be any clearer or any more plainly stated? This truth calls for a response! It begs the question dear reader (under grace not law) "Are you in the Word daily?" (cf Acts 17:11 "**daily**" not just on Sunday!) And even more important "Is the Word really IN YOU daily or is it in one ear and out the other after your morning reading (James 1:22+), and given no chance to be [spiritually digested and chewed on](#) throughout the day?" This is why I am a strong advocate of reading just a few verses in the morning (rather than several chapters as in most "Read Thru the Bible in a Year" programs), chewing them like you would prime rib, and allowing your heart the opportunity to truly be impacted by the passages throughout the remainder of the day. If you do this, don't be surprised when you begin to experience personal revival from your re-Bible discipline! All glory to God. Amen? Amen!

**Great eagerness** (Literally "all eagerness")(4288) (**prothumia** from **prothumos** = predisposed, ready, willing, eager, prompt, referring to one's spirit in Mt 26:41 "the spirit is *willing*"; from **pro** = before, in front of + **thumos** = passion) conveys the idea of ready and willing, of readiness for action, or of having the will or purpose to act. This word describes one's exceptional interest in being of service. It is a determined disposition of one's mind. Prothumia depicts someone who is *already willing* with an eager disposition which is *pre-inclined*.

**Prothumia** conveys the idea of "rushing forward" and here speaks of their readiness to receive the word. In Acts 17:11 prothumia refers to the preexisting character of the Bereans, as already willing to know the Lord more.

**Cleon Rogers** - willingness, eagerness. It indicates a positive disposition, goodwill in the heightened sense of eagerness and ardor and is a compliment that honors its subject

**Eagerness** - a positive feeling of wanting to push ahead with something. Eagerness is very close in nuance to the word enthusiasm which has a fascinating etymological history -

The word "**enthusiastic**" was originally used to refer to a person possessed by a god. It comes from the [Greek](#) word [ἑνθουσιάζω](#) from [ἐν](#) and [θεός](#) and [οὐσία](#), meaning "possessed by [a] god's essence", applied by the [Greeks](#) to [manifestations](#) of divine possession, by [Apollo](#) (as in the case of the [Pythia](#)), or by [Dionysus](#) (as in the case of the Bacchantes and Maenads), the term **enthusiasm** was also used in a transferred or figurative sense. [Socrates](#) taught that the inspiration of [poets](#) is a form of enthusiasm. The term was confined to a belief in religious inspiration, or to intense religious fervour or [emotion](#). ([Wikipedia](#)) (Ed: This latter phrase is an excellent description of the Bereans! Can't wait to meet them in heaven!)

**Why were the Bereans like "newborn babies," so eager and enthusiastic for the pure milk of the Word(1 Peter 2:2-note)?** Because they were **truly possessed, not by "a god" but by THE GOD**, the indwelling Holy Spirit Who lives in us (Ro 8:9-note, 1 Cor 3:16, 1 Cor 6:19-note) to exalt the Name of Jesus (John 15:26, 16:14) and stimulate in us a desire for the Living Word! Dear believer, would it be that all of us might so [emulate](#) and [imitate](#) the ancient Bereans and that we would daily yield to the filling and control of our glorious Teacher, the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Php 1:19-note), Who not only teaches us but then gives us the desire and power to apply the truth of the Word to our lives (Php 2:13NLT-note). **Thank you great Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen!**

Readiness. Forwardness. Willingness. Inclination. Enthusiasm. Goodwill. Eagerness. Eagerness is a state marked by enthusiastic desire or interest and implies ardor and enthusiasm.

In ancient Greece, **prothumia** was a word commonly used in eulogies. The idea of voluntariness is also present in the Qumran writings. A willing and cheerful treading of the divine path is denoted.

**Robertson** commenting on the use of **prothumia** in Acts 17:11 writes that "In Thessalonica many of the Jews out of pride and prejudice refused to listen. Here the Jews joyfully welcomed the two Jewish visitors."

The NT uses are listed below and it is notable that 4 of the 5 uses are in the 2 most comprehensive chapters on Christian giving! (Interesting!)

**Acts 17:11** Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.

**2 Corinthians 8:11** But now finish doing it also; that just as there was the **readiness** to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability...**12** For if the **readiness** is present, it is acceptable according to what a man has, not according to what he does not have.

**2 Corinthians 8:19** and not only this, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work, which is being administered by us for the glory of the Lord Himself, and to show our **readiness**,

**2 Corinthians 9:2** for I know your **readiness**, of which I boast about you to the Macedonians, namely, that Achaia has been prepared since last year, and your zeal has stirred up most of them.

**Prothumia** indicates a positive disposition, goodwill in the heightened sense of eagerness and ardor and is a compliment that honors its subject.

These Bereans were predisposed, ready, willing, and thus their attitude was one of eagerness. Prothumia includes the idea of "rushing forward"...and thus the Bereans were like children in a candy store...like a man who found a pearl and recognized its incredible worth (Mt 13:45, 46). [Does this describe your attitude and approach to the eternal word of God \(Mt 24:35\) about which the psalmist testifies "Forever, O LORD, Thy word is settled in heaven."](#) (Psalm 119:89)? It is the Word about which the aged Joshua could testify "Not one of the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass..." "Now behold, today I am going the way of all the earth, and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one word of all the good words which the LORD your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed." (Joshua 21:45, 23:14)

**THOUGHT** - May God grant by His Spirit and for His Son that we might all be Bereans testing and finding true as did Joshua the Word and therefore willing to stake our temporal lives and eternal destinies on such a trustworthy Word given as a precious treasure by such a Faithful Father! Amen!

## **THE BEREANS SIFTING OF THE TRUTH**

**John MacArthur** - The noble Bereans carefully sifted the evidence and concluded that the gospel Paul proclaimed was the truth that fulfilled Old Testament promise. Those who honestly examine the Scriptures will always come to that conclusion. In John 5:39, Jesus said to the Jewish leaders, "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me."..." "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me." (Jn 5:46, cf Jn 7:17, Lk 24:25-27)...Most people who reject the gospel have little knowledge of the Scriptures. Some of the Bible's harshest critics over the centuries have displayed a shocking ignorance of its teachings. The primary duty in evangelism, then, must be to demonstrate the truth of Christianity from the Scriptures. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

**Jack Arnold** - The Bereans who attended the synagogue examined everything Paul was saying in light of the Old Testament Scriptures. They did not conclude everything false which did not accord with their preconceived opinions nor would they accept any new teaching without carefully checking it out with Scripture. These folks were not pew sitters; they were Bible students. They were cautious and careful about what they believed and they used only the Scriptures as their final authority. If it was in the Book, they would accept it. Both the Thessalonians and the Bereans received the Word of God, but the Bereans were more skeptical and analytical while the Thessalonians were more gullible. These Bereans challenged what the preacher was saying, not to get in a theological argument but to come to the truth. Notice the Bereans did this daily. They were not only earnest but they were diligent in their pursuit of truth. They not only read the Bible devotionally but they studied the Bible theologically. The Bereans were the ideal audience, and would be to God we would have more like them today. The Bible is our only guide, as Christians, to tell us what is true and what is false, what is right and what is wrong, what is of God and of Satan. Unless a Christian grounds his faith in the Holy Scriptures, he will be lost in a sea of relativism, where everybody does that which is right in his own eyes, setting each individual up as his own authority. Unless a Christian makes the Bible his only authority for faith and living, he will be misled and manipulated so as to believe that he is his own god. This, of course, is the basis for all humanism today. We face a great danger in America today among evangelicals. Most evangelicals are gullible, emotional and man-centered. They rarely search the Scriptures. They have believed in Christ but they do not search the Bible for convictions for living and theology. They gather around some teacher and say, "I am of Paul, or Peter or Apollos." They do not test things they believe and do by the Bible, and their theme song is, "Where he leads us we will follow; what he feeds us we will swallow." Just because some Bible teacher or evangelist says something, that does not make it right. If a man says, "I have the truth," or "I know the Greek," that does not make him an authority. We must study the Bible for ourselves and check all teaching of men with the Bible. We must be willing to change when we are convinced from the Scripture alone. The Reformation brought back to Christians our right as self-sustaining believer-priests to read and interpret the Bible without a priest or a church telling us what Scripture means. It is our God-given right and privilege to study the Scripture daily. Remember, too, that as long as we are in this body of flesh, we shall never understand the Bible perfectly. There is always room for improvement and refinement in one's understanding and proclaiming of the Word of God. ([Sermon](#))

**Examining** (350) (**anakrino** from **aná** = again + **kríno** = sift, judge, distinguish, separate out so as to investigate) (present tense = continually) means to sift up and down, to examine accurately or carefully (re-examine), to make careful and exact research as in legal processes. Here in Berea, the Jews took the approach of the best in human jurisprudence, seeking an unbiased investigation to arrive at the truth.

**Anakrino** can mean to interrogate, to cross-examine or to put through a course of questioning as when one is questioned and examined by a judge in a court of law. It was often used in secular Greek of the interrogation of a prisoner. It was also used of a judicial examination before the final verdict was rendered. Before the Bereans would render a final verdict on Paul's preaching they would carefully sift through what he had said.

**Anakrino** is used in the general sense to describe the process of evaluation (in sense of to judge, to estimate or to determine the excellence or defects of any person or thing) in Acts 17:11, 1Corinthians 2:14, 15, 10:25, 27. The idea here is primarily to distinguish so as to investigate and form an opinion. Such a process is impossible in regard to spiritual things, without the Divinely imparted spiritual faculties.

In a judicial or legal sense **anakrino** means to question in order to pass a judicial sentence (cf Lk 23:14, Acts 4:9, 12:19, 24:8, 28:18, 1Cor 4:3, 4)

**Vincent** has the following note on **anakrino**...

Originally implying a through examination; **ana**, up, from bottom to top. Technically, of a legal examination.

The fundamental idea of **anakrino** is examination, scrutiny, following up (**ana**) a series of objects or particulars in order to distinguish (**krino**). This is its almost universal meaning in classical Greek. At Athens it was used technically in two senses: to examine magistrates with a view to proving their qualifications; and to examine persons concerned in a suit, so as to prepare the matter for trial, as a grand jury. The meaning judged is, at best, inferential, and the Revised Version inserts *examined* in the margin, Bishop Lightfoot says: "*anakrinein* is

neither to judge nor to discern; but to examine, investigate, inquire into, question, as it is rightly translated, 1 Cor. 9:3; 10:25, 27. The apostle condemns all these impatient human *praejudicia* which anticipate the final judgment, reserving his case for the great tribunal, where at length all the evidence will be forthcoming and a satisfactory verdict can be given. Meanwhile the process of gathering evidence has begun; an **anakrisis** investigation is indeed being held, not, however, by these self-appointed magistrates, but by one who alone has the authority to institute the inquiry, and the ability to sift the facts" ("On a Fresh Revision of the New Testament").

**Anakrino** is used 16 times in the NT...

**Luke 23:14** and said to them, "You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, **having examined** Him before you, I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against Him.

**Acts 4:9** if **we are on trial** today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well,

**Acts 12:19** And when Herod had searched for him and had not found him, he **examined** the guards and ordered that they be led away to execution. And he went down from Judea to Caesarea and was spending time there.

**Acts 17:11** Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, **examining** the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.

**Acts 24:8** ordering his accusers to come before you. And by **examining** him yourself concerning all these matters, you will be able to ascertain the things of which we accuse him."

**Acts 28:18** "And when they had **examined** me, they were willing to release me because there was no ground for putting me to death.

**1 Corinthians 2:14** But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually **appraised**. **15** But he who is spiritual **appraises** all things, yet he himself is **appraised** by no man.

**1 Corinthians 4:3** But to me it is a very small thing that I should be **examined** by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even **examine** myself. **4** For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who **examines** me is the Lord.

**1 Corinthians 9:3** My defense to those who **examine** me is this:

**1 Corinthians 10:25** Eat anything that is sold in the meat market, without **asking questions** (e.g., Jews were only allowed to buy meat from Gentiles if it could be established that it was not meat offered to idols) for conscience sake...**27** If one of the unbelievers invites you, and you wish to go, eat anything that is set before you, without **asking questions** (i.e., not raising the question as to whether the meat is the residue from an idolatrous sacrifice) for conscience sake.

**1 Corinthians 14:24** But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is **called to account** by all

In Athens **anakrino** was used of the magistrates, who would examine persons concerned in a suit, so as to prepare the matter for trial. The idea is to scrutinize, investigate, interrogate and thus to examine accurately or carefully.

The opposite picture is 1 Cor 2:14 (1 Co 2:15: he who is spiritual appraises all things) which uses 2 of the same verbs Luke uses to describe the Bereans (**anakrino** and **dechomai**) but in this context to describe the "natural man".

**1 Corinthians 2:14**-note But a natural man does not (ou = absolute negation!) **accept** (*dechomai*) the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness (*moria* from *moros* [denotes deficiency] - considered foolish, intellectually weak, or irrational) to him, and he cannot (*dunamia* - inherent capacity - natural men lack this continually = present tense) understand them, because (explains why they have no ability to understand God's Word) they are spiritually **appraised** (*anakrino*).

In contrast to the natural man these discerning men and women would sift the words of other men up and down, constantly making careful and exacting search as one would in preparing for a lawsuit! The words of Paul were on trial, being actively investigated to see if indeed they lined up with what God's Word in the OT said. Every word was weighed as to its significance. Ultimately the purpose of the **Bereans** examining and questioning was in order to pass a judicial sentence...pure words or straw words (see Jer 23:28,29,32 and "the ancient paths" in Jer 6:16,17). They tested the spirits 1 Jn 4:1-note. How? Drop the plumbline (**plumb bob**) on

every teaching no matter how wonderful it sounds...the heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick. Who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9) We need God's Spirit of Truth (John 14:17, 15:26, 16:13, 1 John 5:7-note cp John 6:63) guiding us into all the Truth. (See [Illumination of the Bible](#)).

**Anakrino** is word used by Pilate to describe his examination of Jesus...

(Pilate) said to them, "You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined Him before you, I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against Him. (Luke 23:14)

**Anakrino** clearly is a very legal term, implying extreme attention to the Truth!

In Scotland people have the Bible open on the preacher as he expounds the passage, a fine habit worth imitating. (anakrino means to sift up and down, make careful and exact research as in legal processes as in Acts 4:9; 12:19 etc.) the Scriptures for themselves.

The more time you spend in [observation](#), the less time you will spend in [interpretation](#), and the more accurate will be your results. The less time you spend in observation, the more time you will spend in interpretation, and the less accurate will be your results. And of course most important of all, the better you will be able to apply the truth of the Scripture which is the critical component of [inductive Bible study](#). Observation and interpretation without [application](#) as enabled by the Holy Spirit (giving you the "desire" and the "power" - see Php 2:12-note, Php 2:13NLT-note) makes one the equivalent a modern day [Pharisee](#).

Charles Haddon Spurgeon - I would rather lay my soul [asoak](#) (soaking) in half a dozen verses [of the Bible] all day than rinse my hand in several chapters.

**Joseph Parker** wrote, "What is the model congregation? A congregation well provided with Bibles... a congregation that has the text before it, and that looks from the sermon to the text; from the text to the sermon; from the text to the context; and that binds the speaking man to keep within the sacred brief which God has given to him." (The Jack Andrews Expository Studies – Understanding Acts)

I like the **ESV Study Bible** note - By commending this activity, Luke encourages this searching of the Scriptures as a pattern for all believers and also gives support to the doctrine of the **clarity of Scripture** (See doctrine of Clarity of the Scripture), the idea that the Bible can be understood rightly, not only by scholars but also by ordinary people who read it eagerly and diligently, with conscious dependence on God for help.

**Dwight Hillis** said "Be our theories of inspiration what they may, this book deals with the deepest things in man's heart and life. Ruskin and Carlyle tell us that they owe more to it, in the way of refinement and culture, than to all the other books, plus all the influence of colleges and universities . . . Read all other books, philosophy, poetry, history, fiction; but if you would refine the judgment, fertilize the reason, wing the imagination, attain unto the finest womanhood or the sturdiest manhood, read this book, reverently and prayerfully, until its truths have dissolved like iron into the blood. . . . **The book Daniel Webster placed under his pillow when dying is the book all should carry in the hand while living.**"

**Zeisler**: Why is it helpful to observe that Paul reasoned from the Scriptures? This is telling us something about the power of the Bible. I have been in settings where the Bible is used to bludgeon, where it is shouted, where its message is intended to descend on people like a heavy weight in order to bring about some kind of change in their behavior, regardless of whether they understood it, believed anything different, or knew any more than they had known before. I have also been in settings that are mostly about an emotional stirring, where language is used in a way that bring tears to everyone's eyes. But once people leave, they can't remember what was said, and nothing has been learned. What Paul was doing in this synagogue reminds us that the Bible's power is ultimately the power to persuade us, to open our minds to understand what we didn't understand before. We become aware of truth in such a way that truth itself changes us. Paul reasoned, talked with people, listened to questions, and answered objections, expecting that the God of the Bible would take the words of the Bible and change people's interior life by them.

**The Scriptures** (1124) (**graphe** from **grapho** = to write; English = graphite - the lead in a pencil!) means first a writing or thing written, a document. The majority of the NT uses refer to the Old Testament writings, in a general sense of the whole collection when the **plural** (Scriptures) is used and other times of a particular passage when the **singular** is used (the Scripture) and is used in such a way that quoting Scripture is understood to be the same as quoting God! The Bereans did not run to their favorite commentary to check out Paul but to God's OT writings.

**Daily** - The implication is that Paul must have expounded the Scriptures daily...he was a man on a mission...souls to save...a Kingdom to be built. Likewise the Bereans were in the Scriptures daily, not weekly. They were not like so many today who take a cursory look at the Book of books and go on their merry way. No, they were serious about the Word of God and set a standard that all of us should seek to emulate. Every church should be filled with Bereans! Is yours?



**Rich Cathers** - The last distinguishing characteristic of the Bereans was that they didn't get into the Word just once a week, but EVERY day! We've often seen the parallel between staying in the Word on a daily basis, and how God fed the Israelites with manna in the wilderness. When the people complained about their lack of food, God gave a frost each morning that would leave a crusty thing the people called manna. Every morning the people had to get up early and collect their days' worth of manna. If they tried to gather more than one days' worth, it would turn to worms. You can't survive off of yesterday's manna. If they got up too late, the manna would have melted and disappeared. Get up early and spend time with God.

**Robertson** - The Bereans were eagerly interested in the new message of Paul and Silas but they wanted to see it for themselves. What a noble attitude. Paul's preaching made Bible students of them. The duty of private interpretation is thus made plain (Hovey).

**Guzik** comments that...

When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews: In Berea, they follow their familiar strategy, and found that their audience was more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica. Two things earned this compliment for the Bereans: first, they received the word with all readiness. Second, they searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

The Bereans were taught by the most famous apostle and theologian of the early church, and the human author of at least 13 New Testament books. Yet, they searched the Scriptures when Paul taught, to see if his teaching was truly Biblical! They would not accept Paul's word at face value, but wanted to know if these things were so. When they heard Paul teach, their settled reaction wasn't "My, he's a fine speaker." It wasn't "I don't like the way he talks." It wasn't "What a funny preacher!" Instead, the Bereans wanted to know, "Are these things . . . so? Is this man teaching us the truth? Let's search the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things are so."

Their research was not casual. They searched the Scriptures. It was worth it to them to work hard at it, and investigate what the Word of God said, and how Paul's teaching matched up with it. They also searched the Scriptures daily to find out. It wasn't a one time, quick look. They made it a point of diligent, extended study. Also, they searched the Scriptures daily to find out. They believed they could understand and find out truth from the Bible. For them, the Bible was not just a pretty book of poetry or mystery or nice spiritual inspiration for thoughts-for-the-day. It was a book of truth, and that truth was there to find out.

But with all their diligent searching and concern for the truth, the Bereans did not become skeptics. They received the word with all readiness. When Paul preached, they had open hearts, but clear heads. Many people have clear heads, but closed hearts, and never receive the word with all readiness. It was both of these things that made the Bereans more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica.

We should be more fair-minded than the Bereans. We should receive the word with all readiness, with open hearts. But we must also have clear heads, and when we hear a preacher, be those who search the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things [are] so. If the great apostle Paul was worthy of this kind of close examination, how much more should teachers and preachers today be carefully compared with the Scriptures!

Therefore many of them believed: Paul had nothing to fear by the diligent searching of the Scriptures by the Bereans. If they were really seeking God and His Word, they would find out that what Paul was preaching was true. This is exactly what happened among the Bereans, and therefore many of them believed. ([Ref](#))

**Billy Graham** was once asked "If you had to live your life over again, what would you do differently?" Graham replied, "One of my great regrets is that I have not studied enough. I wish I had studied more and preached less. People have pressured me into speaking to groups, when I should have been studying and preparing."

George Washington's secretary, Robert Lewis, wrote that it was the President's custom to go to his library at 4:00 in the morning for his devotions. And he concluded each day with Bible reading and prayer.

Pastor at the pulpit: "To respond to the charges: Yes, much of last week's sermon was lifted from Scripture, and no, I don't consider that plagiarism."

**Martin Luther** - I'd like all my books to be destroyed so that only the sacred writings in the Bible would be diligently read.

## THE BEREAN'S AUTHORITY

**John Butler** wrote " The authority for the people of Berea was the Scriptures. If the Scriptures agreed then it was accepted, if the

Scriptures disagreed then it was rejected. The Word of God is the authority in all matters in which it speaks. This makes the Bible our fundamental authority."

#### Related Resources:

- [The Authority of Scripture](#) - Paul Feinberg
- [The Authority of Scripture](#) - The Master's Seminary
- [The Authority of Scripture](#) - Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones
- [What does it mean that the Bible should be our sole authority for faith and practice?](#)

**Whether these things were so** - Literally, "if these things had it thus." The Bereans were eagerly interested in the new message of Paul and Silas but they wanted to see it for themselves. What a noble attitude. Paul's preaching made Bible students of them and not simply hearers who relied on the expositions of a dynamic pastor or erudite Bible teacher. In fact the more eloquent or entertaining the sermon, in some cases the greater the danger that one might be deceived into believing that the sermon was all they needed to be "fed" [unless of course those sermons stimulated and encouraged the sheep to pursue personal study and meditation on God's word].

Another description related to examining the Scriptures is found in **Jesus'** declaration in John...

You (Jews) search (ereunao = attempt to learn something by careful investigation or searching) the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me" (Jn 5:39)

Unfortunately most of the Jews failed to manifest the heart attitude of the Bereans for Jesus went on to say...

and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life. (John 5:40)

Commenting on the phrase you search the Scriptures, **C H Spurgeon** has this to say...

The Greek word here rendered search (ereunao) signifies a strict, close, diligent, curious search, such as men make when they are seeking gold, or hunters when they are in earnest after game.

We must not rest content with having given a superficial reading to a chapter or two, but with the candle of the Spirit we must deliberately seek out the hidden meaning of the word. Holy Scripture requires searching—much of it can only be learned by careful study. There is milk for babes, but also meat for strong men.

The rabbis wisely say that a mountain of matter hangs upon every word, yea, upon every title of Scripture.

Tertullian exclaims, "I adore the fulness of the Scriptures." No man who merely skims the book of God can profit thereby; we must dig and mine until we obtain the hid treasure. The door of the word only opens to the key of diligence. The Scriptures claim searching. They are the writings of God, bearing the divine stamp and imprimatur— who shall dare to treat them with levity? He who despises them despises the God who wrote them. God forbid that any of us should leave our Bibles to become swift witnesses against us in the great day of account. The word of God will repay searching. God does not bid us sift a mountain of chaff with here and there a grain of wheat in it, but the Bible is winnowed corn—we have but to open the granary door and find it. Scripture grows upon the student. It is full of surprises. Under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, to the searching eye it glows with splendour of revelation, like a vast temple paved with wrought gold, and roofed with rubies, emeralds, and all manner of gems. No merchandise like the merchandise of Scripture truth. Lastly, the Scriptures reveal Jesus: "They are they which testify of me." No more powerful motive can be urged upon Bible readers than this: he who finds Jesus finds life, heaven, all things. Happy he who, searching his Bible, discovers his Saviour. (Spurgeon, Morning and Evening, June 9)

**John Stott** - It was inevitable in Jewish evangelism that the Old Testament Scriptures should be both the textbook and the court of appeal. What is impressive is that neither speaker nor hearers used Scripture in a superficial, unintelligent or proof-texting way. On the contrary, Paul "argued" out of the Scriptures and the Bereans "examined" them to see if his arguments were cogent. And we may be sure that Paul welcomed and encouraged these thoughtful responses. He believed in doctrine (his message had theological content), but not in indoctrination (tyrannical instruction demanding uncritical acceptance). As Bengel wrote about verse 11, "a characteristic of the true religion is that it suffers itself to be examined into, and its claims to be so decided upon."

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**John MacArthur - Right Thinking** - It's frightening to realize our culture has more interest in **emotion** and **pragmatism** than in **thinking**. That's evident when people more often ask, "How will it make me **feel**?" instead of "Is it true?" That wrong focus is also evident in today's theology, where the predominant questions are "Will it divide?" and "Will it offend?" rather than "Is it right?" Not enough people are like the people of Berea, whom the Bible describes as being "noble-minded" because they were interested in

finding truth, not good feelings or pleasant circumstances. Too many people are going to church today not to think or reason about the truth, but to get a certain **feeling**. **But living by emotions rather than right thinking will produce instability.** In his book [Your Mind Matters: The Place of the Mind in the Christian Life](#), John Stott explains this point: “Sin has more dangerous effects on our faculty of **feeling** than on our faculty of **thinking**, because our opinions are more easily checked and regulated by revealed truth than our experiences.” ([Truth for Today: A Daily Touch of God's Grace](#))

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### **John MacArthur - God honors spiritual discernment.**

On his second missionary journey Paul, accompanied by Silas, preached the gospel of Jesus Christ in the city of Thessalonica. They weren't there long before the gospel took root and many turned from their idolatry “to serve a true and living God” (1 Thess. 1:9). In 1 Thessalonians 2:13 Paul says, “We also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God.” Their open response to God's Word made them an example to all the believers in that area (1 Thess. 1:7).

But as exemplary as the Thessalonians were, their fellow-believers in Berea were even more so. God called them “noble-minded” (Acts 17:11). They were eager to hear what Paul and Silas had to say but tested it against God's prior revelation in the Old Testament before receiving it as a message from God. They had learned to examine everything carefully and to “hold fast” to the truth (1 Thess. 5:21).

The church today, however, has an appalling lack of that kind of discernment. Many believers are duped by novel teachings and outright heresies. They're “tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine” (Eph. 4:14). We desperately need a new breed of Bereans who will raise high the banner of sound doctrine and never compromise it.

With that goal in mind, our studies this month will focus on the character and benefits of God's Word. You'll learn that it's the source of spiritual growth, spiritual service, blessing, victory, truth, and knowledge. You'll see its infallibility, inerrancy, authority, inspiration, and sufficiency.

I pray that by this month's end, your commitment to learning and applying Biblical truth will be stronger than ever and that you will indeed be a modern-day, noble-minded Berean. ([Drawing Near: Daily Readings for a Deeper Faith](#))

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### **Verify the Truth**

Read: Acts 17:10-13

[The Bereans] searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Acts 17:11

“A deadly jungle spider has migrated to the US and is killing people.” This was the story sent to me and to others on my friend's email list. The story sounded plausible—lots of scientific names and real-life situations. But when I checked it out on reliable websites, I found it was not true—it was an Internet hoax. Its truth could only be verified by consulting a trusted source.

A group of first-century believers living in Macedonia understood the importance of confirming what they were hearing. The folks in Berea “received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11). They were listening to Paul, and wanted to make sure what he was saying lined up with the teachings of the Old Testament. Perhaps he was telling them that there was evidence in the Old Testament that the Messiah would suffer and die for sin. They needed to verify that with the source.

When we hear spiritual ideas that disturb us, we need to be cautious. We can search the Scriptures for ourselves, listen to trustworthy sources, and seek wisdom from Jesus, our Lord. By Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Please give us discernment, Lord, to accept only truth that is rooted in Your Word. We praise You for preserving the inspired Scriptures for us—now help us to use them to seek You.

For help in understanding and applying the Bible, read A Message for All Time at [discoveryseries.org/hp142](http://discoveryseries.org/hp142)

God's truth stands any test.

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Acts 17:11 "MORE NOBLE"

Acts 17:11 These were more noble . . . in that they . . . searched the scriptures daily.

One of the most prevalent causes for spiritual anemia is the neglect of God's Word. How many people day after day never open the Bible to feast upon God's bountiful provisions! Some go to church; they may hear a Gospel broadcast or watch a telecast, and may even hurriedly scan through the stories in this book, but fail to study the Word of God itself! By the way, did you read today's

suggested passage? If not, please do so now. (Should time allow only one or the other, the Scripture or the rest of this devotional,, make the wise choice!)

An unknown author tells the following story: "Some Christian women had gathered in a home for Bible study. The leader, much to her dismay, discovered that she had come away without her Bible. So the hostess hurried to get hers. She looked where she usually kept it, but it wasn't there! She searched for it every-where but still couldn't find it. `What will those ladies think of me?' she thought. Running downstairs, she said to the newly employed cleaning woman, `Pearl, have you seen my Bible?' The maid exclaimed, `Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!' `What do you mean, Pearl?' Beaming with joy, she said, `The first thing I do when I go to work at a new place is hide the Bible.' `But why?' the other asked in astonishment. Pearl replied, `Just to find out how long it takes the people to miss it! I put yours in the linen closet under the sheets! "

Dr. Luke tells us that the Christians in Berea "searched the scriptures daily." For this they were commended and called "more noble." Does that describe you?

Search the Scriptures, thou wilt find Guidance there for heart and mind; Test each doctrine by its light, Stand "more noble" in His sight. —Bosch

The truths of Scripture are like flowers; meditation, like the bee, draws the honey out of them! ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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### **Acts 17:11 STANDARD EQUIPMENT**

These . . . received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily. Acts 17:11

The pony express was a thrilling part of early American history. It ran from St. Joseph, Missouri, to Scranton, California — a distance of 1,900 miles. The trip was made in ten days. Forty men, each riding 50 miles a day, dashed along the trail on 500 of the best horses the West could provide. To conserve weight, clothing was very light, saddles were extremely small and thin, and no weapons were carried. The horses themselves wore small shoes or none at all. The mail pouches were flat and very conservative in size. Letters had to be written on thin paper, and postage was \$5.00 an ounce (a tremendous sum in those days). Yet, each rider carried a full-sized Bible! It was presented to him when he joined the pony express, and he took it with him de-spite all the scrupulous weight precautions. Why? Because the Scriptures were deemed standard equipment! God was important to people in those frontier days, and they recognized the need of daily searching the Word, and giving heed to it with all readiness of mind!

Our life is much like the "pony express." We hurry through it on our way to a distant destination called eternity. God has determined that He will not leave us without compass or guide, so He has provided us with "the standard equipment" of His precious revelation called the Bible. Like the noble Bereans of old, may we receive this important "love-letter" with a readiness of mind that will cause its truths to bear fruit in our lives.

Is the Bible precious to you? Is it standard equipment as you go along the journey of life? Do you search its pages daily? I hope so!

The Bible, the Bible! more precious than gold; Glad hopes and bright glories its pages un f old; It speaks of the Father and tells of His love,

And shows us the way to the Mansions above. —Anon.

One evidence of the value of the Bible is the character of those who oppose it

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Acts 17:11

Give me understanding according to Your word. PSALM 119:169, , 2Ti 2:15

#### **CONTEXT, INDUCTIVE STUDY**

Peter Deison tells about a friend who visited New York City and got lost among the maze of streets. So he took an elevator up to the observation deck of the Empire State Building and looked out over the city. He carefully noted prominent buildings, landmarks, and major streets. Having them firmly fixed in his mind, he said to a friend, "Now I understand where we are and where I want to go." Deison commented, "He went back down to the busy streets and never got lost again. He finally understood where to go because he got an overview of the city"

To get the most out of studying a portion of the Bible, we need the big picture. It's important to know the major divisions of the Bible,

the Old and New Testaments, and how they are related. It helps to know the general themes of the Bible and the specific theme of each book, who wrote the books, to whom they were written, and their time period. It's also helpful to know that there are different types of literature in the Bible such as history, prophecy, and poetry. As you read God's Word the Author Himself will guide you. —R. W. D.

To KEEP FROM GETTING LOST IN BIBLE VERSES, BE WELL-VERSED IN THE WHOLE BIBLE. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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### **Is It True?**

Read: Galatians 1:1-9

They received the Word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. —Acts 17:11

Trust, but verify.” My husband loves that quote from Ronald Reagan. During his time in office, the former US President wanted to believe everything he was told in his political dealings with others. But since the security of his country depended on the truth being told—he strived to verify everything.

Acts 17:11 tells us that the Bereans had a similar attitude about knowing the truth. “They received the Word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” In other words, the Bereans didn’t simply believe what someone else was telling them. They also verified it on their own—on a daily basis.

That’s important for us to consider as well. Whether we receive our Bible teaching through church, Sunday school, radio, or TV—we need to test what we hear against God’s inspired Word (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We are to “be diligent to present [ourselves] approved to God, . . . rightly dividing the Word of truth” (2:15). If we do this, we won’t become prey to those who teach “a different gospel,” and those who “want to pervert the gospel of Christ” (Gal. 1:6-7)—false teachers who come as wolves in sheep’s clothing (Matt. 7:15).

Remember, trust—but verify!

Protection from false teaching comes The more we read God’s Word; For once we know the Scripture’s truth, What’s false will sound absurd. —Sper

Knowing what’s true is the first step in knowing what’s false.

By Cindy Hess Kasper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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### **For Honest Skeptics**

Read: Acts 17:10-15

They . . . searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. —Acts 17:11

A skeptic is one who is inclined to doubt. If such a person is honestly seeking to know the truth, his doubting may be the first step toward finding the truth.

When Paul came to Berea, he found Jews who were more “fair-minded” than those in Thessalonica. They received the word “with all readiness,” but also “searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11). Although they believed in the Old Testament, they had a healthy skepticism about the subject of Paul’s preaching. Yet when they found it to be supported by Scripture, they became strong believers in Christ.

Not all skepticism is wrong. The Bereans were commended for their readiness to listen to Paul and for their diligence to evaluate carefully what he said in the light of Scripture.

An honest skeptic will give the gospel a fair hearing. He will be willing to consider the evidence for the truthfulness and unique authority of the Bible. He will examine and test the claims of all who say they have a message from God (1 Thessalonians 5:21). He will recognize that Christians have a rational basis for their faith and that there are sound reasons for their hope (1 Peter 3:15).

Yes, God welcomes honest skeptics. By Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

If you doubt but want to know God,  
Doubt can help you find His way;

But your doubts will lead to darkness  
If His will you disobey. —D. De Haan

Honest questions can lead to faith-building answers.

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Acts 17:11 (They] searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Acts 17:11

Children sometimes do unusual things to song lyrics. One child sang a verse of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" as follows: "He has trampled on the village where the great giraffe is stored." And my preschooler Melissa likes to sing the familiar spiritual, "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho." Only she sings it, "Joshua fit the battle of Cherry Coke."

Word-twisting stops being funny, though, when adults alter Scripture to make it say what they want it to say. Maybe they take a verse out of its context to prove a pet teaching. Some use Jeremiah 10:2-4 to prove that we should not have Christmas trees. Or it may be reinterpreting Scripture to make it support a belief that is not orthodox. Some alter the wording of John 1, for example, to make it say that Christ is not God. When we study the Bible, we must be careful to get the words right—to let Scripture say what it says. And even more, we must make sure we do not read into it what is not there.—J. D. B.

WE MUST MAKE SURE WE ARE HEARING WHAT GOD HAS SPOKEN.

Acts 17:11

A PASTOR called my father one Saturday night and said, "I have my sermon prepared from a certain text, but I can't find it in the Bible."

"What is the text?" my father asked.

"Give me liberty or give me death," the pastor answered.

Although the idea expressed in the quotation is noble, it is not Scriptural. Those words were spoken by American Revolutionary leader Patrick Henry, not by any biblical character.

Many people, including that pastor, think they know the Bible, but don't. To assess your own biblical knowledge, determine which of the following are biblical quotations.

- Cleanliness is next to godliness.
- God helps those who help themselves.
- An honest confession is good for the soul.
- We are as prone to sin as sparks fly upward.
- Money is the root of all evil.
- Honesty is the best policy.

The answer? While some of these statements contain elements of truth, none of them are found in the Bible!

A thorough knowledge of God's Word comes by diligent study. To grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord, we must "let the word of Christ dwell in [us] richly in all wisdom" (Colossians 3:16). When we search and study Scripture, we find out that clever quotations are no substitute for biblical truth. —P R Van Gorder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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### **Acts 17:1-12 Following The Leader**

By Richard De Haan

They . . . searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. —Acts 17:11

My wife and I were driving to church one Sunday when we came to a red traffic light, so we stopped. There was only one car in front of us. While I waited, my mind began to wander. When the car ahead started to move, I was far away in thought and absentmindedly followed right along without even glancing up at the light. Only after I had driven through the intersection did I realize that I had blindly followed the leader. If the other driver had moved ahead before the light had turned green, my following along might have caused a serious accident.

As I reflected on my carelessness, I thought about people who blindly follow their religious leaders. Many are attracted to speakers who have dynamic personalities, the ability to communicate effectively, and an air of authority. They accept and do everything these preachers say without ever thinking for themselves. In sharp contrast, the Christians in Berea "received the Word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

Blindly following the leader can be dangerous. That's why we must test everything by what the Bible says. Then we will know if the

leader is following the truth. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The best translation of God's Word

That we will ever read

Is found in servants of the Lord

Who live that Word in deed. —DJD

It's good to follow the teacher who follows the Master teacher.

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## A Special Day

Read: Luke 11:1-4

This is the day the Lord has made. —Psalm 118:24

What's special about September 4? Perhaps it's your birthday or anniversary. That would make it special. Or maybe you could celebrate the historic events of this day. For instance, in 1781, the city of Los Angeles, California, was founded. Or this: In 1993, Jim Abbott, a pitcher for the New York Yankees, didn't let anyone get a hit off his pitches—and he was born without a right hand. Or if you're a TV fan: In 1951, the first live US coast-to-coast television broadcast was aired from San Francisco.

But what if none of these events and facts seem to make your September 4 special? Try these ideas:

1. **Today** God gives you a new opportunity to praise Him. Psalm 118:24 says, "This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."
2. **Today** God provides for you and wants your trust. "Give us day by day our daily bread" (Luke 11:3).
3. **Today** God wants to speak to you through His Word. **The believers at Berea "searched the Scriptures daily" (Acts 17:11).**
4. **Today** God desires to renew your inner person. "The inward man is being renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16).

With God as your guide, September 4—and every day—can be special.

This is the day the Lord hath made,

He calls the hours His own;

Let heaven rejoice, let earth be glad,

And praise surround the throne. —Watts

([Link to Watts' hymn for you to sing out in praise and adoration to our King](#)).

Each new day gives us new reasons to praise the Lord.

By Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))  
(Bolding and list enumeration added)

## Acts 17:12 Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men.

- **many** - Acts 17:2-4; 13:46; 14:1; Psalms 25:8,9; John 1:45-49; 7:17; Ephesians 5:14; James 1:21
- **honorable** - Acts 13:50; 1 Corinthians 1:26; James 1:10
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Acts 17:1-3, 10-11 Men Who Turned the World Upside Down, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Acts 17:4-9, 12-15 Men Who Turned the World Upside Down, Part 2](#) - John MacArthur

## THE FRUIT OF EXAMINING THE SCRIPTURES DAILY!

**Therefore many of them - Therefore** is a **term of conclusion**. What the conclusion? Literally "*and not a few*" but many!

**Jack Arnold** - All the Bereans started out as skeptics but they ended up as true believers and followers of Christ. Once they were intellectually convinced, the bowing of their wills to Christ was a rather easy step. One of the problems in modern day evangelism is an appeal to the emotions without proper understanding with the mind. Consequently the mind is passed over, and while some kind of a commitment has been made, it was not based on a persuaded mind. This, of course, sets up a terrible conflict between the

mind unconvinced and the heart not fully committed to truth. This has left many so-called Christian converts in total derision. Many infidels have confessed that they had never carefully read the Bible. Thomas Payne, who wrote *The Age of Reason*, a book that shook Puritan New England for humanism, confessed that he wrote the first part of his book without having a Bible at hand, and without its being possible to procure one where he then was in Paris. He said, "I had neither Bible nor Testament to refer to, though I was writing against both; nor could I procure any." (Ibid)

**Believed** (4100) (**pisteuo** from **pistis**; **pistos**; related studies **the faith**, the **obedience of faith**) means to consider something to be true and therefore worthy of one's trust. To accept as true, genuine, or real. To have a firm conviction as to the goodness, efficacy, or ability of something or someone. To consider to be true. To accept the word or evidence of. **Vincent** writes that **pisteuo** "means to persuade, to cause belief, to induce one to do something by persuading, and so runs into the meaning of to obey, properly as the result of persuasion."

This passage is a beautiful illustration of the principle Jesus declared in John 5...

For if you **believed** Moses, you would **believe** Me; for he wrote of Me. (Jn 5:46)

Believing the OT, many of the Bereans believed the Gospel of Christ, for in fact the Gospel is found in the OT. In Galatians Paul declares...

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "ALL THE NATIONS SHALL BE BLESSED IN YOU." (Gal 3:8)

Regarding the phrase **many of them therefore believed** John MacArthur has an interesting comment - A similar rich harvest was reaped in Berea, where many of the Jews, eager to understand, believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men. The Thessalonians had to be persuaded (Acts 17:2, 3); the Bereans were ready and believed. Their hearts were more open to the truth, as evidenced by their eager searching of the Scriptures. The Thessalonians and Bereans typify two kinds of people encountered in evangelism. The Word of God can persuade the closed and the open; the obstinate and the pliant; because of those who seek the truth, and those who do not. (Acts Commentary)

**Jack Arnold** - This text of Scripture tells us many Greeks were persuaded that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. These Greeks found no salvation in Athena, Zeus, Plato or Aristotle. They found no salvation in the sensuous mystery cults. They were weary of humanism of all types and they turned to Christ for salvation, and they were gloriously liberated. My unsaved friends, there is no salvation in science, philosophy or psychology. There is no salvation in the new morality, free sex, libertinism, existentialism, women's lib or genetic engineering. Salvation is only in Jesus Christ, and only Christ can fill the vacuum in your soul. "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

**Along with a number of prominent Greek women and men** - Here we see the Gospel impacted both Jews and Gentiles. Joseph of Arimathea was another prominent (Jewish) individual impacted by the message of Jesus (Mk 15:43). It is interesting that prominent women in both Thessalonica and Berea received Christ (Acts 17:4, 12).

**Wiersbe** - One of the men who was converted was Sopater, who later assisted Paul (Acts 20:4). He may be the same man (Sospater) who later sent greetings to the Christians in Rome (Rom. 16:21). (Bible Exposition Commentary)

**Prominent** (2158) (**euschemon** from **eu** = good + **scheme** = figure, shape, appearance) means comely (in accord with propriety), prominent (having a quality that thrusts itself into attention, conspicuous in position or importance). Respected - Receiving deferential regard. **Euschemon** can speak of that which is appropriate for display or presentable (1 Cor 12:24). Alternatively, **euschemon** speaks of people considered worthy of public admiration (the sense in most NT uses).

**Cleon Rogers** on **euschemon** - respectable, noble, used of appearance, outward bearing, of correct moral conduct, or of high social class; that is, a special class of citizens who were the most well-thought-of and well-to-do in a town or city

**Friberg** - (1) of good or pleasing external appearance graceful, beautiful, presentable ( 1Co 12:24); (2) of persons of high standing in the community prominent, reputable, honored (Mk 15.43); (3) substantively to. eu;schmon good order, proper behavior (1Co 7.35) (Analytical Greek Lexicon)

**Thayer** - 1. of elegant figure, shapely, graceful, comely, bearing oneself becomingly in speech or behavior (Euripides, Aristophanes, Xenophon, Plato): *the comely parts of the body* that need no covering (1 Cor 12:24 opposed to *less presentable members* 1Cor 12:23), 1 Cor. 12:24 2. in later usage of good standing, honorable, influential, wealthy, respectable (R. V. of honorable estate): Mark 15:43; Acts 13:50; 17:12.

**L-S** - elegant in figure, mien and bearing, graceful 2. in bad sense, with an outside show of goodness, specious, (not used this way in the NT). II. of things, decent, becoming, Id., etc.; with grace and dignity, like a gentleman, III. noble, honourable, in rank, N.T.



**Euschemon** - 5x in 5v - Usage: appropriate(1), presentable(1), prominence(1), prominent(2).

Mark 15:43 Joseph of Arimathea came, a **prominent** member of the Council, who himself was waiting for the kingdom of God; and he gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus.

Acts 13:50 But the Jews incited the devout women of **prominence** and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district.

Acts 17:12 Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of **prominent** Greek women and men.

1 Corinthians 7:35 This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is **appropriate** and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.

1 Corinthians 12:24 whereas our more **presentable** members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked,

**Acts 17:13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there as well, agitating and stirring up the crowds**

- **the Jews** Acts 17:5; Matthew 23:13; 1Thessalonians 2:14-16
- **stirred** Acts 6:12; 14:2; 21:27; 1Kings 21:25; Proverbs 15:18; 28:25; Luke 12:51
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Acts 17:4-9, 12-15 Men Who Turned the World Upside Down, Part 2](#) - John MacArthur

## **REACTION TO THE PREACHED WORD OF GOD!**

**But when** - A term of contrast. The contrast is between the welcome reception of the Gospel by the Berea Jews (et al) and the antagonism of the Jews from Thessalonica who had rejected the Word of God. Satan once again sent his emissaires to agitate and stir up the crowds. The principle is playing out in Paul's ministry and will in your ministry likewise beloved - the principle is "Preach the Word of God and duck!"

**The Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also** - These Jews some 50 miles away got wind of Paul's proclamation of **the word of God**, the Gospel. The Good News traveled fast! The fact that they come after Paul again indicates the depth of their hatred of the Gospel, surely a hatred stirred up by the Evil One himself!

**THOUGHT** - This phrase the **Word of God** is found numerous times in Acts - Acts 4:31, Acts 6:2, 6:7, Acts 8:14, Acts 11:1, Acts 13:5, Acts 13:7, 13:44, 13:46, Acts 17:13, Acts 18:11 and would make an enlightening and edifying study. Set aside some time and go through these passages interrogating with the 5W/H questions.

**Related resource:**

- The Power of God's Word

**Robertson** - (They were) Shaking the crowds like an earthquake (Acts 4:31) and disturbing like a tornado (Acts 17:8). Success at Thessalonica gave the rabbis confidence and courage. The attack was sharp and swift. The Jews from Antioch in Pisidia had likewise pursued Paul to Iconium and Lystra. How long Paul had been in Berea Luke does not say. But a church was established here which gave a good account of itself later and sent a messenger (Acts 20:4) with their part of the collection to Jerusalem. This quiet and noble town was in a whirl of excitement over the attacks of the Jewish emissaries from Thessalonica who probably made the same charge of treason against Paul and Silas. ([Acts 17 - Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament](#))

**Jack Arnold** - The Jewish legalists hounded Paul wherever he went because they hated his doctrine of Messiah and free grace in salvation and sanctification. These hounds of hell came to Berea, 50 miles from Thessalonica, to stir trouble for Paul. These Jews despised Paul and were after him because he was the leader. Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea. Paul left Berea but not before the foundation for a local church was established. We hear nothing of Berea after this event in the New Testament. Paul may have written a letter to them but it has not been preserved. Why? Perhaps this was such a spiritually healthy church there was no need to write them a letter. We do know this that in Berea today, after 2000 years of corruption, the church Paul planted has now become the persecutor of true Bible-believing Christians. The Greek Orthodox Church, dead in apostasy, is forcing evangelical Christians to almost an underground status. (Ibid)

**Agitating** (4531) (**saleuo** from **salos** = wave) means to cause to move to and fro, cause to waver or totter, make to rock. To shake or agitate as by winds or storms. It refers to unexpected and disastrous shaking, of what would be thought to be stable, e.g. earth or sky shake. In Acts 4:31 the prayer meeting was literally shaken by the power of God! In Acts 16, **saleuo** is used literally of an earthquake (Acts 16:26). **Saleuo** described a ship at anchor slipping its mooring in the midst of a heavy wind. In an ancient letter we read "you sent me letters which would have shaken (**saleuo**) a stone, so much did your words move me". Figuratively, as in Acts 17:13, **saleuo** means stirring up a crowd which is incited or agitated. In another figurative use **saleuo** describes an agitated state of mind (great anxiety) as if the source of agitation "dislodges" or drives the mind away from more sober senses (2Th 2:2). Their confidence is shaken!

In the **Septuagint (Lxx)** translation of the Psalms **saleuo** is used frequently to describe not being shaken (Ps 10:6, 15:5, 16:8, 17:5 [slipped translated with **saleuo**], Ps 21:7, 30:6, 46:5, 62:2, 93:1, 94:18, 112:6, 125:1) - Suggestion: Study these uses of **saleuo** in Psalms and observe what keeps one from being shaken (mentally speaking). Interesting!

**Friberg** (summary) **Saleuo** - (1) literally, as the unexpected and disastrous shaking of what would be thought to be stable, e.g. earth or sky shake, cause to move to and fro, cause to waver or totter, make to rock (Acts 16.26); (2) figuratively; (a) of stirring up a crowd incite, move, agitate (Acts 17.13); (b) mentally, of an individual agitate; passive be distressed, be upset, be shaken (2Thes 2.2)

**Saleuo** - 15x in 12 verses. **NASB** Usage: agitating(1), shake(1), shaken(11), shaken together(1), shook(1).

Matthew 11:7 As these men were going away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed **shaken** by the wind?"

Matthew 24:29 "But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be **shaken**."

Mark 13:25 AND THE STARS WILL BE FALLING from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be **shaken**."

Luke 6:38 "Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure-- pressed down, **shaken** together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return."

48 he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not **shake** it, because it had been well built.

Luke 7:24 When the messengers of John had left, He began to speak to the crowds about John, "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed **shaken** by the wind?"

Luke 21:26 men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be **shaken**."

**Comment:** The Cosmic shaking brings about men shaking for fear of imminent judgment. It's as if the Cosmos, the Creation, signals the Creator's just judgment.

Acts 2:25 "For David says of Him, 'I SAW THE LORD ALWAYS IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE **SHAKEN**."

Acts 4:31 And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was **shaken**, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

Acts 16:26 and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were **shaken**; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened.

Acts 17:13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there as well, **agitating** and stirring up the crowds.

2 Thessalonians 2:2 that you not be quickly **shaken** from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

Hebrews 12:26 And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "YET ONCE MORE I WILL **SHAKE** NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN." 27 This expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be **shaken**, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be **shaken** may remain.

**Saleuo** - 59v in the non-apocryphal Septuagint -

Jdg 5:5; 2Sa 22:37; 2 Kgs 17:20; 21:8; 1 Chr 16:30; 2Chr 33:8; Job 9:6; 41:23; Ps 10:6; 13:4; 15:5; 16:8; 17:5; 18:7; 21:7; 30:6; 33:8; 36:11; 38:16; 46:5f; 48:5; 60:2; 62:2; 73:2; 77:18; 82:5; 93:1; 94:18; 96:9ff; 97:4; 98:7; 99:1; 107:27; 109:10, 25; 112:6; 114:7; 125:1; Prov 3:26; Eccl 12:3; Isa 7:2; 40:20; Jer 23:9; 51:7; Lam 4:14f; Dan 4:14; Amos 8:12; 9:5; Mic 1:4; Nah 1:5; 3:12; Hab 3:6; Zech 12:2;

Jdg 5:5 "The mountains **quaked** at the presence of the LORD, This Sinai, at the presence of the LORD, the God of Israel.

Job 9:6 Who shakes the earth out of its place, And its pillars **tremble** (Lxx = saleuo);

Proverbs 96:9 Worship the LORD in holy attire; **Tremble** before Him, all the earth.

Ps 99:1 The LORD reigns, let the peoples tremble; He is enthroned above the cherubim, let the earth **shake!**

**And stirring up the crowds** - This is the same devilish deed they had accomplished in Thessalonica, where the identical verb **tarasso** is used for stirring up (Acts 17:8+). **Stirring up** is **present tense** indicating this was their continuous activity! They were driven by jealousy, zeal and hatred, which clearly can be very strong motivating emotions.

**Acts 17:14 Then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there.**

- **then** Acts 17:10; 9:25,30; Matthew 10:23
- **as it** Acts 20:3; Joshua 2:16
- **but** Acts 19:22; 1Timothy 1:3; Titus 1:5
- See [Map](#) Paul's 2nd Missionary Journey (Begins in Acts 15:35)
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Acts 17:4-9, 12-15 Men Who Turned the World Upside Down, Part 2](#) - John MacArthur

## **GOSPEL SEED PLANTED AND A GREAT ESCAPE**

**Then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea** - Paul was quickly hustled out of Berea by the believing **brethren** just as he had been at Thessalonica (Acts 17:10+). So once again we see Paul was forced to leave a fruitful field of ministry, but we must remember that the **sovereign** God was in control and clearly wanted Paul to spread the message to other cities.

**THOUGHT** - Paul had successfully planted the Gospel seed in every city he had visited and that was what was important because as we learn in Acts Luke says "the **word of the Lord** continued to grow and to be multiplied" (Acts 12:24+) and "the **word of the Lord** was growing mightily and prevailing." (Acts 19:20+). One is reminded of Paul's testimony "I planted, Apollos watered, but **God was causing the growth**. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth." (1 Cor 3:6-7). So what is the take home message for all of us? Sow the Seed (Lk 8:11+, cf Ps 126:6, Eccl 11:6), proclaim the Word of God (2 Ti 4:2+), the Gospel, wherever God has placed you as His "preacher" and "missionary" (workplace, school, athletic team, etc) and leave the supernatural work to God Who has given us the steadfast, sure promise in Isaiah 55:11

So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.

**Immediately** (2112) see preceding note on [euteos](#)

**John MacArthur** - Unlike the situation in Thessalonica, **Silas and Timothy** were able to remain behind to carry on the work in Berea.

**Silas and Timothy remained there** - Paul again is forced to leave a place of rich ministry and break away from people he had come to love. It appears that Silas and Timothy later joined Paul in Athens, but that because of his concern for following up the Thessalonians, he is compelled to send Timothy to strengthen and encourage them in their faith (1Th 3:1, 2+). Silas apparently was also sent on a special mission somewhere in Macedonia because later both men return to Paul after he has moved on to Corinth (Acts 18:1-5+). It was upon this return that Timothy brought good news of the Thessalonians faith and love (1Th 3:6+) and this occasion prompted Paul to write the letter (most think it was his first letter) to the Thessalonians to encourage them (especially 1 Th 1-3) and to instruct and exhort them (especially 1 Th 4-5).

**David Guzik** - The same had happened at Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:45, 50), at Iconium (Acts 14:2, 5), at Lystra (Acts 14:19) and at Thessalonica (Acts 17:5-8) This was the fifth city Paul was run out of by an angry mob, stirred up by envious Jewish leaders. (Enduring Word Bible Commentary – Acts)

**Acts 17:15** Now those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they left.

- **Athens** Acts 18:1; 1Th 3:1
- **receiving** Acts 18:5; 2Ti 4:10,11,20,21; Titus 3:12
- See [Map](#) Paul's 2nd Missionary Journey (Begins in Acts 15:35)
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Acts 17:4-9, 12-15 Men Who Turned the World Upside Down, Part 2](#) - John MacArthur



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## APOLOGETICS IN ATHENS

**Now those who escorted (*kathistemi*) Paul brought him as far as Athens** - Whether by land or sea is unknown for Luke does not specify how Paul traversed the distance of about 222 miles to Athens. Believing brethren accompanied him. Who would not have relished one on one time with the great apostle. It is very unlikely they discussed the weather! One can only imagine how much he taught them.

**Receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible** - As discussed in Acts 17:14 notation, it appears that they did come to him but that he soon decided to send them on special follow-up missions, especially Timothy (1 Th 3:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6-note). Silas was instructed by Paul to leave Athens and then meet him at Corinth (cf. Acts 18:1-5).

**Command** (order)(1785)(*entole* from *en* = in, upon + *téllo* = accomplish, charge, command) refers to some type of demand or requirement.

**ESV Study Bible** note - Luke does not at this point give many details about the travels of Silas and Timothy, but Paul gives more information in 1 Thessalonians 3, and Luke gives more details at Acts 18:1, 5. These passages reveal the following sequence:

- (1) Paul traveled to Athens, leaving Silas and Timothy in Berea (Acts 17:14-15).
- (2) Paul summoned Silas and Timothy to join him in Athens (Acts 17:15).
- (3) Silas and Timothy joined Paul in Athens (Acts 17:16; 1 Th 3:1-2).
- (4) Paul became concerned for the churches he had just founded in Macedonia (in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea), so he sent Timothy to Thessalonica to find out how that church was doing amid its persecution and opposition (1 Th 3:1-2). At the same time he must have sent Silas somewhere else in Macedonia (Acts 18:5), being willing to be left at Athens “alone” (1 Th 3:1). It is likely that Silas went at least to Philippi but possibly also to Berea.
- (5) Paul “left Athens and went to Corinth” (Acts 18:1).

(6) Silas and Timothy joined Paul again in Corinth, bringing good news from the churches of Macedonia (Acts 18:5; 1 Th 3:6). (7) From Corinth, Paul wrote his two letters to the church at Thessalonica (1 Th 1:1; 2 Th 1:1; both of these letters come from "Paul, Silvanus [= Silas], and Timothy"). (ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version)

**Ray Pritchard** on modern **America** and ancient **Athens** - In his book, [Therefore Stand](#) (written in 1945), Wilbur Smith has a chapter on Paul's speech to the Areopagus (Acts 17:16-34). Along the way he comments on the similarity between ancient Athens and modern America. For all the obvious differences in culture and language, there is a similar approach to the problems of life. Professor Smith brings forth three evidences of that similarity that seem even more true a half-century later. He notes that the men of Athens worshiped the human intellect. They also loved newness and the endless discussion of new ideas. Finally, they valued tolerance and diversity as seen by their ever-expanding pantheon of gods. The same is true today. We too worship the human mind, love new ideas, and exalt tolerance as our highest virtue. What does such a worldview produce? When you worship intellect, you get educated arrogance. When you love newness, you get restless dissatisfaction. When you exalt tolerance, you get endless uncertainty—always seeking for the truth you can never seem to find. The more you travel around the world, the more common humanity seems to be. Athens knew everything that was knowable except the most important thing. She did not know God. Or what to do about her sins or where to find peace or how to discover the hope of heaven. That leads me to the following crucial point: It is possible to be highly educated and deeply religious and still be totally ignorant about God. Is that not an apt description of our own generation? To quote another writer, we have become a nation of "**intellectual giants and moral pygmies.**" We know more and more about the details and less and less about the meaning of life. [Acts 17:26-28 Empty on the Inside: How God Reveals Himself to Us](#))

**Acts 17:16 Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols.**

- **his spirit.** - Exodus 32:19,20; Numbers 25:6-11; 1 Ki 19:10,14; Job 32:2,3,18-20; Psalms 69:9; Psalms 119:136,158; Jeremiah 20:9; Micah 3:8; Mark 3:5; John 2:13; 2 Peter 2:7
- **William Ramsay** - [Athens and Corinth from St Paul: the Traveler and Roman Citizen](#)
- [Acts 17:4-9, 12-15 Men Who Turned the World Upside Down, Part 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Acts 17:16-34 God's Man Confronts Satan's City](#) - John MacArthur
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Athens City Plan  
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## WAITING AND WATCHING IN ATHENS

**Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens** - Paul was waiting for Silas and Timothy. Paul was waiting which is significant because it is a mark of one's character. While Paul waited, he watched. He did not waste his time, but reasoned in the synagogue and the agora daily as he waited for his co-workers.

**At Athens** - In the map above, Paul the "**Acropolis**" was the elevated hill centrally located and the site of the most famous pagan temple, the **Parthenon** ([pix of modern ruins](#); [another pix reconstructed](#)) which housed the most significant mythological figure, the goddess Athena ([recreation of this huge ivory and gold plated statue](#))

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**Athens** ([Classic Athens-Wikipedia](#)) - [On this map](#) note that the city of Athens was not on the coast but was about 5-7 miles inland from the port of **Piraeus** on the **Saronic Gulf** of the Aegean Sea. In ancient times, the Athenians fortified Piraeus and enclosed the road from this port to their city with two massive walls 50 feet high as depicted in the diagram above. Paul would have walked from the sea port of Piraeus through the western **Dipylon Gate** and continued straight to the marketplace or **agora**. The city state of Athens had reached its zenith as one of the leading cities of the world in 480-404 BC under the leadership of **Pericles** (lived 495-429 BC) from about 461 to 429 BC. For a historical context, during the [time of Athen's golden age](#) the events recorded in the Book of Nehemiah were occurring (445-420 BC). In addition the post-exilic prophets ministered and wrote their prophecies during this time of Athen's zenith - Haggai (about 520 BC), Zechariah (about 520 -518 BC), Malachi (about 450-400 BC).

But almost 500 years later, by the time of the events of the book of Acts, Athens was in a period of decline (especially politically),

although it was still recognized as a center of culture and education. While the glory of politics and commerce of Athens had faded, the city still maintained a famous university and numerous beautiful buildings, but it lacked the influence it once enjoyed. Athens was a city populated by "cultured pagans" who fed off of the worship of idols, novel ideas and philosophy. And on to this scene steps the great apostle Paul, one great man filled with the Spirit against one great city ruled by demonic spirits. Who do you think will win this spiritual battle?

#### Pictures of Athens:

- [City map](#)
- [Painting of Acropolis](#)

**John MacArthur** writes that "some historians said that Athens, at the time of Paul, was the intellectual center and the university of the world. The minds of that part of the world congregated in Athens. In fact, it was such a – it was such a proud city that it even called its university the Eye of Greece and the Mother of Arts. And Athens offered a home, incidentally, to almost every god in existence. In a place called the Pantheon, they had a god for everything. They had ever god there. And every public building in Athens was a shrine to a god. ([God's Man Confronts Satan's City](#))

**MacArthur** adds that "its zenith, Athens was home to the most renowned philosophers in history, including [Socrates](#), [Plato](#), and [Aristotle](#), who was arguably the most influential philosopher of all. Two other significant philosophers taught there: [Epicurus](#), founder of [Epicureanism](#), and [Zeno](#), founder of [Stoicism](#)—two of the dominant philosophies in that day. (The MacArthur Study Bible)

**F F Bruce** - "Although Athens had long since lost the political eminence which was hers in an earlier day, she continued to represent the highest level of culture attained in classical antiquity."

**Ray Stedman** - This section is a powerful revelation of why the gospel needs to be presented to every culture and every age of the world. While Paul was waiting at Athens, he did what any tourist does in Athens: He went sightseeing. If you have been in Athens, you know what a striking city this is. There are the great temples of the Acropolis, crowned by the [Parthenon](#) -- now in a ruined state but nevertheless still one of the most beautiful buildings in all the world. There are many other theaters, temples, and marketplaces of ancient Athens which can still be seen...One of the ancient writers tells us that at this time there were 30,000 gods in Athens! Many of these statues have survived and you will find copies of them everywhere as samples of ancient art. Paul recognized that these were not merely objects of art, but were actually gods being worshipped by the people of Athens. [Petronius](#), one of the ancient historians, said that it was easier to find a god in Athens than a man! With 30,000 of them, you can see why this would be true. ([Athens versus Paul](#))

Pausanias said, "The Athenians greatly surpassed others in their zeal for religion."

**Jack Arnold** gives us some context - Suppose God called you, as a Christian, to present a case for Christianity before the philosophy professors at Harvard and Yale Universities. How would you react? Would you shy away, concluding that you had nothing to offer these intellectuals? Would you think that these brilliant brains would want nothing to do with Christianity, for they almost to the person deny the supernatural? Would you shake with fear believing that these men or women with massive IQ's might laugh at you as a babbling idiot? It would be a somewhat frightening experience to sit across from these Harvard and Yale professors who are existentialists, atheistic evolutionists, materialists, determinists and relativists committed to the new morality. Yet, this is exactly what Paul faced in his day at Athens. Athens was the university seat of the world. This city had fostered great philosophers such as Pericles, Oemosthenes, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Sophocles and Euripides. These famous humanistic philosophers taught patterns of human thought which affected philosophers in Paul's day and still affect philosophers today. In fact, almost all modern day philosophies follow, in some degree, the teachings of these ancient philosophers. Humanistic philosophy has not changed much in three thousand years. Philosophers come and go, and philosophies change their names, labels and terms, but the philosophies of Paul's day are essentially the same humanistic philosophies of our day. What Paul told these first century philosophers is the same thing we must tell the twentieth century philosophers. ([Paul and the Philosophers Acts 17:16-34](#))

**Waiting** (1551) (**ekdechomai** from **e k** = from + **dechomai** = receive kindly, accept deliberately and readily) (see related verb **prosdechomai**) means literally to receive or accept from some source. The preposition **ek** in this compound may have a perfective idea indicating that one is ready and prepared to deal with the situation when it arrives. It means to remain in a place or state and await an event or the arrival of someone. The idea is to look or tarry for, to watch for, expect, be about to receive from any quarter. In regard to of future events it means to wait for them expecting them to happen.

**Robertson** - We know that Timothy did come to Paul in Athens (1 Th 3:1+, 1 Th 3:6+) from Thessalonica and was sent back to them from Athens. If Silas also came to Athens, he was also sent away, possibly to Philippi, for that church was deeply interested in Paul. At any rate both **Timothy and Silas** came from Macedonia to Corinth with messages and relief for Paul (Acts 18:5; 2 Cor

11:8.). Before they came and after they left, Paul felt lonely in Athens (1 Th 3:1+), the first time on this tour or **the first that he has been completely without fellow workers**. Athens had been captured by Sulla b.c. 86. After various changes Achaia, of which Corinth is the capital, is a separate province from Macedonia and a.d. 44 was restored by Claudius to the Senate with the Proconsul at Corinth. Paul is probably here about a.d. 50. Politically Athens is no longer of importance when Paul comes though it is still the university seat of the world with all its rich environment and traditions....In its **Agora** Socrates had taught, here was the Academy of Plato, the Lyceum of Aristotle, the Porch of Zeno, the Garden of Epicurus. **Here men still talked about philosophy, poetry, politics, religion, anything and everything. It was the art centre of the world. The Parthenon (picture of modern remains)**, the most beautiful of temples, crowned the **Acropolis (picture of Acropolis)**. ([Acts 17 - Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament](#))

#### Related Resources on Athens:

- Wikipedia article on [classic Athens](#)
- American Tract Society [Athens](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Athens](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Athens](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Athens](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Athens](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Athens](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Athens](#)
- Morrish Bible Dictionary [Athens](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary [Athens](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Athens](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Athens](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Athens](#)

**Corynbear** in his book [Life and Epistles of St Paul](#) wrote that "The Greek religion was a mere deification of human attributes and the powers of nature. It was a religion which ministered to art and amusement, and was entirely destitute of moral power. Greek mythology dealt with so called gods and goddesses that were whimsical and acted more like human beings than divinity. One person has quipped that in Athens it was easier to find a god than a man and Paul was pricked in his heart over this plethora of vain dead, lifeless idols. How interesting that in our day we admire Greek sculpture and architecture as works of art, but in Paul's day, these works were associated with their idolatrous religion." ([Life and Epistles of St Paul](#) - The preceding excerpt is from Chapter 10 which has discussions of each of the following subjects - ARRIVAL ON THE COAST OF ATTICA.—SCENERY ROUND ATHENS.—THE PIRÆUS AND THE "LONG WALLS."—THE AGORA.—THE ACROPOLIS.—THE "PAINTED PORCH" AND THE "GARDEN."—THE APOSTLE ALONE IN ATHENS.—GREEK RELIGION.—THE UNKNOWN GOD.—GREEK PHILOSOPHY.—THE STOICS AND EPICUREANS.—LATER PERIOD OF THE SCHOOLS. ST. PAUL IN THE AGORA.—THE AREOPAGUS.—SPEECH OF ST. PAUL.—DEPARTURE FROM ATHENS - [Reviews of this classic book](#))

Paul knew that idolatry was demonic (1Co 10:14-23) and that the many gods of the Greeks were only characters in stories who were unable to transform men's lives and morality (1Co 8:1-6). With all of their culture and wisdom, the Greeks did not know the true God (1Co 1:18-25). In fact Athens was devoted not only to idolatry but to philosophy. When you think of Greece, you automatically think of Socrates and Aristotle and a host of other thinkers whose works are still read and studied today. Newspaper columnist Franklin P. Adams once defined philosophy as "unintelligible answers to insoluble problems." The Greeks would not have agreed with him. They would have followed Aristotle who called philosophy "the science which considers truth." Philosophy (literally love of wisdom) may have considered the "truth" but it was only truth as seen from fallen man's perspective. Men's "truth" will take you straight to hell forever. Only God's truth has the power to transport you to heaven!

Evil upset Paul. He knew that men if did not worship THE God, they would make A god of their own vain imagination. And in Athens there was a plethora of worthless idols to seduce and ensnare men away from THE God and His gift of eternal life by grace through faith in Christ. Most of humanity sees the same thing Paul saw but like the Athenians remains unprovoked. How many visit the remains of idolatrous temples to take pictures of demonically inspired statues and works of "art" and are blind to the evil forces behind these images. Paul saw the peril that idolatry wrought in a man's soul. He knew that one can get so accustomed or acclimated to evil that evil no longer upsets them. Is this not what has happened in America? Idolatrous (godless) ideas have subtly infiltrated our culture to the point that even those who say they are "Christian" are not fazed by the evil nor are their spirits even slightly provoked! Paul was a holy man and exposure to the slightest degree of unholiness resulted in major provocation. O that more of those who call themselves "Christians" in America would walk in holiness, so that they might be provoked by unholiness and moved to pray for revival and the proclamation of the Gospel from pulpits throughout the land which are now too often filled with orations of pious platitudes, sermonettes for Christianettes, prosperity teaching, etc. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

While Paul was waiting for his co-laborers, this did not keep him from doing a little "spiritual" sight seeing which brought him considerable inner turmoil as he saw the plethora of pagan images in the guise of magnificent architecture and beautiful statues. It is like the old saying idolatrous images were "everywhere, everywhere!"

## RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION

**His spirit was being provoked within him - Was being provoked** is in the **imperfect tense** which pictures this provocation as occurring over and over again. Every time he saw one of the lifeless abominable idols, he was provoked anew. It was as if a storm was brewing in Paul's inner being! The **spirit** here is not the Holy Spirit (although doubtless the Holy Spirit was "provoked" by the evil images). See Ro 8:16 for our spirit and Holy Spirit.

**Ray Stedman** rightly observes that "Each idol revealed that these men and women of Athens had a great capacity for God. They knew there was something beyond man, and they were seeking for it. But each idol also revealed a twisting, a distorting, of that capacity, a sabotaging of it. So, as the apostle went around the city, his spirit was greatly troubled to see men and women blasted by this prostitution of their human powers through the worship of false gods." What Paul felt was very much akin to what must have moved a group of Christian students recently when they ran an ad in the *Stanford Daily*. I have quoted parts of this before, but I would like to read one paragraph again because it seems to me to capture the exact sense of what gripped the apostle's heart in Athens:

*Why are we Christians willing to follow Jesus into suffering in order to accomplish His mission of liberation? Because Jesus has changed our minds about a lot of things, and we can no longer tolerate the foolishness and futility that is passed out as wisdom at this university. We are tired of the "enlightenment" of this age which is blindly ignorant of its intellectual slavery to materialism and its contradictory obligation to ethical relativism. We are tired of seeing people's lives wasted and unfulfilled because of their submission to the established world order.*

That expresses exactly what the apostle felt as he moved about the city, and saw the cloud of idolatry that hung over this city, blotting out the truth and light, and plunging these people into the darkness of superstition. So he began to preach. He could not help it. He knew that the only message that could help people in this state was the delivering word of Jesus. ([Athens versus Paul](#))

**John Gill** wrote that Paul's "soul was troubled and his heart was grieved...he was exasperated and provoked to the last degree: he was in a paroxysm; his heart was hot within him; he had a burning fire in his bones, and was weary with forbearing (cf Jer 20:9), and could not stay; his zeal wanted vent, and he gave it."

**Being provoked** ([3947](#)) (**paroxuno** from **pará** = at point of, implying movement toward a certain point + **oxúno** = sharpen, incite, irritate) literally means to sharpen but both NT uses are figurative. Figuratively **paroxuno** means to be stimulated, excited or aroused. "To cause a state of inward arousal, urge on, stimulate, esp. provoke to wrath, irritate" (BDAG) **Paroxuno** gives us our English word **paroxysm**, which describes a convulsion or sudden outburst of emotion or action. The only other NT use of **paroxuno** is in 1 Cor 13:5+ where Paul writes that **love** is not continually **provoked**. In the current context Paul's holy hatred of the countless abominable idols stirred him deeply. Holy hatred is provoked by evil! Are you ever provoked by the evil that is beginning to dominate the airways, the blogs, the movies, the politics, etc? Movies that used to be just R-rated (which was bad enough) but now have advanced to MA-rated because of the plethora of sex and cursing! At least they are still rating them!

**THOUGHT** - America may not have statues of mythological gods but idols are rampant throughout the land (money, sex, power, prestige, etc) and are in effect being worshiped in place of God. Augustine was right that God has created man in such a way that his (her) spirit abhors a spiritual vacuum and if it is not filled by the only thing that truly satisfies (God/Jesus/Spirit), it will be filled with all manner of spiritual counterfeits, none of which will bring temporal contentment and all of which will bring eternal discontent!

**Jack Arnold** asks "Christian, does your spirit have righteous indignation and compassion for people all around you who have made their own idols in their minds--money, power, prestige, pleasure or whatever? Are you disturbed as you see unsaved men sold out to materialism and godlessness? Are you angered when men laugh and mock Christ and the Bible? You should be for each Christian must hold forth the true God to this Christ-rejecting world. It is interesting to note that in this city of philosophy there was the most rampant idolatry. Humanistic philosophy always causes men to set up their own idols and these idols ultimately bring despair to the human soul. This shows the vanity of learning apart from God." ([Sermon](#))

**John MacArthur** writes that "Nineteenth-century missionary [Henry Martyn](#) expressed what Paul must have felt. He wrote concerning a discussion he had with a Muslim:



Mirza Seid Ali told me of a distich (couplet) made by his friend in honour of a victory over the Russians. The sentiment was that Prince Abbas Mirza had killed so many Christians that Christ from the fourth heaven took hold of Mahomet's [Muhammad's] skirt to entreat him to desist. I was cut to the soul at this blasphemy. Mirza Seid Ali perceived that I was considerably disordered and asked what it was that was so offensive? I told him that "I could not endure existence if Jesus was not glorified; it would be hell to me, if He were to be always thus dishonoured." He was astonished and again asked "Why?" "If any one pluck out your eyes," I replied, "there is no saying *why* you feel pain;—it is feeling. It is because I am one with Christ that I am thus dreadfully wounded." (Constance E. Padwick, Henry Martyn [Chicago: Moody, 1980], 225-26. Italics in the original.) (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

**Observing** (2334) (**theoreo** from **theoros** = spectator = looks at things with careful observation of details) means to observe with sustained attention (as would a spectator). The present tense pictures this as Paul's continual action (for apparently he was continually confronted with idols!).

**Wiersbe** comments that "Paul arrived in the great city of Athens, not as a sightseer, but as a soul-winner. The late Noel O. Lyons, for many years director of the Greater Europe Mission, used to say, "Europe is looked over by millions of visitors and is overlooked by millions of Christians." Europe needs the Gospel today just as it did in Paul's day, and we dare not miss our opportunities. Like Paul, we must have open eyes and broken hearts.....As for novelty, it was the chief pursuit of both the citizens and the visitors (Acts 17:21). Their leisure time was spent telling or hearing "some new thing." Eric Hoffer wrote that "the fear of becoming a has been keeps some people from becoming anything." The person who chases the new and ignores the old soon discovers that he has no deep roots to nourish his life. He also discovers that nothing is really new; it's just that our memories are poor."

**Solomon** tragically understood the vanity and abysmal emptiness of the novel and wrote...

All things are wearisome; Man is not able to tell it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, Nor is the ear filled with hearing. That which has been is that which will be, And that which has been done is that which will be done. So, there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which one might say, "See this, it is new"? Already it has existed for ages Which were before us. There is no remembrance of earlier things; And also of the later things which will occur, There will be for them no remembrance Among those who will come later still. I, the Preacher, have been king over Israel in Jerusalem. (Eccl 1:8, 9, 10, 11, 12).

Perhaps Paul was standing in the [Stoa Poikile](#) and saw the various temples housing the imperial cult as well as other temples and altars

The [Stoa](#) was the location from which [Zeno of Citium](#) taught [Stoicism](#). The philosophical school of Stoicism takes its name from having first been expounded here, and was derived from the Greek word *stoa*. Zeno taught and lectured to his followers from this porch.

**Full of idols** (2712) (**kateidolos** from **kata** = intensifies or may mean "thick with," "luxuriant with" as used of vegetation + **eidolon** = idol) means full of idols, swamped by idols.

**Vincent** - The word, which occurs only here in the New Testament, and nowhere in classical Greek, means **full of idols**. It applies to the city, not to the inhabitants. "We learn from Pliny that at the time of Nero, Athens contained over three thousand public statues, besides a countless number of lesser images within the walls of private houses. Of this number the great majority were statues of gods, demi-gods, or heroes. In one street there stood before every house a square pillar carrying upon it a bust of the god Hermes. Another street, named the Street of the Tripods, was lined with tripods, dedicated by winners in the Greek national games, and carrying each one an inscription to a deity. Every gateway and porch carried its protecting god. Every street, every square, nay, every purlieu, had its sanctuaries, and a Roman poet bitterly remarked that it was easier in Athens to find gods than men" (G. S. Davies, "St. Paul in Greece").

**Zodhiates kateidolos** "is a peculiar word describing the **deisidaimones** (1174 - piety that leads to fear instead of worship), superstitious, those wholly given up to the worship of false gods (Acts 17:22)."

**Barclay** - It was said that there were more statues of the gods in Athens than in all the rest of Greece put together!

What an incredible irony that the intellectual capital of the world was also filled with dumb idols about which the psalmist declared (read especially verse 8)...

Their idols are silver and gold, The work of man's hands. 5 They have mouths, but they cannot speak; They have eyes, but they cannot see; 6 They have ears, but they cannot hear; They have noses, but they cannot smell; 7 They have hands, but they cannot feel; They have feet, but they cannot walk; They cannot make a sound with their throat. 8 **Those who make them will become like them, Everyone who trusts in them.**(Ps

**Robertson** - Paul, like any stranger was looking at the sights as he walked around. This adjective kateidōlon (perfective use of eidolon (idol)...These statues were beautiful, but Paul was not deceived by the mere art for art's sake. The idolatry and sensualism of it all glared at him (Romans 1:18-32). [Ernest Renan](#) ridicules Paul's ignorance in taking these statues for idols, but Paul knew paganism better than Renan. The superstition of this centre of Greek culture was depressing to Paul. One has only to recall how superstitious cults today flourish in the atmosphere of Boston and Los Angeles to understand conditions in Athens. Pausanias says that Athens had more images than all the rest of Greece put together. Pliny states that in the time of Nero Athens had over 30,000 public statues besides countless private ones in the homes. Petronius sneers that it was easier to find a god than a man in Athens. Every gateway or porch had its protecting god. They lined the street from the Piraeus and caught the eye at every place of prominence on wall or in the agora. ([Acts 17 - Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament](#))

**Disciples Study Bible** - People in biblical times had many ideas about gods. There was no shortage of belief in gods in that time. The problem was to help people see that there is truly only one God. In modern times, our problem may be just the opposite: helping people who live without any idea of God come to believe in the one true God. The point is exactly the same: there is one true God.

**Ray Pritchard sermon series on this section:**

- [Acts 17:16-17 Why God Put Us Here](#)
- [Acts 17:18-21 Speaking Truth to Intelligent People](#)
- [Acts 17:22-23 To an Unknown God- How to Find Common Ground](#)
- [Acts 17:24-25 He Doesn't Need Your Help: The Truth You Must Understand](#)
- [Acts 17:26-28 How God Reveals Himself to Us](#)
- [Acts 17:29 Warning Against Modern-Day Baal Worship](#)
- [Acts 17:30 Repent! The Forgotten Doctrine of Salvation](#)
- [Acts 17:31 Here Comes the Judge](#)
- [Acts 17:32-34 Power of the Gospel](#)

## Changed Perspective

Read: Acts 17:16-23

Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. — Acts 17:16

As an early riser, my wife enjoys the quiet moments before the house wakes up and uses it to read the Bible and pray. Recently she settled into her favorite chair, only to be confronted by a rather messy couch left there by “someone” watching a football game the night before. The mess distracted her at first, and her frustration with me interrupted the warmth of the moment.

Then a thought hit her, and she moved to the couch. From there, she could look out our front windows to the sun rising over the Atlantic Ocean. The beauty of the scene God painted that morning changed her perspective.

As she told me the story, we both recognized the lesson of the morning. While we can't always control the things of life that impact our day, we do have a choice. We can continue to brood over the “mess,” or we can change our perspective. When Paul was in Athens, “he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols” (Acts 17:16 niv). But when he changed his perspective, he used their interest in religion as an opportunity to proclaim the true God, Jesus Christ (vv.22-23).

As my wife left for work, it was time for someone else to change his perspective—for me to let the Lord help me to see my messes through her eyes and His.

Dear Lord, grant us the wisdom to change our perspective rather than linger over messes. Help us to see—and fix—the “messes” we make for others.

Wisdom is seeing things from God's perspective.

By Randy Kilgore | See Other Authors

INSIGHT The Areopagus (vv.19,22) was like an ancient philosophical think tank. There the wisest thinkers and philosophers of the day would assemble to wrestle with important ideas and teachings. This made it the ideal place for Paul to present the good news

and teachings of Jesus. [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

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## Still True Today

Read: Acts 17:16-31

While Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. —Acts 17:16

The Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, Ireland, has an extensive collection of ancient Bible fragments dating back to the second century AD. One fragment on display is a piece of Acts 17:16.

The message that ancient fragment displays, however, is as contemporary as today's newspaper. It reads, "While Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols." Paul was angered by the proliferation of idols in ancient Athens, and I am convinced he would be upset with us today.

Some idols that we see in today's world are different than the ones in Paul's day. Whether it's wealth, fame, power, athletes, entertainers, or politicians, contemporary idols abound. As always, our spiritual enemy, Satan, seeks to lure us away from the Savior to the false worship of idols. Christians are not immune, and thus we must guard our hearts against self-righteous anger toward unbelievers who seem to worship everything but God.

We must also be drawn by Christ's love to reach out to those who don't know Him. Then, like the believers at Thessalonica, they may turn "to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Thess. 1:9). [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

The dearest idol I have known, Whate'er that idol be, Help me to tear it from Thy throne And worship only Thee. —Cowper

An idol is anything that takes God's rightful place.

By Bill Crowder

**Acts 17:17 So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present.**

- **disputed** Acts 17:2-4; 14:1-4
- **devout** Acts 8:2; 10:2; 13:16
- **daily** Proverbs 1:20-22; 8:1-4,34; Jeremiah 6:11; Matthew 5:1,2; Mark 16:15; Luke 12:3; 2Timothy 3:2,5
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Acts 17:16-34 God's Man Confronts Satan's City](#) - John MacArthur
- [Acts 17:16-34 The God of Resurrection](#) - John MacArthur

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## PAUL REDEEMED THE TIME "CORAM DEO" IN THE SYNAGOGUE AND THE AGORA

**So** (men oun) - A term of conclusion which denotes that what it introduces is the result of or an inference of what precedes, in this context Paul's "[paroxysm](#)" over paganism! Paul never wasted time (cf Eph 5:16<sup>+</sup>), but was always purposeful in his practice, always conducting himself [Coram Deo](#) or as in the presence of God and Jesus Christ (cf 2 Ti 4:1<sup>+</sup>) giving all of us a high, holy standard/pattern to [emulate](#), enabled by the same Spirit Who filled, controlled and empowered Paul (1 Cor 11:1<sup>+</sup>). Holy hatred of idolatry motivated Paul's zealous presentation of the truth of the living Jesus, and should have the same energizing effect on every disciple of Jesus!

**He was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and God fearing Gentiles**- First Paul (as was his custom) goes to those that had some Biblical background, which would characterize a great percentage of people in America today. They know something of the Bible, but they have not yet seen that Jesus is the One to Whom the Bible is pointing mankind. The Jews and God-fearing Gentiles were steadfastly opposed to the all pervasive idolatry of Athens but were powerless to prevent it because they focused on the enslaving Law of Moses and not the liberating Gospel of Christ. Luke does not record a significant impact of Paul's reasoning

with these religious people.

**Reasoning** is the vivid [imperfect tense](#) which pictures Paul repeatedly engaging in [dialogue](#) (derived from Greek *dialegomai*) with the Jews and God-fearers surely relying on the OT Scriptures as he had done in Acts 17:2+.

**Reasoning** - see preceding discussion of [dialegomai](#) in Acts 17:2.

**Robertson** - Accordingly therefore, with his spirit stirred by the proof of idolatry. [Imperfect](#) middle of *dialego* (**dialegomai**) same verb used in Acts 17:2. First he reasoned in the synagogue at the services to the Jews and the God-fearers, then daily in the agora or marketplace (southwest of the [Acropolis](#) - see [picture of Acropolis](#), between it and the Areopagus and the Pnyx) to the chance-comers, "them that met him". Simultaneously with the synagogue preaching at other hours Paul took his stand like Socrates before him and engaged in conversation with (pros =expresses direction - toward, on the side of, in the direction of. It can serve as a marker of closeness of relation or proximity) those who happened by. This old verb, **paratugchanō** occurs here alone in the NT and accurately pictures the life in the **agora**. The listeners to Paul in the agora would be more casual than those who stop for street preaching, a Salvation Army meeting, a harangue from a box in Hyde Park. It was a slim chance either in synagogue or in agora, but Paul could not remain still with all the **reeking** idolatry around him. The boundaries of the agora varied, but there was always the Poikile Stoa ([see Painted Porch](#)), over against the [Acropolis](#) on the west. In this Stoa (Porch) [Zeno](#) and other philosophers and rhetoricians held forth from time to time. Paul may have stood near this spot. ([Acts 17 - Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament](#))

For discussion of [synagogue](#) see [sunagoge](#) below.

**God-fearing** (4576)([sebomai](#) from **sébas** = reverential awe) is in the present tense indicating these Gentiles continually held the God of Judaism in high esteem. *Sebomai* is always in the [middle voice](#) indicating the personal involvement of each of these Gentiles in their veneration of Jehovah. *Sebomai* in reference to Gentiles is a technical term for God-fearers, those Gentiles who worshiped the God of Israel and in many cases sought to keep the Mosaic law, but did not take the final step of circumcision necessary to become a proselyte to Judaism.

**Bill Hybels** said "If we're going to speak with integrity to secularized men and women, we need to understand the way they think." And since most of us were at one time "secularized" we should be able to meet them where they are and give a defense for the Gospel.

Click to enlarge  
Agora in Center

**So he was reasoning...in the market place every day with those who happened to be present** - [See map above for central location of the agora](#) or marketplace (See also [Ancient agora of Athens](#)), a great place to evangelize idol worshippers! Paul was engaging repeatedly ([imperfect tense](#)) in conversations with one or more people, undoubtedly exchanging opinions on spiritual topics with Paul obviously focusing on Jesus as we can deduce from the accusation that was leveled him in Acts 17:18, "**preaching Jesus and the resurrection.**"

Don't miss the time phrase **every day** - Paul was a man on mission. No days off. No furloughs for this soldier of the Lord. The phrase **those who happened to be present** indicates that Paul did not discriminate. He harbored no deep seated prejudice to keep him from **reasoning** with any soul who providentially crossed his path. **John MacArthur** adds that "The literal Greek for **them that met him** is anybody who happened to cross his path. He just was cold turkey (Ed: See resource below). He got into the marketplace and just mixed it up....You know what most of us would do? And I look at myself. We'd say, "Well, I've got to reach my city." So, we'd have a committee meeting. We've got to plan it out....How do you win the world? Well, you just go out there, and you just find whoever's around, and you just tell them about Jesus Christ. See?" ([God's Man Confronts Satan's City](#))

**THOUGHT** - Are you on the lookout every day for those souls that the Father sends providentially across your path? (cf 1 Pe 3:15+).

**Related Resource:**

- [Why You Should Go Cold Turkey?](#)

**Happened to be present** ([present tense](#) = continually)(3909)(**paratugchano** from **pará** = near + **tugchano** = happen to be, chance upon) is only used here in the NT and means to happen to be near or be present, to "chance" to meet or to fall in with someone. "Whoever *chanced* to be by" (L-S) In context those who just **'happened to be present'** ([God's providence](#) superintends all "happenings" so that no individual was there by "*chance*" as the world defines [chance!](#)) **Ray Stedman** adds that those who **happened to be present** were "tradesmen, people going about their business, commercial people coming in with their wares to the

city square. There he met them and talked with them. Here were people who were unthinking victims of the idolatry that held the city in its grip. They were sunken in superstition, gripped by fear, uncertainty, dread of darkness, and inner tensions and turmoil. These are always the results of following false gods." (Ibid)

**Market place (58) (agora)** is the town-square where the people assembled in public. It can also refer to a market or thoroughfare or a broad street. Here it refers to a forum or a market place where things were exposed for sale and where assemblies and public trials were held (See similar use in Mk 7:4; Acts 16:19; 17:17) (see **use** in Acts 16:19)

**Simon J. Kistemaker** noted that the **agora** functioned not only as a marketplace, but also "as the social center of the city. Here the unemployed waited for suitable work, the sick were healed, and the magistrates judged court cases. In those days, a plaintiff could drag a defendant into court and ask the judge to pass a verdict (James 2:6). The owners of the slave girl were acting according to Roman law when they laid their hands on Paul and Silas and put their grievance before the city authorities. (New Testament Commentary: Acts [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990], 595)"

**NIDNTT** - Originally any place of public assembly, the **agora** became identified in classical times with the market-place, a centre of community life which was regularly used for political meetings, judicial hearings, and especially for trade. The derived adj. **agoraios** (lit. belonging to the agora) is occasionally found in a good sense to describe those who do their business in the market-place (especially advocates in law-suits), but it is applied much more frequently to loafers who hang around the agora looking for excitement or trouble. **Agorazo**, the verb (lit., frequent the agora), came to mean "buy in the market-place", and thence "buy" in general. In Hellenistic times it was also in common use as a term for buying slaves, which is significant for its NT usage, although the practice of sacral manumission is not clearly linked with agorazō. The intensive form **exagorazo** could be applied to the redeeming of slaves.

**BDAG** summarized - market place as a place for children to play Mt 11:16; Lk 7:32. Place for people seeking work and for idlers Mt 20:3; cp. 23:7; Mk 12:38; Lk 11:43; 20:46. Scene of public events, incl. the healings of Jesus Mk 6:56. Scene of a lawsuit (so as early as Hom.; cp. Demosth. 43, 36 ) against Paul Acts 16:19, 35 D. Of the Agora in Athens (in the Ceramicus), the center of public life Acts 17:17

**Liddell-Scott** summarized - agora, Assembly of the People, opp. to the Council of Chiefs, Hom.:- to hold an assembly, II. the place of Assembly, Hom.; used not only for debating, trials, and other public purposes, but also as a market-place, like the Roman Forum, Att.; but to lounge in the market was held to be disreputable, III. the business of the agora = public speaking, gift of speaking, mostly in pl., Hom. IV. things sold in the agora = the market, to hold a market, Thuc. V. as a mark of time, the forenoon, when the market-place was full, Hdt.; opp. the time just after mid-day, when they went home, Id.

#### Related Resources -

- [Market \(Agora\)](#)
- [Agora](#) - Wikipedia
- Compare the Roman counterpart = [Forum](#)

**Agora** - 11x in 11v and always translated market place(5) or market places(6).

Matthew 11:16 "But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market places, who call out to the other children,

Matthew 20:3 "And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the market place;

Matthew 23:7 and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men

Mark 6:56 Wherever He entered villages, or cities, or countryside, they were laying the sick in the market places, and imploring Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were being cured.

Mark 7:4 and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots.)

Mark 12:38 In His teaching He was saying: "Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes, and like respectful greetings in the market places,

Luke 7:32 "They are like children who sit in the market place and call to one another, and they say, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.'

Luke 11:43 "Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the chief seats in the synagogues and the respectful

greetings in the market places.

Luke 20:46 "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love respectful greetings in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets,

Acts 16:19 But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities,

Acts 17:17 So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present.

**Agora** - 8v in the non-apocryphal Septuagint -

Eccl 12:4-5 Song 3:2; Ezek 27:12, 14, 16, 19, 22. Agora is used to describe the trading activity of Tyre (Ezek 27:12, 14, 16, 19, 22), to describe the place where a girl seeks her lover (Song 3:2); and the "shut doors of the agora" figuratively describe deafness in Eccl. 12:4.

**Synagogue** (4864) (**sunagoge** from **sunago** = lead together, assemble or bring together) refers to a group of people "going with one another" (**sunago**) literally describes a bringing together or congregating in one place. Eventually, **sunagoge** came to mean the place where they congregated together. The word was used to designate the buildings other than the central Jewish temple where the Jews congregated for worship. Historically, the Synagogues originated in the Babylonian captivity after the 586 BC destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar and served as places of worship and instruction. Sunagoge was the name of a group "**Synagogue** of the Freedmen" (Acts 6:9).

**Synagogues** should have been (and frequently were) a place of teaching and proclamation of the Gospel (Mt 4:23, 9:35, 12:9, 13:54, Mk 6:2, Lk 4:15, 16, Lk 4:44, 6:6, 13:10, Jn 6:59, 18:20, Acts 9:20 = Paul immediately "began to proclaim Jesus," Acts 13:5 = Paul proclaimed "the word of God," Acts 14:1 = place Paul, et al, spoke and where "a large number of people believed," Acts 17:17, 18:4, 18:19, 19:8 = Paul, et al reasoned with various audiences in synagogues).

In James 2:3 the synagogue seems to describe an assembly-place for Judeo-Christians.

Sadly many **synagogues** became hotbeds of hypocrisy (Mt 6:2), assemblies for arrogant display (a form of hypocrisy) (Mt 6:5, Mk 12:39, Lk 11:43, 20:46).

**Synagogue** is used in the Septuagint of Ps 21:16 to describe a group of persons who banded together with hostile intent.

**Synagogues** also were used as places where court was held and punishment inflicted = they became places of false accusation (Lk 12:11) and of scourging, flogging, etc of true disciples (Mt 10:17, Mk 13:9, Lk 21:12, Acts 22:19 = imprisoned, Acts 26:11 = Paul's punishment of believers, ), and places of violent reaction to unpopular teaching (Lk 4:28).

#### Related Resources:

- Nave Topical Bible [Synagogue](#)
- Thompson Chain Reference [Synagogues](#)
- Torrey Topical Textbook [Synagogues](#)
- American Tract Society [Synagogue](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Synagogue](#)
- Baker Evangelical Dictionary [Synagogue](#)
- Charles Buck Dictionary [Synagogue](#)
- CARM Theological Dictionary [Synagogue](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary [Synagogue](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Synagogue](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Synagogue](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Synagogue](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Synagogue](#) [Synagogue \(2\)](#)
- King James Dictionary [Synagogue](#)
- Morrish Bible Dictionary [Synagogue](#)
- People's Dictionary of the Bible [Synagogue](#)
- Smith Bible Dictionary [Synagogue](#)
- Vines' Expository Dictionary [Synagogue](#)
- Webster Dictionary [Synagogue](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary [Synagogue](#)

- 1911 Encyclopedia Britannica [Synagogue](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Synagogue](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopeda [Synagogue](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Synagogue](#)
- The Nuttall Encyclopedia [Synagogue](#)

In the time of Jesus and the apostles every town, not only in Palestine but also among the Gentiles if it contained a considerable number of Jewish inhabitants, had at least one synagogue, the larger towns several or even many. That the Jews held trials and even inflicted punishments in them, is evident from such passages (Mt 10:17, 23:34), a haunt of demon possessed (Mk 1:23).

**Liddell-Scott** has some additional secular uses of **synagoge** = I.1. a bringing together, uniting, Plat. 2. a place of assembly, synagogue, a levying of war, Thuc. 2. a gathering in of harvest, Polyb. 3. a drawing together, contracting, a forming an army in column, Plat.; a pursing up or wrinkling of the face, Isocr. 4. a collection of writings, Arist. III. a conclusion, inference, Id.

**TDNT** describes the secular and Septuagint uses of **synagoge**...

#### A. Secular Greek.

1. The General Meaning. The basic sense of synagoge is that of bringing together or assembling (cf. a gathering of people, a collection of books or letters, the ingathering of harvest, the mustering of troops, the knitting of brows, the drawing in of a sail, and in logic the deduction or demonstration).

2. **Societies.** Relative to societies, the term usually denotes the periodic meeting. Only rarely is synagoge the place of meeting. Often a festal assembly (cultic or otherwise) is denoted, e.g., a feast or even a picnic. Unlike ekklesia (the assembly of free citizens), synagoge is not a constitutional term. Conversely ekklesia plays no part in guild life.

#### B. The LXX.

1. **Occurrence.** synagoge occurs some 200 times in the LXX. It usually translates either 'eda or qahal. The former is the term for the national, legal, and cultic community of Israel, preferred in Exodus and Leviticus, used exclusively in Numbers, but replaced by qahal (which has essentially the same meaning) in Deuteronomy, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles.

2. **ekklesia and synagoge.** Like the Hebrew terms, these two words have essentially the same sense. Individual translators seem to prefer either the one or the other. If synagoge is mostly found in the Pentateuch, this is perhaps because the translators find here the charter of their synagogal communities. They almost always use it for 'eÒÑaÖ.

3. **Gathering.** The term synagoge may have such normal senses as the collecting of taxes, the ingathering of harvest, the heaping up of stones, the gathering of a crowd, the mustering of troops, the swarming of bees, and a great number of people.

4. **Assembly.** When "assembly" is the point, there is little difference from the secular use. At times the stress may be on assembling for common action, but this is not always the case.

5. **The Whole Congregation.** synagoge is often a term for the congregation, i.e., the whole people of Israel, sometimes with pasa or Israel. The people is not as such a religious entity, but often the reference is to the people as it assembles for legal or cultic purposes. The synagoge is thus the cultic community engaged in sacred acts or the legal community engaged in judgment. The term bears a strong historical character as the desert community, the community that sees God's wonders and inherits the promises, yet also the eschatological community that is to be gathered from the dispersion.

6. **The Individual Congregation.** In the Apocrypha the term comes to be used for the local congregation, and the plural is now used for Israel as a whole.

**Synagoge** - 56x in 56v - NAS Usage: assembly(1), synagogue(31), synagogues(24).

Matthew 4:23 Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their **synagogues** and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.

Matthew 6:2 "So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the **synagogues** and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

5 "When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the **synagogues** and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

Matthew 9:35 Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their **synagogues** and

proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

Matthew 10:17 "But beware of men, for they will hand you over to the courts and scourge you in their **synagogues**;

**Comment:** Could there be any association between Mt 9:35 and Mt 10:17? Teach the Word and duck!

Matthew 12:9 Departing from there, He went into their **synagogue**.

Matthew 13:54 He came to His hometown and began teaching them in their **synagogue**, so that they were astonished, and said, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?"

Matthew 23:6 "They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the **synagogues**,

34 "Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your **synagogues**, and persecute from city to city,

Mark 1:21 They went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the **synagogue** and began to teach.

23 Just then there was a man in their **synagogue** with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,

29 And immediately after they came out of the **synagogue**, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

39 And He went into their **synagogues** throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out the demons.

Mark 3:1 He entered again into a **synagogue**; and a man was there whose hand was withered.

Mark 6:2 When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the **synagogue**; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things, and what is this wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands?"

Mark 12:39 and chief seats in the **synagogues** and places of honor at banquets,

Mark 13:9 "But be on your guard; for they will deliver you to the courts, and you will be flogged in the **synagogues**, and you will stand before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them.

Luke 4:15 And He began teaching in their **synagogues** and was praised by all.

16 And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the **synagogue** on the Sabbath, and stood up to read.

20 And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the **synagogue** were fixed on Him.

28 And all the people in the **synagogue** were filled with rage as they heard these things;

33 In the **synagogue** there was a man possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice,

38 Then He got up and left the **synagogue**, and entered Simon's home. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Him to help her.

44 So He kept on preaching in the **synagogues** of Judea.

Luke 6:6 On another Sabbath He entered the **synagogue** and was teaching; and there was a man there whose right hand was withered.

Luke 7:5 for he loves our nation and it was he who built us our **synagogue**."

Luke 8:41 And there came a man named Jairus, and he was an official of the **synagogue**; and he fell at Jesus' feet, and began to implore Him to come to his house;

Luke 11:43 "Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the chief seats in the **synagogues** and the respectful greetings in the market places.

Luke 12:11 "When they bring you before the **synagogues** and the rulers and the authorities, do not worry about how or what you are to speak in your defense, or what you are to say;

Luke 13:10 And He was teaching in one of the **synagogues** on the Sabbath.

Luke 20:46 "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love respectful greetings in the



market places, and chief seats in the **synagogues** and places of honor at banquets,

Luke 21:12 "But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the **synagogues** and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake.

John 6:59 These things He said in the **synagogue** as He taught in Capernaum.

John 18:20 Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in **synagogues** and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret.

Acts 6:9 But some men from what was called the **Synagogue** of the Freedmen, including both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with Stephen.

Acts 9:2 and asked for letters from him to the **synagogues** at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

20 and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the **synagogues**, saying, "He is the Son of God."

Acts 13:5 When they reached Salamis, they began to proclaim the word of God in the **synagogues** of the Jews; and they also had John as their helper.

14 But going on from Perga, they arrived at Pisidian Antioch, and on the Sabbath day they went into the **synagogue** and sat down.

43 Now when the meeting of the **synagogue** had broken up, many of the Jews and of the God-fearing proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, were urging them to continue in the grace of God.

Acts 14:1 In Iconium they entered the **synagogue** of the Jews together, and spoke in such a manner that a large number of people believed, both of Jews and of Greeks.

Acts 15:21 "For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the **synagogues** every Sabbath."

Acts 17:1 Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a **synagogue** of the Jews.

10 The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the **synagogue** of the Jews.

17 So he was reasoning in the **synagogue** with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present.

Acts 18:4 And he was reasoning in the **synagogue** every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

7 Then he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to the **synagogue**.

19 They came to Ephesus, and he left them there. Now he himself entered the **synagogue** and reasoned with the Jews.

26 and he began to speak out boldly in the **synagogue**. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

Acts 19:8 And he entered the **synagogue** and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.

Acts 22:19 "And I said, 'Lord, they themselves understand that in one **synagogue** after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in You.

Acts 24:12 "Neither in the temple, nor in the **synagogues**, nor in the city itself did they find me carrying on a discussion with anyone or causing a riot.

Acts 26:11 "And as I punished them often in all the **synagogues**, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities.

James 2:2 For if a man comes into your **assembly** with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes,

Revelation 2:9 'I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who

say they are Jews and are not, but are a **synagogue** of Satan.

Revelation 3:9 'Behold, I will cause those of the **synagogue** of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie-- I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you.

**Synagoge** - 186 verses (some 200 actual uses) in the non-apocryphal Septuagint -

Ge 1:9; 28:3; 35:11; 48:4; Ex 12:3, 6, 19, 47; 16:1ff, 6, 9f, 22; 17:1; 23:16; 34:22, 31; 35:1, 4, 20; 38:1, 25; Lev 4:13ff, 21; 8:3ff; 9:5; 10:3, 6, 17; 11:36; 16:5, 17, 33; 19:2; 22:18; 24:14, 16; Num 1:2, 16, 18; 8:9, 20; 10:2f, 7; 13:26; 14:1f, 5, 7, 10, 27, 35f; 15:14, 24ff, 33, 35f; 16:2f, 5f, 9, 11, 16, 19, 21f, 24, 26, 33, 42, 45, 47; 19:9, 20; 20:1f, 4, 6, 8, 10ff, 22, 25, 27, 29; 22:4; 25:6f; 26:2, 9f; 27:2f, 14, 16f, 19, 21f; 31:13, 16, 26f, 43; 32:2, 15; 35:12, 24f; Deut 5:22; 33:4; Josh 9:15, 18f, 21, 27; 18:1; 20:3, 9; 22:16f, 20, 30; Judg 14:8; 20:1; 21:10, 13, 16; 1 Kgs 12:20f; 2 Chr 5:6; Esther 10:3; Job 8:17; Ps 7:7; 16:4; 22:16; 40:10; 62:8; 68:30; 74:2; 82:1; 86:14; 106:17f; 111:1; Pr 5:14; 21:16; Isa 19:6; 22:6; 37:25; 56:8; Jer 6:11; 26:17; 31:4, 13; 44:15; 50:9; Ezek 26:7; 27:27, 34; 32:22; 37:10; 38:4, 7, 13, 15; Dan 8:25; 11:10ff; Obad 1:13; Zeph 3:8; Zech 9:12

First use in OT - (Gen 1:9) Then God said, "Let the waters below the heavens **be gathered into one place**, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so.

In the Lxx **synagoge** was used to mean a collection of something (Gen 1:9) or a company of individual (Ge 28:3, 35:11, 46:4), a gang (Ps 21:17), a congregation (Ex 12:3), a multitude (Ezek 38:4), swarm of bees (Jdg 14:8, crowd of bulls (Ps 68:30)

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Acts 17:16-34 I will not give . . . my praise to idols. - Isaiah 42:8

#### TODAY IN THE WORD

In August 2004, thousands of spectators converged upon Athens to watch 11,099 athletes compete in the Games of the XXVIII Olympiad. Visitors and athletes alike delighted in such famous sights as the [Parthenon](#) and the Agora. Yet one ancient visitor had a much different reaction to this city. Instead of relaxing, he was agitated. Instead of beautiful buildings, he saw countless idols. His heart burned that the Lord God was denied His rightful praise and glory.

Paul's "strange ideas" caught people's attention. Epicureans sought a life of tranquility, free from pain, disturbing passions, or superstition. Stoics tried to live in harmony with nature and rational principles. Intrigued, these philosophers brought Paul to the Areopagus (meaning "Mars Hill"), a common location for public debates.

Altars to unknown gods (v. 23) dated back six centuries before Christ when a plague struck Athens. Fearful that some god was offended, people erected altars to "unknown gods" to end the pestilence.

Notice how Paul took advantage of this "open door." First, he proclaimed that God could indeed be known through the visible display of His creation. Moreover, He created all humanity and directed the course of human history (v. 26). The correct response to the true God wasn't temples and idols, but repentance (v. 30). Although God had been patient, He would not allow the sin of idolatry to go unpunished forever.

It seems that Paul intended to say more, but was cut off by the crowd when he mentioned resurrection. Epicureans denied any possibility of resurrection, and others thought that bodily resurrection was abhorrent.

Some have criticized Paul's speech because it lacks references to Scripture or Jesus. Yet this was a thoroughly pagan crowd. He had to begin by establishing the existence of the One God. Moreover, he must have talked about the Cross at some point because he talked about the Resurrection. In any event, at least two people repented and received Christ as a result.

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY

We can learn a lot from Paul's time in Athens. First, notice Paul's flexibility. In the synagogue, he urged those with a religious background to a complete understanding of God through Jesus Christ. On the street, he shared Christ with those with no Bible background by beginning with what all humans have in common—being created by God. Second, notice that Paul avoided two common extremes: he neither refused contact with other religions, nor gave uncritical approval in an attempt to earn favor.

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Acts 17:16-34

Since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen . . . so that men are without excuse. - Romans 1:20

#### TODAY IN THE WORD

One of the great apologists of recent times, C. S. Lewis, has this to say about defending the faith:

"One of the great difficulties is to keep before the audience's mind the question of truth. . . . One must keep on pointing out that Christianity is a statement which, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite

importance. . . . They are simply not interested in the question of truth or falsehood. They only want to know if it will be comforting, or 'inspiring,' or socially useful."

Lewis could just as easily have been talking about the Athenians of Paul's day. This episode is the only recorded "sermon" that defends Christianity from a purely rational perspective, as opposed to a historical argument or fulfilled prophecy (cf. Acts 2). In other words, this is a concrete example of philosophical apologetics. From Jerusalem, the city of faith, we have arrived now in Athens, the city of reason.

Distressed by the city's paganism, Paul preached and defended the gospel to anyone willing to listen. He got the attention of some local philosophers—Epicureans and Stoics, whose philosophies are still studied in philosophy courses today. They brought Paul to a meeting of the Areopagus, a sort of philosophical society or discussion seminar, where people would hear and debate the latest philosophical ideas (vv. 19-21).

How could Paul convince these radically different people? He began with respect for their religiosity, using the altar to an "unknown god" he'd seen earlier as a cultural connection. He also quoted one of their poets (v. 28).

He then presented the one true God, starting from creation (vv. 24-26). The true God is the Creator, the maker of all things, all beings, all life. He is all-powerful and self-sufficient. He rules over human history and has taken the initiative to reach out to people (v. 27). One day God will hold everyone accountable for whether they worshiped Him or worshiped idols (vv. 29-31).

**Acts 17:18 And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, "What would this idle babbler wish to say?" Others, "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection**

- **philosophers** Romans 1:22; 1Corinthians 1:20,21; Colossians 2:8
- **encountered** Acts 6:9; Mark 9:14; Luke 11:53
- **babblers** or, base fellow. -Proverbs 23:9; 26:12; 1 Corinthians 3:18
- **Jesus** - Acts 17:31; 26:23; Romans 14:9,10; 1Corinthians 15:3,4
- **William Ramsay** - [The University at Athens from St Paul: the Traveler and Roman Citizen](#)
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Acts 17:16-34 God's Man Confronts Satan's City](#) - John MacArthur
- [Acts 17:16-34 The God of Resurrection](#) - John MacArthur

## PAUL ENGAGES THE PHILOSOPHERS

**And also some of the [Epicurean](#) and [Stoic](#) philosophers were conversing with him** - This is the third group with which Paul interacted (first the religious crowd, second the regular folks in the agora, now philosophers). The Epicureans were the pleasure seekers. The Stoics were the [pantheists](#), the ancient version of modern New Agers.

**The Stoic said "Endure Life"!**

**The Epicureans said "Enjoy Life"!**

These vain, empty, worthless philosophies are deceptive counterfeits! Only believers in Christ can truly enjoy life and endure life (cf Jn 1:4, Jn 3:15-16, 1 Jn 5:4-5), indeed even abundant life (Jn 10:10b)!

**Ray Stedman** on Epicureans and Stoics

The **Epicureans** were atheists; they denied God's existence. They denied a life after death. They were also materialists, and felt that this life was the only thing that really existed and that, therefore, men should get the most out of it. They felt that pleasure was the highest virtue, and that pain was the opposite. Their motto (and it still persists to this day) was "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." They were what we would call today "existentialists," living for the experience of the moment. This is a widespread philosophy in our day, although it is no longer called Epicureanism.

The **Stoics**, followers of the philosopher Zeno, were pantheists. That is, they believed that everything is God, and that he does not exist as a separate entity, but is in the rocks and trees and every material thing. Their attitude toward life was one of ultimate resignation, and they prided themselves on their ability to take whatever came. Their motto, in modern terms, was "Grin and bear it." They urged moderation: "Don't get over-

emotional, either about tragedy or happiness." Apathy was regarded as the highest virtue of life. You will recognize there are many people today who feel that the best thing they can do is to take whatever comes and handle it the best they can. These Stoics were all proud fatalists, and there are many like them today. ([Athens versus Paul](#))

**Philosophers** (5386) (**philosophos** from **philos** = friend/lover + **sophia** = wisdom; see **philosophia**) is the only use of this word in the NT and it literally means a friend or lover of wisdom, often from a particular worldview (especially non-Christian). One who is fond of wise things. Those who professed the study of wisdom were, among the ancient Greeks, called [sophoi](#), wise men; but [Pythagoras](#) introduced the more modest name of **philosophos**, a lover of wisdom, and called himself by this title. **Thayer** writes **philosophos** refers to a "philosopher, one given to the pursuit of wisdom or learning (Xenophon, Plato, others); in a narrower sense, one who investigates and discusses the causes of things and the highest good: This is one of the only two specific references in the Bible to "philosophy," the other being Colossians 2:8-note. Both have strongly negative emphases, warning against philosophy--the love of human wisdom." **Liddell-Scott** defined **philosophos** as "one who speculates on the nature of things and truth." **Gilbrant** writes that "his was an inquiring mind, motivated by a strong desire to know and be a lover of wisdom. As Paul wrote, **The Greeks seek after wisdom**" (1 Cor 1:22). A philosopher searched for wisdom his whole life without attaining it fully (Weigelt, "Wisdom," Colin Brown, 3:1034)."

Paul alluded to **philosophy** in his first epistle to the Corinthians

For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, "**I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE.**" 20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? **Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?** 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world **through its wisdom did not come to know God**, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached (1 Cor 1:18) to save those who believe. 22 For indeed Jews ask for signs and **Greeks search for wisdom**; (1 Cor 1:18-22)

[Francis Bacon](#) said, "A little **philosophy** inclineth man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion." He was right. Superficial knowledge of philosophy, or science, or history often causes one to doubt. Deeper study will often lead to faith. We may need only to take more time, study more thoroughly, think more deeply. Bacon wrote about Pontius Pilate, "'What is truth,' said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer."

**Wiersbe** - Newspaper columnist Franklin P. Adams once defined **philosophy** as "unintelligible answers to insoluble problems," but the Greeks would not have agreed with him. They would have followed Aristotle who called **philosophy** the science which considers truth.

**Henry Morris** - Like all other Greek and Roman philosophies of the day, **Epicureanism** and **Stoicism** were based on an evolutionary world view. The **Epicureans were essentially atheists**, like modern Darwinists, whereas the **Stoics were pantheists**, much like modern New Age evolutionists. Both believed in an infinitely old space/time/ matter universe, and both rejected the concept of an omnipotent transcendent Creator. On the popular level, both were expressed in terms of polytheism, astrology and spiritism, with the many gods and goddesses essentially being personifications of natural forces and systems. Both would naturally be strongly opposed to Biblical Creationist Christianity.

Paul describes the "[pathogenesis](#)" (I am a pathologist) of **idolatry** as he describes man's progressive descent into **idolatry** in Romans 1

For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "**BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.**" 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them (CONSCIENCE); for God made it evident to them. 20 (AND CREATION) For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, **have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.** (THUS THE DESTRUCTIVE EFFECT OF THE FALSE TEACHING OF EVOLUTION!) 21 For even though they knew God (COULD PAUL BE ANY CLEARER? CONSCIENCE AND CREATION REVEALED THE INVISIBLE GOD TO MEN **BUT**....), they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile (EMPTY, VAIN, WORTHLESS) in their speculations (EVOLUTION, PHILOSOPHY, ETC), and their foolish heart was darkened (WHEN THEY CAST OFF THE LIGHT OF GOD, THEY WERE GIVEN OVER TO THE POWER OF DARKNESS) . 22 Professing to be wise (THIS IS SELF-DECEPTION), they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God (NOW THE FINAL DESCENT INTO IDOLATRY

BECAUSE MAN WAS MADE TO WORSHIP!) for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. 24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. (IDOLATRY WILL ALWAYS LEAD TO IMMORALITY!) 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a (LITERALLY "THE") lie (of Satan in Ge 3:1-6), and worshiped and served the creature (cf 30,000 STATUES IN ATHENS!) rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. (Ro 1:16-25+ - NOTICE THE TRAGIC PROGRESSIVE DESCENT FROM REJECTION OF THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD TO ACCEPTING THE BAD NEWS OF MEN!)

**F. F. Bruce** comments that "**Stoicism** and **Epicureanism** represent alternative attempts in pre-Christian paganism to come to terms with life, especially in times of uncertainty and hardship, and post-Christian paganism down to our own day has not been able to devise anything appreciably better. (The Book of the Acts, The New International Commentary on the New Testament)

**Barclay - 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. They did not mean fleshly and material pleasure; for the highest pleasure was that which brought no pain in its train. **Stoics.** (i) They believed that everything was God. God was 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) They believed that everything that happened was the will of God and therefore must be accepted without resentment. (iii) They believed that every so often the world disintegrated in a conflagration and started all over again on the same cycle of events. ([Acts 17 - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

**Epicurean** ([Epicureanism - Wikipedia](#)) - followers of **Epicurus** (341-270 BC) believed that while God existed but that He had no interest in humankind, and the main purpose of life was pleasure. Sounds very modern, doesn't it? In fact the word has lost its original sense and so Epicurean describes the pursuit of fine food. **Epicurus**, a contemporary of Zeno, considered practical atheism the true view of reality. Denying a future life entirely, he claimed pleasure as the ruling principle of life. He allowed for the existence of gods but considered them distant and unconcerned with the lives of men. Both these systems, with their doctrines of self-discipline on the one hand and fruitful earthly life on the other, differed sharply from the Christian resurrection hope for life in eternity. This should have generated a desire for the gospel in true philosophers, i.e., those serious-minded, truth-seeking men.

**Epicurus** was an **existentialist** in that he sought truth by means of personal experience and not through reasoning. The Epicureans were materialists and atheists, and their goal in life was pleasure.

**Vincent - Epicureans** = Disciples of Epicurus, and atheists. They acknowledged God in words, but denied his providence and superintendence over the world. According to them, the soul was material and annihilated at death. Pleasure was their chief good; and whatever higher sense their founder might have attached to this doctrine, his followers, in the apostle's day, were given to gross sensualism. **Stoics = Pantheists.** God was the soul of the world, or the world was God. Everything was governed by fate, to which God himself was subject. They denied the universal and perpetual immortality of the soul; some supposing that it was swallowed up in deity; others, that it survived only till the final conflagration; others, that immortality was restricted to the wise and good. Virtue was its own reward, and vice its own punishment. Pleasure was no good, and pain no evil. The name Stoic was derived from stoa porch. Zeno, the founder of the Stoic sect, held his school in the Stoa Poecile, or painted portico, so called because adorned with pictures by the best masters. ([Acts 17 - Vincent's Word Studies](#))

**Stoics** ([Stoicism - Wikipedia](#)) - This group believed God was the world's soul, and life's goal was to rise above all things, showing no emotional response to either pain or pleasure. The Stoics were pantheists, much like modern New Age evolutionists. They rejected the idolatry of pagan worship and taught that there was one World God. The Stoics emphasized personal discipline and self-control and their goal in life was to follow one's reason and be self-sufficient, unmoved by inner feelings or outward circumstances. It telling that the first two leaders of the Stoics committed suicide. The doctrine of the Stoics taught that human beings should be free from passion, unmoved by joy or grief, and submissive to natural law, calmly accepting all things as the result of divine will.

**Zeno of Citium** (c. 334 – c. 262 BC) taught in the **Stoa** (Porch), and his teaching accordingly was called **Stoicism**. He advanced many noble ideas, such as self-mastery, but occasionally he or his followers would adhere to the ideas with such strictness that their austerity led to immense pride, and suicide became the solution for failure. Thus, many followers were distinctly selfish and unloving, frequently espousing a **pantheistic world view** (Modern day New Age Movement). Pantheism says that god is the all, and therefore all that exists is god. God is almost always an impersonal god in any pantheistic system.

**John MacArthur** observes that the famous poem "**Invictus**" poetically captures the essence of the Stoic philosophy ([Listen to the reading of the tragic poem](#))...

**Invictus**

## W. E. Henley

Out of the night that covers me,  
Black as the pit from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever gods may be  
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance  
I have not winc'd nor cried aloud.  
Under the bludgeonings of chance  
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears  
Looms but the Horror of the shade,  
And yet the menace of the years  
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,  
How charged with punishments the scroll,  
I am the master of my fate,  
I am the captain of my soul.

**MacArthur** commented after reading the poem "What a bunch of baloney!"

**Stoicism** was one of the most influential Greek schools of philosophy in the NT period. It took its name from the Stoa Poikile, the painted "portico" (stoa) in Athens where the founder Zeno of Citium (about 280 b.c.) taught. Zeno was followed by Cleanthes (about 260 b.c.), Cleanthes by Chrysippus (about 240 b.c.), who was regarded as the intellectual founder of the Stoic system. Stoicism soon found an entrance at Rome, and under the empire Stoicism was not unnaturally connected with republican virtue. The Stoics believed that people are part of the universe, which itself is dominated by reason. God is identified with the world-soul and so inhabits everything. Therefore, one's goal is to identify oneself with this universal reason that determines destiny, to find one's proper place in the natural order of things. Since people cannot change this grand design, it is best for them to cooperate and to take their part in the world order. Moreover, they must live above any emotional involvement with life, exemplifying a detached virtue in serving others. Above all, they must be self-sufficient, living life with dignity and pride. Individual Stoics, including the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius, set a high standard of personal conduct. The ethical system of the Stoics has been commonly supposed to have a close connection with Christian morality. But the morality of Stoicism is essentially based on pride, that of Christianity on humility; the one upholds individual independence, the other absolute faith in another; the one looks for consolation in the issue of fate, the other in Providence; the one is limited by periods of cosmical ruin, the other is consummated in a personal resurrection. In Stoicism God was not a personal Being but a spiritual force or soul-power immanent in men and things. He was given many names—Logos or Reason, Nature, Providence, divine Spirit et al. His substance was the whole world and the heavens. An elaborate pantheon was developed to agree with God's total immanence. The highest good was to follow reason or virtue, suppress the emotions, and conduct oneself according to what nature wills. In the end there was reabsorption into the world Soul, but no individual immortality. The "greatness" of Stoicism was found in its high ethical concepts and doctrine of human brotherhood.

### Related Resources:

- [How has Greek philosophy influenced Christianity?](#)
- [Should a Christian study philosophy?](#)
- [What is the philosophy of ethics?](#)
- [What is philosophical theology?](#)
- [What is Aristotelianism?](#)
- [What was the Enlightenment, and what impact did it have on Christianity?](#)

**Philosophers were conversing with him** - **Conversing** is in the [imperfect tense](#) giving us a vivid picture of Paul in the agora, carrying on discussion with one philosopher, than another and another. It would have been quite a scene to witness! And as the context shows while Paul was in a cultural center with a difference type of audience, he continues to focus his message on **Jesus and the resurrection**, a good pattern for all of us to pursue.

**Conversing** (4820) ([sumballo](#) from **sun** = together + **ballo** = throw, cast) literally means to throw together and then "to converse, to carry on a discussion," or "to consider carefully and draw conclusions" about a certain matter which is probably the main sense of the verb in this context. Other meanings include "to dispute" or "quarrel" with someone, even to the point of engaging in a fight,

which was not quite what the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were doing.

**Some were saying, "What would this idle babbler wish to say?"** - The arrogant philosophers were mocking Paul expressing their contempt by calling him an **idle babbler** or an "ignorant show-off."

**MacArthur** paraphrases the philosophers "Paul, you're not telling us a philosophy; you're nothing but a philosophical seed picker. You've picked up bits and pieces of philosophy and religion, slapped it all together, and you're trying to pawn it off as knowledge....What an uneducated babble you're trying to pawn off; bits and scraps of all kinds of random philosophies and religion being passed off as information that is true."

**John Polhill** writes that their designation of Paul as an **idle babbler** "evoked images of a bird pecking indiscriminately at seeds in a barnyard. It referred to a dilettante, someone who picked up scraps of ideas here and there and passed them off as profundity with no depth of understanding at all. (The New American Commentary: Acts)

**Idle babbler** (4691)(**spermologos** from **sperma** = seed + **lego** = collect or gather) literally means seed collector and was used originally of birds picking up seed. It came to be applied in Athenian slang to one who gains a hand to mouth living in the markets by picking up anything that falls from the loads of merchandise which was carried about. Hence **spermologos** passed into the figurative meaning of a person who gathers bits of information and spouts them off second hand without any real knowledge of their meaning. A **babbler** is one who talks idly with no definite purpose. The English definition of **babbler** is an obnoxious, foolish, and loquacious talker. **Moffatt** translates it "fellow with scraps of learning". **Goodspeed** has "rag picker". Since it describes a person who maintained himself by picking up bits of scraps, another apropos name would be **scavenger**.

**Louw-Nida** has this note on **spermologos** - A figurative extension of meaning of a term based on the practice of birds in picking up seeds - one who acquires bits and pieces of relatively extraneous information and proceeds to pass them on with pretense and show - 'ignorant show-off, charlatan.' (Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains)

**Cleon Rogers** on **spermologos** - A slang term first used of birds that pick up grain, then of men who pick up odds and ends in the market, and then applied to men who were zealous seekers of the second rate at second hand, and finally to generally worthless persons—"this character"

It is said that the Athenians applied this name **spermologos** to those who made their living by collecting and selling refuse they found in the market places. In short, "seed pickers" were men of no account and were considered the scum of the earth, low and contemptible.

**THOUGHT** - Clearly **spermologos** was intended to mock Paul's ministry and message. Beloved, has your message (His message through you) been mocked? Have you been persecuted for the cause of Christ and His glorious Gospel? (cf 2 Ti 3:12+) Then you are in good company. Most of God's best men have at some time in their ministry been mocked, scandalized, blasphemed, etc (e.g., see [Foxe's Book of Martyrs](#)). **Jesus has a word for you** -

"Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. **Rejoice** and **be glad**, (both verbs in red = **present imperative** = make this your habitual practice when persecuted for Jesus) for your reward in heaven ("cross" before the "crown") is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Mt 5:10-12+)

**Babble** (Free Dictionary) - To utter a meaningless confusion of words or sounds: Babies babble before they can talk. 2. To talk foolishly or idly; chatter: "In 1977 [he] was thought of as crazy because he was babbling about supply side" (Newt Gingrich). 3. To make a continuous low, murmuring sound, as flowing water. Verb transitive = 1. To utter rapidly and indistinctly. 2. To blurt out impulsively; disclose without careful consideration. Noun = 1. Inarticulate or meaningless talk or sounds. 2. Idle or foolish talk; chatter. 3. A continuous low, murmuring sound, as of flowing water.

**John Polhill** writes that **spermologos** "evoked images of a bird pecking indiscriminately at seeds in a barnyard. It referred to a dilettante, someone who picked up scraps of ideas here and there and passed them off as profundity with no depth of understanding at all." (New American Commentary - Acts).

**A T Robertson** - The word for **'babbler'** means "seed-picker" or picker up of seeds (sperma seed, legō to collect) like a bird in the **agora** hopping about after chance seeds. Plutarch applies the word to crows that pick up grain in the fields. Demosthenes called Aeschines a spermologos. Eustathius uses it of a man hanging around in the markets picking up scraps of food that fell from the carts and so also of mere rhetoricians and plagiarists who picked up scraps of wisdom from others. Ramsay considers it here a piece of Athenian slang used to describe the picture of Paul seen by these philosophers who use it, for not all of them had it. Note the use of "an" and the present active optative theloi conclusion of a fourth-class condition in a rhetorical question (Robertson,

Grammar, p. 1021). It means, What would this picker up of seeds wish to say, if he should get off an idea? It is a contemptuous tone of supreme ridicule and doubtless Paul heard this comment. Probably the Epicureans made this sneer that Paul was a charlatan or quack. ([Acts 17 - Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament](#))

**Others, "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities**-- The second group of philosophers gave Paul a little more "intellectual credit." This is the only NT use of **proclaimer** (**kataggeleus** from [kataggello](#) uses 3x in Acts 17:3, 13, 23) and describes a "herald" one who makes a solemn announcement.

**Strange** (3581)(**xenos**) primarily means a strange, foreign, unheard of. **Xenos** thus describes that which was unfamiliar because it was unknown to the philosophers (cf., "**strange** teachings" in Heb 13:9+). **Xenos** can also mean strange in the sense of unheard of or surprising ("as though some **strange** thing were happening to you" = 1 Pe 4:12+). Finally, **xenos** was used by Paul to refer to Gentiles as those who were unacquainted with God and without interest in Him = "**strangers** to the covenants of promise" (Ep 2:12+).

**Robertson - Xenos** is an old word for a guest-friend (Latin *hospes*) and then host (Ro 16:23), then for foreigner or stranger (Mt 25:31; Acts 17:21), new and so strange as here and Heb 13:9; 1Pe 4:12, and then aliens (Eph 2:12). This view of Paul is the first count against **Socrates** does wrong, introducing new deities (kaina daimonia eispherōn Xen. Mem. I). **On this charge the Athenians voted the hemlock for their greatest citizen. What will they do to Paul?** This Athens was more skeptical and more tolerant than the old Athens. But Roman law did not allow the introduction of a new religion (*religio illicita*). Paul was walking on thin ice though he was the real master philosopher and these Epicureans and Stoics were quacks. Paul had the only true philosophy of the universe and life with Jesus Christ as the centre (Colossians 1:12-20), the greatest of all philosophers as Ramsay justly terms him. But these men are mocking him. ([Acts 17 - Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament](#))

**Deities** (1140) see detailed discussion of **daimonion** below. Daimonion is used 63 times in the NT and all but the use in Acts 17:18 are translated demon or demons! And so it is most **ironic** that daimonion is used most often to describe demons or fallen angels under the dominion of the head fallen angel, Satan! The irony of course is that demons were behind these idols worshiped by the Greeks! (cf 1 Cor 10:20, 21). The true and living God is Jesus Whom these "foolish philosophical babblers" (another irony!) classified as "daimonion"!

**John MacArthur** explains that "**Demons** are the spiritual force **behind all idolatry**. Those who sacrifice to idols sacrifice to demons. When worshipers believe an idol represents an actual god, Satan sends one of his demon emissaries to act out the part of that imaginary god. There is never a god behind an idol, but there is always a spiritual force; and that force is always evil, always demonic. Demons can exhibit considerable power. Many cultic and pagan religious claims are faked and exaggerated; but many are true. They are evil but true. Much that goes under the name of astrology, for instance, is simply exploitation of the gullible. But many predictions come true through the work of demonic forces. Demons are not unlimited in power, but they have power to perform enough wonders and to make enough predictions come true to keep superstitious worshipers deceived and loyal (1 Corinthians. Chicago: Moody Press)

**A T Robertson on seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities** - This view is put cautiously by **dokei** (**seems**). **Kataggeleus** does not occur in the old Greek, though in ecclesiastical writers, but Deissmann gives an example of the word "on a marble stele recording a decree of the Mitylenaens in honour of the Emperor Augustus," where it is the herald of the games. Here alone in the NT. **Daimonion** is used in the old Greek sense of deity or divinity whether good or bad, not in the NT sense of demons. Both this word and **kataggeleus** are used from the Athenian standpoint. ([Acts 17 - Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament](#))

**Because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection - Because** gives the reason for something preceding. Always pause to ponder and query this strategic **term of explanation**. As **Robertson** says **because** gives us the "Reason for the view just stated." **Preaching** is in the **imperfect tense** depicting Paul as preaching this good news over and over and over! Paul was like a "broken record" that repeats the same message of how Jesus can fix a "broken life!" A good pattern for all of God's ambassadors to imitate! (cf 1 Cor 11:1)

**Bullinger on Jesus and the resurrection** - They were accustomed to personify abstract ideas, as victory, pity, &c., and they may have thought that Jesus and the resurrection were two new divinities. One charge against Socrates was that of introducing new divinities.

**David Guzik** wrote that "Paul seemed unable to preach a sermon without focusing on the resurrection of Jesus. For him, none of the Christian life made sense without the triumph of Jesus' resurrection." (Ibid)

**Preaching** (literally "gospelizing", giving the only good news)(2097)(**euaggelizo/euangelizo** from **eu** = good, well + **aggello** = proclaim, tell; English = evangelize) means Paul was repeatedly announcing the good news concerning **Jesus and the resurrection**. **Euaggelizo** was often used in the Septuagint for preaching a glad or joyful message (cf. 1Sa 31:9; 2Sa 1:20; 4:10).



**Euaggelizo** in its original sense could be used to refer to a declaration of any kind of good news, but in the NT it (with 2 exceptions) refers especially to the glad tidings of the coming kingdom of God and of salvation obtained through Jesus Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Most of NT uses of **euaggelizo** are translated "preach" or "preach the gospel," whichever fits more smoothly into the context.

**Luke's** uses of **euaggelizo** (In the other Gospel surprisingly it is used only once in Mt 11:5)

Lk. 1:19; Lk. 2:10; Lk. 3:18; Lk. 4:18; Lk. 4:43; Lk. 7:22; Lk. 8:1; Lk. 9:6; Lk. 16:16; Lk. 20:1; Acts 5:42; Acts 8:4; Acts 8:12; Acts 8:25; Acts 8:35; Acts 8:40; Acts 10:36; Acts 11:20; Acts 13:32; Acts 14:7; Acts 14:15; Acts 14:21; Acts 15:35; Acts 16:10; Acts 17:18;

**Because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection** - Of course in the Roman world to deny the Greco-Roman gods and advocate for the true and living God, was indeed strange dogma! The central truth of the Gospel was always at the forefront of Paul's mind and it should likewise be at the forefront of our presentation. Spurgeon said that in his sermons regardless of the particular text of the day, he would always make a "beeline for the Cross!"

**Robertson** has an interesting note on why the philosophers said "**deities**" plural - Apparently these critics considered **anastasis** (Resurrection) another deity on a par with Jesus. The Athenians worshipped all sorts of abstract truths and virtues and they misunderstood Paul on this subject. They will leave him as soon as he mentions **the resurrection** (Acts 17:32). It is objected that Luke would not use the word in this sense here for his readers would not understand him. But Luke is describing the misapprehension of this group of philosophers and this interpretation fits in precisely. ([Acts 17](#))

**Swindoll** comments that some "saw Paul's teaching as dangerous to social order because he taught "**strange deities.**" Most philosophers dismissed the deities as too holy to be sullied by human interaction, effectively marginalizing the gods without actually denying their existence." (Ibid)

**Bob Utley** - The stumbling block of the gospel for the Jews was "a suffering Messiah" and for the Greeks it was "the resurrection" (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18–25). A personal, bodily afterlife did not fit into the Greek understanding of the gods or mankind. They asserted a divine spark in every person, trapped or imprisoned by a physical body. Salvation was deliverance from the physical and reabsorption into an impersonal or semi-personal deity.

**Strange** ([3581](#))(**xenos**) primarily means a foreigner and thus describes that which is unfamiliar because it is unknown (e.g., strange doctrine, Heb 13:9, in our present passage "strange deities"). **Xenos** can mean strange in the sense of unheard of or surprising (1 Pe 4:12+). Xenos also referred to Gentiles who were unacquainted with God as strangers or estranged or without interest in God ("strangers to the covenants of promise" = Ep 2:12+).

**Deities** ([1140](#))(**daimonion** from **daímon** = demon) most often describes demons or evil spirits who have supernatural powers and are neither human nor divine (Mt 7:22). Acts 17:18 refers specifically to heathen gods. In the context of a Jewish use it more often refers to a demon, evil spirit, devil, or one who is subject to Satan. Daimonion was used in pagan Greek writings to refer to an inferior race of divine beings, lower than the Greek gods, but more powerful than men.

**Vine** - not a diminutive of **daímon**, but the neuter of the adjective daimonios, pertaining to a demon, is also mistranslated "devil," "devils." In Acts 17:18, it denotes an inferior pagan deity. "Demons" are the spiritual agents acting in all idolatry. The idol itself is nothing, but **every idol has a "demon" associated with it who induces idolatry, with its worship and sacrifices**, 1 Corinthians 10:20,21; Revelation 9:20; cp. Deuteronomy 32:17; Isaiah 13:21; 34:14; 65:3,11. **They disseminate errors among men, and seek to seduce believers**, 1Ti 4:1. As seducing spirits they deceive men into the supposition that through mediums (those who have "familiar spirits," Leviticus 20:6,27, e.g.) they can converse with deceased human beings. Hence the destructive deception of spiritism, forbidden in Scripture, Leviticus 19:31; Deuteronomy 18:11; Isaiah 8:19. "Demons" tremble before God, James 2:19; they recognized Christ as Lord and as their future Judge, Matthew 8:29; Luke 4:41. Christ cast them out of human beings by His own power. His disciples did so in His name, and by exercising faith, e.g., Matthew 17:20. Acting under Satan (cp. Revelation 16:13,14), "demons" are permitted to afflict with bodily disease, Luke 13:16. Being unclean they tempt human beings with unclean thoughts, Matthew 10:1; Mark 5:2; 7:25; Luke 8:27-29; Revelation 16:13; 18:2, e.g. They differ in degrees of wickedness, Matthew 12:45. They will instigate the rulers of the nations at the end of this age to make war against God and His Christ, Revelation 16:14. ([Demon, Demonic - Vine's Expository Dictionary of NT Words](#))

**NIDNTT** - (In classic literature) **daimōn** is derived from **daímai**, divide, apportion. It may be connected with the idea of the god of the dead as the divider of corpses. It denotes superhuman power, god, goddess, destiny, and demon. In Gk. popular belief the world was full of demons, beings between gods and men which could be appeased or controlled by magic, spells and incantations. They were first of all spirits of the dead, especially the unburied (an animistic concept), then ghosts which could appear in varying forms especially at night. There is no essential difference between → gods and demons. The latter lived in the air near the earth. The work of demons could be seen in the disasters and miseries of human fate. Through natural catastrophes they shook the cosmos. Above

all they made men sick or mad. Gk. philosophy was not able to free itself completely from this belief. The world was not a system of abstract forces, but was filled with demons. Offensive myths about the gods were explained away or opposed by using the idea of demon. The problem of divine providence was also approached from this standpoint. In Homer's *Il.*, *daimōn* is still sometimes used for the gods, but in the *Od.*, this was avoided so as not to place them on the same level as lower spirits. In Hesiod during the golden age men became demons after death. As Zeus' representatives they watched over human behaviour, apportioning rewards and punishments at his command. For Empedocles the *daimōn* was a separate spiritual being, not the *psychē* which accompanied a man from birth. Socrates' *daimonion*, his "good spirit", had the same characteristics. It dissuaded, but never advised him (Plato, *Apology*, 31c, 8 ff.). *daimōn* was even equated with the *hēgemonikon* (the authoritative part of the soul, the reason) of the Stoics. In later systems (Neoplatonism, Porphyry) whole hierarchies and courses of demons were drawn up. The demons were mediators between gods and men. Sometimes they supervised men. They could also be considered as one of the stages leading from deity to matter. *daimonion* is the adj. of *daimōn*, and is used as a noun as the "divine". It expresses that which lies outside "human capacity and is thus to be attributed to the intervention of higher powers" (W. Foerster, *TDNT* II 8). In popular belief *daimonion* was used as a diminutive of *daimōn*. Philo and Josephus stood entirely in the Gk. tradition. Philo considered that → angels and demons were of the same nature, but angels kept their distance from the earth and were used by God as messengers. Josephus used *daimonia* especially for evil spirits. (New international dictionary of New Testament theology)

Nineteen times (only in the synoptic Gospels, but not in John) **daimonion** is combined with **ekballo** = cast out demons.

#### See Dictionary Articles:

- [Demon - ISBE](#)
- [Demon - Baker's Evangelical](#)
- [Demon Possession - Holman](#)
- [Demon - Wikipedia](#)
- [Demon - Multiple Questions about Angels and Demons](#)

**Thayer** (summary) - 1. the divine Power, deity, divinity; so sometimes in secular authors as Josephus, Acts 17:18 2. a spirit, a being inferior to God, superior to men (Lk 4:33) to have a demon, be possessed by a demon, is said of those who either suffer from some exceptionally severe disease, Luke 4:33; 8:27 or act and speak as though they were mad, Matt. 11:18; Luke 7:33; Jn 7:20; 8:48-49,52; 10:20. According to a Jewish opinion which passed over to the Christians, the **demons** are the "**gods**" of the Gentiles and the authors of **idolatry** (Ps. 96:5, and Dt. 32:17; Ps 106:37) , the prince of the demons, or the devil: Matt. 9:34; 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15; they are said to enter into (the body of) one to vex him with diseases: Luke 8:30,32f; when they are forced to come out of one to restore him to health: Mt. 9:33; 17:18; Mark 7:29, 30; Lk 4:35,41; 8:2,33,35. to have a demon, be possessed by a demon, is said of those who either suffer from some exceptionally severe disease, Luke 4:33; 8:27; or act and speak as though they were mad, Mt. 11:18; Lk 7:33; Jn 7:20; 8:48f,52; 10:20. The apostle Paul, though teaching that the gods of the Gentiles are a fiction (1Cor. 8:4; 10:19), thinks that the conception of them has been put into the minds of men by demons, who appropriate to their own use and honor the sacrifices offered to idols. 1Cor 10:20 (from the Septuagint of Deut. 32:17, cf. Baruch 4:7), and those who frequent the sacrificial feasts of the Gentiles come into fellowship with demons, 1Cor 10:20f. Pernicious errors are disseminated by demons even among Christians, seducing them from the truth, 1Ti 4:1. Josephus, also makes mention of *daimonia* taking possession of men, *Antiquities* 6, 11, 2f; 6, 8, 2; 8, 2, 5; but he sees in them, not as the NT writers do, bad angels, but the spirits of wicked men deceased.

**Daimonion** - 63x in 55v - Usage: deities(1), demon(19), demons(43).

Matthew 7:22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out **demons**, and in Your name perform many miracles?'

Matthew 9:33 After the demon was cast out, the mute man spoke; and the crowds were amazed, and were saying, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel." 34 But the Pharisees were saying, "He casts out the **demons** by the ruler of the **demons**."

Matthew 10:8 "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out **demons**. Freely you received, freely give.

Matthew 11:18 "For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a **demon**!'

Matthew 12:24 But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "This man casts out **demons** only by Beelzebul the ruler of the **demons**."

27 "If I by Beelzebul cast out **demons**, by whom do your sons cast them out? For this reason they will be your judges.

28 "But if I cast out **demons** by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Matthew 17:18 And Jesus rebuked him, and the **demon** came out of him, and the boy was cured at once.

Mark 1:34 And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many **demons**; and He was not permitting the demons to speak, because they knew who He was.

39 And He went into their synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out the **demons**.

Mark 3:15 and to have authority to cast out the **demons**.

22 The scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "He casts out the **demons** by the ruler of the **demons**."

Mark 6:13 And they were casting out many **demons** and were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them.

Mark 7:26 Now the woman was a Gentile, of the Syrophenician race. And she kept asking Him to cast the **demon** out of her daughter.

29 And He said to her, "Because of this answer go; the **demon** has gone out of your daughter."

30 And going back to her home, she found the child lying on the bed, the demon having left.

Mark 9:38 John said to Him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out **demons** in Your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us."

Mark 16:9 Now after He had risen early on the first day of the week, He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven **demons**.

17 "These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out **demons**, they will speak with new tongues;

Luke 4:33 In the synagogue there was a man possessed by the spirit of an unclean **demon**, and he cried out with a loud voice,

35 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet and come out of him!" And when the **demon** had thrown him down in the midst of the people, he came out of him without doing him any harm.

41 **Demons** also were coming out of many, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But rebuking them, He would not allow them to speak, because they knew Him to be the Christ.

Luke 7:33 "For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a **demon**!'

Luke 8:2 and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven **demons** had gone out,

27 And when He came out onto the land, He was met by a man from the city who was possessed with **demons**; and who had not put on any clothing for a long time, and was not living in a house, but in the tombs.

29 For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had seized him many times; and he was bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard, and yet he would break his bonds and be driven by the **demon** into the desert.

30 And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion"; for many **demons** had entered him.

33 And the **demons** came out of the man and entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

35 The people went out to see what had happened; and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the **demons** had gone out, sitting down at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they became frightened.

38 But the man from whom the **demons** had gone out was begging Him that he might accompany Him; but He sent him away, saying,

Luke 9:1 And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the **demons** and to heal diseases.

42 While he was still approaching, the **demon** slammed him to the ground and threw him into a convulsion.

But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the boy and gave him back to his father.

49 John answered and said, "Master, we saw someone casting out **demons** in Your name; and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow along with us."

Luke 10:17 The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the **demons** are subject to us in Your name."

Luke 11:14 And He was casting out a **demon**, and it was mute; when the **demon** had gone out, the mute man spoke; and the crowds were amazed.

15 But some of them said, "He casts out **demons** by Beelzebul, the ruler of the **demons**."

18 "If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out **demons** by Beelzebul.

19 "And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? So they will be your judges.

20 "But if I cast out **demons** by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Luke 13:32 And He said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out **demons** and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I reach My goal.'

John 7:20 The crowd answered, "You have a **demon**! Who seeks to kill You?"

John 8:48 The Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a **demon**?"

49 Jesus answered, "I do not have a **demon**; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me.

52 The Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a **demon**. Abraham died, and the prophets also; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word, he will never taste of death.'

John 10:20 Many of them were saying, "He has a **demon** and is insane. Why do you listen to Him?"

21 Others were saying, "These are not the sayings of one demon-possessed. A **demon** cannot open the eyes of the blind, can he?"

Acts 17:18 And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, "What would this idle babbler wish to say?" Others, "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange **deities**,"-- because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.

1 Corinthians 10:20 No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to **demons** and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in **demons**. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of **demons**; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of **demons**.

1 Timothy 4:1 But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of **demons**,

James 2:19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the **demons** also believe, and shudder.

Revelation 9:20 The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship **demons**, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk;

Revelation 16:14 for they are spirits of **demons**, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.

Revelation 18:2 And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of **demons** and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird.

There are only 7 uses of **daimonion** in the non-apocryphal Septuagint - Dt 32:17; Ps 91:6; 96:5; 106:37; Isa 13:21; 34:14; 65:3

Deuteronomy 32:17 "They sacrificed to **demons** who were not God, To gods whom they have not known, New gods who came lately, Whom your fathers did not dread.

Psalm 91:6 Of the pestilence that stalks in darkness, Or of the **destruction** (**Lxx = daimonion**) that lays waste at noon.

Psalm 96:5 For all the gods of the peoples are **idols** (**Lxx = daimonion**), But the LORD made the heavens.

Psalm 106:37 They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the **demons**,

Isaiah 13:21 But desert creatures will lie down there, And their houses will be full of owls; Ostriches also will live there, and shaggy goats will frolic there.

Isaiah 34:14 The desert creatures will meet with the wolves, The hairy goat also will cry to its kind; Yes, the night monster will settle there And will find herself a resting place.

Isaiah 65:3 A people who continually provoke Me to My face, Offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on bricks;

**C H Spurgeon** once preached a sermon in which he alluded to the inherent problem of **philosophy** as opposed to **theology**...

It has been said by someone that "**the proper study of mankind is man.**" I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God's elect is God; the proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father...Would you lose your sorrows? Would you drown your cares? Then go, plunge yourself in the Godhead's deepest sea; be lost in his immensity; and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul; so calm the swelling billows of grief and sorrow; so speak peace to the winds of trial, as a **devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead.** ([The Immutability of God](#))

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## Foreign Worship

Read: Acts 17:16-31

"[Paul] seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods," because he preached to them Jesus. —Acts 17:18

During a trip to the Far East, I visited an unusual shrine made up of hundreds of statues. According to our guide, worshipers would pick the statue that looked the most like an ancestor and pray to it.

A few years ago, I read about a student named Le Thai. An ancestor worshiper, he found great comfort in praying to his deceased grandmother. Because he was praying to someone he knew and loved, he found this to be personal and intimate.

But when he came from Vietnam to the US to study, Le Thai was introduced to Christianity. It sounded like a fairy tale based on American thinking. To him, it was the worship of a foreign God (see Acts 17:18).

Then a Christian friend invited him to visit his home on Christmas. He saw a Christian family in action and heard again the story of Jesus. Le Thai listened. He read John 3 about being "born again" and asked questions. He began to feel the pull of the Holy Spirit. Finally, he realized that Christianity was true. He trusted Jesus as his personal Savior.

When friends see Christianity as foreign worship, we need to respect their heritage while sharing the gospel graciously and giving them time to explore Christianity. And then trust the Spirit to do His work. By Dave Branon [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

Man gropes his way through life's dark maze,  
To gods unknown he often prays,  
Until one day he meets God's Son—  
At last he's found the Living One!  
—D. De Haan

**God is the only true God.**

**Acts 17:19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming?"**

- **Areopagus or, Mars'-hill.** Acts 17:22; "It was the highest court in Athens."
- **May** Acts 17:20; 24:24; 25:22; 26:1; Matthew 10:18
- **new** Mark 1:27; John 13:34; 1John 2:7,8
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

- [Acts 17:16-34 God's Man Confronts Satan's City](#) - John MacArthur
- [Acts 17:16-34 The God of Resurrection](#) - John MacArthur

Raphael's Painting of Paul's Aeropagus Sermon  
 Click to Enlarge

**And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus** - Clearly Paul's words had stirred up the "[intelligentsia!](#)" **They** refers to those who grabbed Paul and brought him to the venerable council (or court) that had charge of religious and educational matters in Athens in Paul's time and it had considerable power in Roman times, recalling that Athens was a [free city in the Roman Empire](#) and thus had the privilege to exercise self-governance. The council/court possibly met on the Hill of Ares West of the [Acropolis](#) ([picture of Acropolis](#)), the hill also being known as the **Areopagus**, though some think it met in a building in the agora (marketplace).

**Took** (1949)([epilambano](#)) means to lay hold of, get a good grip on, take possession of. All NT uses are in the [middle voice](#) which speaks of their personal involvement.

#### Resources on Evangelistic Approach of Paul:

- [John Appleby, "Paul on Mars Hill: our role model for evangelising people around us today?"](#)
- [E M Blaiklock - The Areopagus Address](#)

**They took hold of him** - "to lay hold of, but with no necessary sense of violence (Acts 9:27; Acts 23:27; Mk 8:23), unless the idea is that Paul was to be tried before the Court of Areopagus for the crime of bringing in strange gods. But the day for that had passed in Athens. Even so it is not clear whether "unto the Areopagus (epi ton Areion Pagon ") means the Hill of Mars (Areopagus = Romanized to "Mars' hill") (west of the Acropolis, north of the agora and reached by a flight of steps in the rock) or the court itself which met elsewhere as well as on the hills, usually in fact in the Stoa Basilica opening on the agora and near to the place where the dispute had gone on. Raphael's painting with Paul standing on Mars Hill has made us all familiar with the common view, but it is quite uncertain if it is true. There was not room on the summit for a large gathering. If Paul was brought before the Court of Areopagus (commonly called the Areopagus as here), it was not for trial as a criminal, but simply for examination concerning his new teaching in this university city whether it was strictly legal or not. Paul was really engaged in proselytism to turn the Athenians away from their old gods to Jesus Christ. But "the court of refined and polished Athenians was very different from the rough provincial magistrates of Philippi, and the philosophers who presented Paul to their cognizance very different from the mob of Thessalonians" (Rackham). It was all very polite." ([Acts 17 - Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament](#) )

**MacArthur** writes - Paul created enough of a stir that finally they took him and brought him to the Areopagus. The Areopagus was a court, so named for the hill on which it had once met. The power of that tribunal had fluctuated over the centuries but in Roman times was considerable. (Athens was a free city in the Roman Empire, with the right of self-government.) Paul was not formally tried before this court (which several centuries earlier had condemned Socrates), but he was informally required to give an account of his teaching. ([Acts 1-12; Acts 13-28 Moody Press](#))

**Areopagus** (697)([Areios Pagos](#)) referred originally to a hill about 370 feet high west of the Acropolis of Athens. The name **Areopagus** translated literally means "hill of Ares" ([Ares](#) [god of war] in Latin = Mars and so "Mars Hill").

**William Barclay** says **Areopagus** "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. There, in the most learned city in the world and before the most exclusive of courts, Paul had to state his faith. It might have daunted anyone else; but Paul was never ashamed of the Gospel of Christ (Ro 1:16). To him this was another God-given opportunity to witness for Christ (cf Eph 5:16, Col 4:5-6)."

**Gilbrant** - According to tradition it received its name because here the god Ares (Mars) was tried for the murder of Halirrothios (Pausanias 1.28.5). Another tradition made the hill the site where Orestes was tried for the murder of his mother (Pausanias *ibid.*; see also Aeschylus *The Eumenides*). It is possible a temple of Ares once stood here (Finegan, "Areopagus," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*). In historical times **the council of the Areopagus** met here and presided over Athens. It was made up of ex-Archons—the highest leaders of Athens. According to Aristotle it largely ran the city-state as well as served as a court (*Constitution of Athens* 3.6). Its members served for life. Its powers remained substantially the same through the reforms of Solon (first quarter of the Sixth Century B.C.). But under the reforms of Cleisthenes (500 B.C.) and later Ephialtes (462 B.C.) the Areopagus lost most of its power, the Council of the Five Hundred and the Jury-courts assuming most of its authority. Its power oscillated during the next 150 years, but gradually got weaker so that by Aristotle's time (ca. 340 B.C.) it had jurisdiction only over murder trials (see *Constitution of Athens* 57.3). Eventually the council transferred its meeting place from the hill to the Royal Portico in the Agora (the locale of the Jury-courts) (Bruce, *New International Commentary, Acts*, p.352). However, under Roman authority the Areopagus council had certain local powers, namely over forgery cases, over standards of measure, and over matters of religion and education (Dosker,

"Areopagus," International Standard Bible Encyclopedia). It also had jurisdiction over visitors (Bruce, p.352) and commanded great respect, although it had no real independent status. Athens was part of the province of Achaia and was governed by a Roman proconsul. The capital of Achaia was Corinth not Athens. It is likely that when Paul was in Athens he was in some formal manner brought before the council (it is to the council of the Areopagus that Paul was taken, not necessarily to the hill site itself), although from the nature of his speech he may not have been on trial since he appears to have been free to leave without incident. It is possible the authorities were simply curious to know exactly what Paul was teaching. (See Acts 17:16ff.) (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary)

**Vincent - Areopagus = The Hill of Mars:** the seat of the ancient and venerable Athenian court which decided the most solemn questions connected with religion. **Socrates** was arraigned and condemned here on the charge of innovating on the state religion. It received its name from the legend of the trial of Mars for the murder of the son of Neptune. The judges sat in the open air upon seats hewn out in the rock, on a platform ascended by a flight of stone steps immediately from the market-place. A temple of Mars was on the brow of the edifice, and the sanctuary of the Furies was in a broken cleft of the rock immediately below the judges' seats. The Acropolis rose above it, with the **Parthenon** and the colossal statue of Athene. "It was a scene with which the dread recollections of centuries were associated. Those who withdrew to the Areopagus from the Agora, came, as it were, into the presence of a higher power. No place in Athens was so suitable for a discourse upon the mysteries of religion" (Conybeare and Hewson). ([Acts 17 - Vincent's Word Studies](#))

**May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming** - Their question is a great one! The word for **know** ([ginosko](#)) means to know by experience, the very word Jesus used in His last great prayer in John 17 declaring ""This is eternal life, that **they may know** ([ginosko](#)) You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." (Jn 17:3).

**Teaching** ([1322](#))([didache](#) from [didasko](#) = to give instruction in a formal or informal setting with the highest possible development of the pupil as the goal; English = didactic = intended to teach, particularly in having moral instruction as an ulterior motive) is a noun which describes the activity of teaching (instruction). In the passive sense, it describes teaching which is given. In Acts 2:42+ **didache** describes the early church giving primacy to "the apostles' teaching." The Jewish religious leaders instructed the apostles saying "We gave you strict orders not to continue **teaching** in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us."(Acts 5:28+) And in Acts 13:12+ "the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the **teaching** of the Lord." This last use is intriguing in the present context, for here are these philosophically disposed men who want to know the teaching and clearly Paul has been giving out the "teaching of the Lord." So the seed was the same for the Proconsul and the Philosophers, and the soil of the former was good (Lk 8:15), while the soil of the hearts of the philosophers was not so good (in Acts 17:32 some sneered, some wanted more, but in Acts 17:34 only a few received the Word implanted able to save their souls - James 1:21+). The "seed" which constituted Paul's **teaching** was good.

**Proclaiming** ([2980](#))([laleo](#)) is the Greek verb meaning to make a sound and then to utter words. Note the [present tense](#) indicating Paul was continuously speaking this **teaching** again giving us all a pattern to imitate (1 Cor 11:1).

## Areopagus

([Areopagus - Wikipedia](#)) - AREOPAGUS - ar-e-op'-a-gus (Areios pagos; Acts 17:19,22. Mars' Hill, Acts 17:22 the King James Version): A sort of spur jutting out from the western end of the Acropolis and separated from it by a very short saddle. Traces of old steps cut in the rock are still to be seen. Underneath are deep grottoes, once the home of the Eumenides (Furies). On the flat surface of the summit are signs still visible of a smoothing of the stone for seats. Directly below to the North was the old Athenian agora, or market-place. To the East, on the descent from the Acropolis, could be seen in antiquity a small semicircular platform--the orchestra--from which rose the precipitous rock of the citadel. Here the booksellers kept their stalls; here the work of Anaxagoras could be bought for a drachma; from here his physical philosophy was disseminated, then, through Euripides, the poetic associate of Socrates and the sophists, leavened the drama, and finally reached the people of Athens. Then came the Stoics and Epicureans who taught philosophy and religion as a system, not as a faith, and spent their time in searching out some new thing in creed and dogma and opinion. Five centuries earlier Socrates was brought to this very Areopagus to face the charges of his accusers. To this same spot the apostle Paul came almost five hundred years after 399 BC, when the Attic martyr was executed, with the same earnestness, the same deep-rooted convictions, and with even greater ardor, to meet the philosophers of fashion. The Athenian guides will show you the exact place where the apostle stood, and in what direction he faced when he addressed his audience. No city has ever seen such a forest of statues as studded the market-place, the streets and the sides and summit of the Acropolis of Athens. A large part of this wealth of art was in full view of the speaker, and the apostle naturally made this extraordinary display of votive statues and offerings the starting-point of his address. He finds the Athenians extremely religious. He had found an altar to a god unknown. Then he develops theme of the great and only God, not from the Hebrew, but from the Greek, the Stoic point of view.

His audiences consisted, on the one hand, of the advocates of prudence as the means, and pleasure as the end (the Epicureans); on the other, of the advocates of duty, of living in harmony with the intelligence which rules the world for good. He frankly expresses his sympathy with the nobler principles of the Stoic doctrine. But neither Stoic nor Epicurean could believe the declarations of the apostle: the latter believed death to be the end of all things, the former thought that the soul at death was absorbed again into that from which it sprang. Both understood Paul as proclaiming to them in **Jesus** and **Anastasis** ("resurrection") some new deities. When they finally ascertained that Jesus was ordained by God to judge the world, and that Anastasis was merely the resurrection of the dead, they were disappointed. Some scoffed, others departed, doubtless with the feeling that they had already given audience too long to such a fanatic. The Areopagus, or Hill of Ares, was the ancient seat of the court of the same name, the establishment of which leads us far back into the mythical period long before the dawn of history. This court exercised the right of capital punishment. In 594 BC the jurisdiction in criminal cases was given to the archons who had discharged the duties of their office well and honorably, consequently to the noblest, richest and most distinguished citizens of Athens. The Areopagus saw that the laws in force were observed and executed by the properly constituted authorities; it could bring officials to trial for their acts while in office, even raise objections to all resolutions of the Council and of the General Assembly, if the court perceived a danger to the state, or subversion of the constitution. The Areopagus also protected the worship of the gods, the sanctuaries and sacred festivals, and the olive trees of Athens; and it supervised the religious sentiments of the people, the moral conduct of the citizens, as well as the education of the youth. Without waiting for a formal accusation the Areopagus could summon any citizen to court, examine, convict and punish him. Under unusual circumstances full powers could be granted by the people to this body for the conduct of various affairs of state; when the safety of the city was menaced, the court acted even without waiting for full power to be conferred upon it. The tenure of office was for life, and the number of members without restriction. The court sat at night at the end of each month and for three nights in succession. The place of meeting was a simple house, built of clay, which was still to be seen in the time of Vitruvius. The Areopagus, hallowed by the sacred traditions of the past, a dignified and august body, was independent of and uninfluenced by the wavering discordant multitude, and was not affected by the ever-changing public opinion. Conservative almost to a fault, it did the state good service by holding in check the too rash and radical younger spirits. When the democratic party came to power, after Cimon's banishment, one of its first acts was to limit the powers of the Areopagus. By the law of Ephialtes in 460 the court lost practically all jurisdiction. The supervision of the government was transferred to the nomophulakes (law-guardians). At the end of the Peloponnesian war, however, in 403 its old rights were restored. The court remained in existence down to the time of the emperors. From Acts 17:19,22 we learn that it existed in the time of Claudius. One of its members was converted to the Christian faith (17:34). It was probably abolished by Vespasian. -- J. E. Harry (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia)

### Acts 17:20 For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean.

- **strange** Hosea 8:12; Matthew 19:23-25; Mark 10:24-26; John 6:60; 7:35,36; 1Corinthians 1:18,23; 1Corinthians 2:14; Hebrews 5:11; 1Peter 4:4
- **what** Acts 17:2:12; 10:17; Mark 9:10
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Acts 17:16-34 God's Man Confronts Satan's City](#) - John MacArthur
- [Acts 17:16-34 The God of Resurrection](#) - John MacArthur

## THE GOSPEL IS STRANGE TO NATURAL MEN!

**For** (gar) - Term of explanation. This explains their statement "new teaching" which they describe as "strange."

**You are bringing some strange things to our ears**- "things surprising or shocking us." Paul was "bringing" **Jesus and the resurrection** and clearly they had never heard this teaching before. And this was the honey that attracted the bees so to speak. The Athenians ("bees") were attracted to any and all "new teaching" so Paul would be given a hearing by the erudite fools.

**Bringing** (1533)(**eisphero** from **eis** = in or to, into + **phero** = to bring, bear) means literally to bring into as in Lk 5:18, 19, Heb 13:11. Figuratively in the present passage **eisphero** means to bring into someone's ears and so to "announce." **Robertson** notes that is "The very verb used by Xenophon (Mem. I) about Socrates.

**Strange things** (3579)(**xenizo** from **xenos** = a stranger, foreigner) means to receive as a guest. In this passage **xenizo** is used intransitively referring to something strange, novel, surprising, causing wonder. The idea is to affect with novelty. To have an emotional or cognitive impact upon someone by introducing something new or strange.

**Xenizo** in Acts - Acts 10:6; Acts 10:18; Acts 10:23; Acts 10:32; Acts 17:20; Acts 21:16; Acts 28:7



**So we want to know what these things mean** - The old saying is "curiosity killed the cat," but in this case curiosity saved a few! (Acts 17:32-34). They want to know the purpose and aim of Paul's "new teaching."

**Know** (1097)(**ginosko**) is the same verb used in Acts 17:19. They are still being relatively polite and repetition of **ginosko** emphasizes their desire to know. Sadly they wanted knowledge, but not knowledge that would save them. There are many like these men today who want to know about Jesus or perhaps even know about Him but in the tragedies of tragedies, they do not really, intimately, personally know Him. The just know "about Him," and are among those who one day will hear those fateful words from the lips of Jesus, the Judge of all mankind (Jn 5:22)...

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; **DEPART** (present imperative) **FROM ME**, YOU WHO PRACTICE (present tense = as their lifestyle!) **LAWLESSNESS.**' (Mt 7:21-23+)

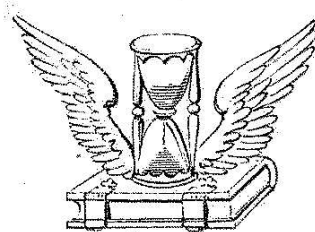
They were on the right track in one sense for in Hosea 6:6 God tells us what He desires - He want sinful men to know Him!

I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, And in the **knowledge** (Lxx = epignosis) **of God** rather than burnt offerings.

The problem with pagans even those who are religious is they "do not know God." (1 Th 4:5) So a pagan or heathen is not just a native in deepest darkest Africa, but is the stock broker on Wall Street. They are heathens because they do not know God. And of course the only way to know God is to know and believe in His Son (Jn 14:9, 6).

**Acts 17:21 (Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.)**

- **spent** Ephesians 5:16; Colossians 4:5; 2Th 3:11,12; 1 Timothy 5:13; 2 Timothy 2:16,17
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Acts 17:16-34 God's Man Confronts Satan's City](#) - John MacArthur
- [Acts 17:16-34 The God of Resurrection](#) - John MacArthur



## **WASTING TIME ON TRIVIAL TEMPORAL PURSUITS**

**Trivial Pursuit** is a famous board game, but sadly many are playing it out in real life! The English word **trivial** means of little worth, little substance, little significance, something unimportant, insignificant, inconsequential, minor, of no/little account, of no/little consequence, of no/little importance. That's what these "wise" men in the intellectual capital of the world were foolishly doing, and as discussed below this is tragically what many/most of mankind is doing with their one short life which God has given them and which the Bible depicts with several vivid metaphors such as a **breath** (Ps 39:5, 144:4, Job 7:6-7), a **vapor** (James 4:14), a **shadow...grass** (Ps 102:11; Ps 37:2, 103:15, Ps 40:6-8)!

**Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new** - This proclivity of ancient intellectual philosophers is still characteristic of modern evolutionists, especially those espousing New Age concepts. (Henry Morris) "The new soon became stale with these itching and frivolous Athenians." (Robertson) Does this not recall Paul's warning to Timothy that men will have itching ears and turn from the truth to myths (2 Ti 4:3-4+)?

**Jack Arnold** - **Demonsthenes** rebuked the Athenians for running around and asking the question, "What news?" Their endless speculative philosophy led them to hear a new truth, find a new god, erect a new altar or experience something new. They could

never be satisfied because they had never found the truth. They were forever seeking and never coming to the knowledge of the truth. ([Sermon](#))

Time is the one commodity we cannot buy and these foolish "intelligent" men were wasting the precious moments discussing thoughts that had no eternal value. But Paul was about to change that, for now, for the first time, these brilliant men would hear about the only true God in Jesus Who had died and rose and is alive.

**THOUGHT** - How many today in affluent America are wasting their time in trivial pursuits that will vanish into nothingness in eternity. And this description sadly fits many today in America who would claim to be Christians but who are spending their time in nothing other than focusing on things which are seen, ignoring the things which are unseen. Paul writes that believers "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are **temporal**, but the things which are not seen are **eternal**." (2 Cor 4:18+) O that the church of Jesus Christ would experience a revival, for only then will she begin to see that the things of eternity are the only things that will count for eternity! May our prayer be that of America's greatest theologian [Jonathan Edwards](#) who prayed "O Lord please stamp eternity on my eyeballs." Amen! Only then will really begin to grasp the significance of the short time we have on earth to "redeem." [Tempus fugit](#) - time flies. [Carpe diem](#) - Seize the day. [Coram Deo](#) - before the face of God.

**Spend their time** (2119) ([eukaireo](#) from [eukairos](#) - from [eu](#) = good + [kairos](#) = opportunity) to have convenient time or opportunity (Mk 6:31). To take advantage of the element of time as providing an opportunity. To enjoy doing, spend time enjoying. To experience a favorable time or occasion for some activity. (BDAG) Accompanied by the prep. it means "to devote one's leisure to". Used on 3x - Mk 6:31, Acts 17:21, 1 Cor 16:12 (have time(1), opportunity(1), spend...time(1).)

**Gilbrant** - In secular Greek the primary meaning of [eukaireō](#) is "to have a favorable opportunity, time, or leisure." Secondary meanings are "to devote one's leisure" (to a thing), "to enjoy good times," "to prosper." The term [eukaireō](#) is not found in the Septuagint (Ibid)

**Vincent** on **something new** - Literally **newer**: newer than that which was then passing current as new. The comparative was regularly used by the Greeks in the question what news? They contrasted what was new with what had been new up to the time of asking. The idiom vividly characterizes the state of the Athenian mind. Bengel aptly says, "New things at once became of no account; newer things were being sought for." Their own orators and poets lashed them for this peculiarity. Aristophanes styles Athens the city of the gapers ("Knights," 1262). Demades said that the crest of Athens ought to be a great tongue. Demosthenes asks them, "Is it all your care to go about up and down the market, asking each other, 'Is there any news?'" In the speech of Cleon to the Athenians, given by Thucydides (iii., 38), he says: "No men are better dupes, sooner deceived by novel notions, or slower to follow approved advice. You despise what is familiar, while you are worshippers of every new extravagance. You are always hankering after an ideal state, but you do not give your minds even to what is straight before you. In a word, you are at the mercy of your own ears." ([Acts 17 - Vincent's Word Studies](#))

**Lenski** comments that "If they had time for nothing else they always had plenty of it for anything "newer," just out and thus newer than what they had heard thus far. They were enamored of "the latest" as we should call it, both they and the resident foreigners who had come there and were living there for a while. They loved both to state and to hear something new. Both Thucydides and Demosthenes rebuke the Athenians for this passion for the new. It tended to make them exceedingly superficial. They might welcome the gospel, the greatest news in the world, but only for an hour; when something newer came along, they would cast the gospel aside as being old. The world still has many religious Athenians. Religion must be progressive, have new doctrines, "advanced ideas," not everlastingly repeat the old "categories or patterns of thought." They are like the vain woman who would never dream of appearing in last year's dress or hat. (The Interpretation of The Acts of the Apostles)

**Acts 17:22** So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects.

- **Mars'-hill or, the court of the Areopagites.**
- **I perceive** Acts 17:16; 19:35; 25:19; Jeremiah 10:2,3; 50:38
- **William Ramsay** - [The Speech Before the Council of Areopagus](#)
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Acts 17:16-34 God's Man Confronts Satan's City](#) - John MacArthur
- [Acts 17:16-34 The God of Resurrection](#) - John MacArthur
- [Acts 17:22-24 Getting to Know the Unknown God, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur

## FIRST THING BE COURTEOUS

In presenting the Gospel, Paul shows us the first thing is be courteous. Notice he begins where his listeners are, not denouncing or attacking their gross idolatry, but actually paying them a compliment that they were **very religious**.

**Brian Bill** explains that "First words matter. If he loses his audience—either by boring them or insulting them—he'll never get them back again. To Paul, the Athenians were like blind men groping in the dark towards a God they did not know and could not find. But no kind person makes sport of the blind. Write it down in large letters: You cannot insult a person into the Kingdom of God. Were not the Athenians idolaters? Yes they were. But he didn't begin by saying, "I've come to expose your sins, you dirty, wretched, hell-bound, idol-worshipping, heathenistic pagans. Thank God I'm here because I'm going to lead you to Jesus." They wouldn't have given him the time of day if he had said that. Are you courteous when you spend time with people who are not Christians yet? Or, are you secretly angry with them because of some of the things they do? If so, we need to remember that people without Christ are going to sin. In other words, we shouldn't be surprised when non-Christians act like non-Christians. Are you kind and gracious or are you abrasive? Non-believers can pick up on our attitudes so we need to be careful. I think the early church had a good handle on this. They were so thankful for the grace of God in their own lives, that they extended this same grace to others. I'm intrigued by what we read in Acts 2:47 when it says that the believers were praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. That tells me that Christians were fun to be around. They were winsome. Upbeat. Full of grace. Non-Christians wanted to hang out with church people. Question. Do non-Christians feel that same way about you? If not, work at being more courteous." ([Sermon](#))

**ESV Study Bible** introduces this section - Paul's Areopagus address is the prime example in Acts of preaching to Gentiles. Although rooted in OT ideas, it appealed to the Greek philosophers by interacting with their thought, even quoting their own writers in a well-informed, respectful way. Its main subject was the error of idolatry. Paul began with and returned to the theme of idolatry (Acts 17:23, 29), in a well-informed manner, clearing the way for a full statement of the gospel, but he was interrupted before he could achieve this.

**So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus** - Paul was here by invitation. This was a dramatic moment like Gary Cooper in that famous gunfight scene in "[High Noon](#)!" Paul was not intimidated by the intelligence or oratorical skills of his audience. He was a man filled with the Spirit Who enabled him to be bold and confident (cf Mk 13:11, Lk 12:11-12+). And remember that humanly speaking Paul is all alone, for Silas and Timothy have not yet arrived in Athens. All eyes were on Paul, fixed and attentive, as only men looking to hear new things could be!

**Lenski** writes that "Paul had learned to take sinners as they are. The gospel had power ([dunamis](#)) to transform any of them. The old and ever new gospel was intended for all of them. Two Sanhedrists had been converted (Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea), so here one at least of the Areopagites ("Dionysius the Areopagite" - Acts 17:34) was converted....Paul's address is a masterpiece in every way: in its introduction, in its line of thought, in its aptness for the audience, in its climax. It is bold but it does not offend in a bungling manner; it refutes but it does this so as to convince and to win; it states the truth squarely and fully but so as to lift it far above the follies of error.; it is reasonable but it is directed at the heart; it seeks to win men but only by glorifying God and the Lord Jesus Christ. It was not quite concluded but it did not fail of divinely given fruit. Just ask yourself, "If you had stood in Paul's place that day, what would you have said?"(The Interpretation of The Acts of the Apostles)

**Robertson on Paul stood** - First aorist passive of *histēmi* used of Peter in Acts 2:14. Majestic figure whether on Mars Hill or in the Stoa Basilica before the Areopagus Court. There would be a crowd of spectators and philosophers in either case and Paul seized the opportunity to preach Christ to this strange audience as he did in Caesarea before Herod Agrippa and the crowd of prominent people gathered by Festus for the entertainment. Paul does not speak as a man on trial, but as one trying to get a hearing for the gospel of Christ. ([Acts 17 - Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament](#))

**Criswell** - Paul did not accuse his Athenian hearers of something wrong, such as superstition but rather he complimented them, a wise approach for a public speaker in the opening remarks to his audience. The religious character of his hearers provided common ground as a basis for communicating the specific revelation of the gospel. The logic of this statement appears forcefully as Paul adds v. 23 in the next breath.

**Ray Pritchard** comments that "By any standard, this is a masterpiece. Remember where it takes place. Paul is standing before the Areopagus—the Supreme Court of Athens. As the only Christian in the city, he has been asked to explain what he believes. It is one of the most dramatic scenes in the New Testament—Paul preaching the gospel in the intellectual capital of the world." ([You're very religious but you don't know God](#)—Acts 17:22-23)

**Men of Athens** - This is the form of address used by Demosthenes and other orators. Think for a moment about Athens. What do these men represent? They were the intellectual capital of the known world and represented the best that humanity could do in trying to come up with a god to worship. And yet clearly they fell short as testified by the fact that they had to cover their bases with

an "unknown god." As **Ray Pritchard** says "this teaches us the necessity of divine revelation. **Athens** represents the "**City of Man**" at its best—and it's still not good enough. You can't reason your way to God because human reason has been darkened by the Fall (Ephesians 4:17-19). We can still think but we can't think God's thoughts unless the Holy Spirit illuminates our minds so that we can see God's truth. The way to heaven must be revealed from above." ([To An Unknown God](#))

**I observe (theoreo) that you are very religious in all respects** - The idea of **very religious** can have a positive or negative nuance, on the one hand meaning "devout," and on the other hand meaning "superstitious." Paul is acknowledging that the Athenians are "[supernaturalists](#)" as are all men (whether they acknowledge it or not) because God has '**set eternity in their heart.**' (Eccl 3:11) Every man and woman has a "God-shaped vacuum" inside their heart because God put it there, and if people will not fill that vacuum with God, they will always fill it with something else! Augustine prayed, "You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you." As **Ray Pritchard** said "Mankind is inherently religious. Anthropologists tell us that every society on earth—no matter how primitive—has some conception of a higher power....Even the most corrupt religion demonstrates man's innate capacity to know God. "

For those with whom we seek to share the Gospel who say "I don't believe there is a God," it is more difficult to talk to them about supernatural truths. As someone has suggested when you get that response ask the individual if he has been everywhere in the universe? Of course he will be forced to say he has not (if he says he has then recommend a good psychiatrist!). And since he has not been everywhere in the universe, it is impossible for him to state absolutely there is no God. He can only say "I don't think there is a God." He is not an atheist but an agnostic. Agnostic means a person who views the existence of ultimate truth as unknowable, particularly when it comes to the existence of God. Charles Darwin is an example of a famous agnostic. Agnostics do not deny the existence of God—instead, they claim that one cannot know for certain whether God exists. The term agnostic was coined by the 19th-century British scientist Thomas H. Huxley, who believed that only material phenomena were objects of exact knowledge. Ro 1:19-20 counters this deceptive belief (but it is doubtful an agnostic would accept it!) "that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse." Even the great Jewish mind Albert Einstein said that anybody who did not believe in a cosmic power was a fool. And sadly he added that "we can never know Him." O, how wrong he was! And now he knows! The writer of Hebrews said that "he who comes to God must believe that HE IS!" (Heb 11:6). So what does the Bible say about so-called atheists? Ps 14:1 says literally "The fool has said in his heart, "No God!" and then David explains why - "They are corrupt (ruined)." Finally, many are atheist (if not actually, they live practically like there is no God) because if there is no God, there is no judgment (at least that is their deceptive logic)!

**Vincent** on **superstitious** (very religious) - This rendering and that of the Revised, somewhat superstitious, are both unfortunate. The word is compounded of **deido** = to fear, and **daimon** = a deity. It signifies either a religious or a superstitious sentiment, according to the context. Paul would have been unlikely to begin his address with a charge which would have awakened the anger of his audience. What he means to say is, "You are more divinity-fearing than the rest of the Greeks." This propensity to reverence the higher powers is a good thing in itself, only, as he shows them, it is misdirected, not rightly conscious of its object and aim. Paul proposes to guide the sentiment rightly by revealing him whom they ignorantly worship. The American revisers insist on very religious. The kindred word *deisidaimonia* occurs Acts 25:19, and in the sense of religion, though rendered in A. V. superstition. Festus would not call the Jewish religion a superstition before Agrippa, who was himself a Jew. There is the testimony of the Ephesian town-clerk, that Paul, during his three years' residence at Ephesus, did not rudely and coarsely attack the worship of the Ephesian Diana. "Nor yet blasphemers of your goddess" (Acts 19:37). ([Acts 17 - Vincent's Word Studies](#))

**Robertson** adds - **Deisidaimōn** is a neutral word (from **deido** = to fear + **daimōn** = deity). The Greeks used it either in the good sense of pious or religious or the bad sense of superstitious. Thayer suggests that Paul uses it "with kindly ambiguity." Page thinks that Luke uses the word to represent the religious feeling of the Athenians (*religiosus*) which bordered on superstition. The Vulgate has *superstitiosiores*. In Acts 25:19 Festus uses the term *deisidaimonia* for "religion." It seems unlikely that Paul should give this audience a slap in the face at the very start. The way one takes this adjective here colors Paul's whole speech before the Council of Areopagus. The comparative here as in Acts 17:21 means more religions than usual (Robertson, *Grammar*, pp. 664f.), the object of the comparison not being expressed. The Athenians had a tremendous reputation for their devotion to religion, "full of idols" (Acts 17:16). ([Acts 17 - Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament](#))

**Cleon Rogers** - God-fearing, religious, superstitious; comp., very religious. It expresses respect for or fear of the supernatural which according to its nature can be either piety or superstition (Williams; LC; TLNT). Here the comp. means "more religious than usual" (RWP). The Athenians were often praised for their piety

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**Ray Pritchard** - God Wants You to Know Him! As Paul stood before the intellectual giants of ancient Athens, he faced men who were in precisely that situation—highly educated, deeply religious and totally ignorant about God. Here's what he has said so far:

1. [You're very religious but you don't know God](#)—Acts 17:22-23.

2. [Let me tell you who God really is](#)—Acts 17:24-25.

In our text today he adds a new thought.

3. [God is closer to you than you think he is](#)—Acts 17:26-28.

He's trying to show them that God is not far off but has made Himself accessible to everyone. This is a message we need to repeat over and over again. If you don't know God, it's not God's fault. God has already done everything necessary for you to have a relationship with Him. He created the world and then left His fingerprints everywhere. He sent prophets and kings and poets with His message. Then He capped it off by sending his Son to the world. God has made it perfectly clear that His heart yearns for men and women to seek Him.

## I. What God Did

Often times it's our own pride that keeps us from turning to God. Without ever using that word, Paul strikes at the notion that the men of Athens were somehow better than anyone else.

### A. Created humanity from one man.

"From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth" (v. 26). This speaks of the common origin of the human race—that all humanity is descended from Adam. First there was Adam, then from Adam's side came Eve, then came their children, and eventually many generations stretching from Eden to the 5.7 billion people on planet earth today. This is a magnificent conception, highly Scriptural in nature. In Genesis 1:26 God said, "Let us make man in our own image." Then the next verse adds, "Male and female he created them." First there was God, then Adam, then Eve, then all the rest of us down the line. In Malachi 2:10 the prophet asks, "Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us?" The answer is yes, we have one Father and one God who created us all. **This struck hard at the pride of the Athenians who thought themselves superior to others.** They divided the human race into two parts—the Greeks and the Barbarians (everyone else). The men of Athens thought their city the greatest in Greece so they felt themselves a cut above the ordinary Greeks. Paul neatly punctures their balloon by telling them they aren't really any different from anyone else. The theory of racial superiority has led to horrible results in history. Just over a half-century ago the Nazis elevated the "pure Aryan" race and used that as an excuse to murder 12 million Jews, Slavs, Ukrainians, Russians, and others deemed inferior and unworthy. In our own country the belief in white superiority fueled slavery, segregation, and the Jim Crow Laws. It still causes men to loathe and fear others of a different color. Against the evils of racism Paul declares, "We're all from the same stock. Fruit from the same branch. Born into the same human family." This is the basis for Christian reconciliation between the races and the various ethnic groups in society and in the church. It is also confirmed by common sense. The more you travel around the world, the more common humanity seems to be. Superficially we are very different in our appearance, background, language and customs. But scratch deeper and you discover that all people are substantially the same. Once past the surface, you discover no fundamental difference between a savage in the jungle and a corporate lawyer on Wall Street or between a woman in a brothel in Rio and a refined graduate of Vassar College. Everywhere we are the same—the same longings, regrets, dreams, hopes, the same need to love and be loved, the same desire to bear children and raise a family, with the same sense that there must be a God of some kind who made us.

### Only One Race—the Human Race

The Christian gospel is fundamentally incompatible with racial prejudice. The Bible teaches us four crucial facts we must never forget:

1. All people are equally created in God's image.
2. All are deeply loved by God.
3. All are stained and tainted by sin.
4. All are able to be redeemed.

Those four facts form the basis of the doctrine of Christian equality. All people regardless of their background are significant, loved, fallen, and redeemable. Those four facts are true of all people no matter what color their skin happens to be. No race has any advantage over any other race. No group is better than any other group.

There is only one race in God's eyes—the human race. God doesn't love white people more than he loves black people. And blacks are no better than Hispanics. And Asians are just as lost as Europeans. Latinos and Native Americans are saved in exactly the same way. That's what Acts 10:34 means when it says that God is no respecter of persons. He doesn't play favorites. Skin color doesn't matter to him. Race isn't an issue with God. "Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight." As long as we live together on the earth there will be various races, colors, pigments, backgrounds, languages and cultures. These differences are not evil and should not be ignored or deprecated. There is much to appreciate in the various differences in humanity. But let us be clear on this point: There is only one race in God's eyes—the human race. Secondary differences do not matter to him the way they seem to matter so much to us. Paul's point is clear. Since we all descend from the same person, there is no room for inordinate pride or a feeling of superiority over others. We're all in this together—and we all need the saving touch of Jesus Christ. ([Acts 17:26-28 How God Reveals Himself to Us](#))

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## **Acts 17:22-31 The Carpenter Judge**

By Richard De Haan

It is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead. —Acts 10:42

Jesus Christ is the Inescapable One. We must either receive Him in this life as our loving Savior or stand before Him in the life to come as our eternal Judge.

There's a story in the Gray and Adams Commentary about a doctor who "made it his chief concern in matters of religion to degrade the character and dignity of Christ." He viewed the Savior with so much contempt that he always spoke of Him in a demeaning way by calling Him "the carpenter's son."

Eventually, the physician became terminally ill. During the weeks before his death, he became very agitated. He remarked to the person attending him, "I'm a dying man, and what affects me most of all is that I must be judged by the carpenter's son!"

That doctor faced the terrible future that awaits all who reject Christ. Yet, even in his last conscious moments, if he had trusted Jesus as Savior he could have found peace and received eternal salvation.

How have you been treating Christ? Remember, "the carpenter's son" is the Son of God. Trust Him today! You will receive the blessing of salvation—not the sentence of condemnation (John 3:17). ( [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

What will you do with Jesus?

Neutral you cannot be;

Someday your heart will be asking,

"What will He do with me?"

—Simpson

Everyone must choose—Christ or condemnation.

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## **Acts 17:22-34 Christmas In Tokyo**

By David C. McCasland

The One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you. —Acts 17:23

On Christmas Eve 2003, noted painter Makoto Fujimura gathered with other artists for a party at Sato Museum in Tokyo. Many had donated their works for a benefit exhibit to raise money for children in Afghanistan. After the meal, Mr. Fujimura, an ardent Christian who lives in New York, shared some words about the true meaning of Christmas and their opportunity as artists to create works that help bring hope into the world.

Reflecting on that event, Fujimura wrote: "I was convinced, that evening in Tokyo, that Jesus invited Himself to be among artists who may not even know His name. Some of these artists, I suspect, have already sensed His presence in their studios as they labored to create peace via their paintings. All gifts of creativity, like the Magi's [star], point straight to a stable in Bethlehem."

Paul said that God is at work among people of all nations "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" (Acts 17:27-28).

We should be alert for the Lord's presence where we least expect to see Him. Jesus may invite Himself to any Christmas party. After all, it's His birthday. ( [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The star shines forth in its glory bright

To lighten the gloom of earth's darkest night;

And Calvary's Christ will still impart

His comfort and love to the needy heart.

—Richey

This Christmas, be alert for the work and presence of Jesus.

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## **Acts 17:22-31 Common Ground**

By Dennis Fisher

That I might win those who are without law. —1 Corinthians 9:21

Roman emperors are not generally remembered for their wisdom, but there are a few exceptions. One great thinker was Marcus Aurelius, emperor of Rome from AD 161 to 180. Gifted with a brilliant mind, he was one of the great intellectual rulers in Western civilization.

Although he never became a convert to the new faith that would be called Christianity, he displayed remarkable insight. His wisdom reflects the law of God written in the heart of someone who did not have God's Word (Rom. 2:14-15). For example:

- The happiness of your life depends on the quality of your thoughts.
- You have power over your mind—not outside events.
- Your life is what your thoughts make it.

These words sound similar to Proverbs 23:7, "As [a person] thinks in his heart, so is he." We can learn helpful principles from non-Christians and use their beliefs as common ground for sharing the gospel. When Paul stood on Mars Hill addressing some of the leading intellectuals of his day, he did not belittle their beliefs but established common ground with them and then gave the gospel (Acts 17:26-28).

Let's look for common ground with our neighbors, so that we may lead them to Christ. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

What common ground do you share with your friends?

Books read Hobbies Travel

Children Sports Upbringing

Work A grief experience Military service

A faith worth having is a faith worth sharing.

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### **Acts 17:22-31 A Spiritual Journey**

By Dennis Fisher

You turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God. —1 Thessalonians 1:9

The miracles that God worked through Moses challenged the many gods of Pharaoh. Yet, in another time, there was a Pharaoh who promoted the belief in one deity. Pharaoh Akhenaten pointed to the rising and setting sun as the great deity who gave life to the earth. His religious symbol for Aton, the sun god, was represented by a single disc of light with emanating rays. Though this Pharaoh's idea came closer to the one God of the Bible, it was still idolatry.

When Paul addressed the people in Athens, he was grieved by the idolatry in that city. Yet he used the people's imperfect understanding of God to point them to the God of Scripture. Of their efforts in trying to find God, Paul said: "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands" (Acts 17:24).

In our increasingly pluralistic world, the people around us may worship a multiplicity of deities. Yet their spiritual journey need not end there. We never know when someone might be moving toward the kingdom of God. Following the example of Paul, we should respect a person's religious background, watch for spiritual receptivity, and then point him or her to the one true God of Scripture.

A Prayer: Dear Lord, help us to lead the lost away from all that is false. And to lead them to You—the one and only God— who alone offers true life. Amen.

God alone is worthy of our worship. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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### **The One True God**

**Read: Acts 17:16-34**

Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. —Philippians 2:11

The Pantheon in Rome is a magnificent circular structure that was built in 27 BC and completely reconstructed by the emperor Hadrian about ad 120. Its purpose was to unite the conquered peoples of the empire by providing a central place for their gods. When Christians were offered a niche for a statue of Jesus, they replied, "Never! He cannot stand beside gods that are not true."

In AD 609 the Pantheon became a Christian church. Centuries later, a British lecturer visited Rome and found that all the niches around the wall were empty except one. It contained a statue of Jesus.

This reminds me that Jesus Christ has no equal in the world. He stands out from all others. For that reason, Christianity is both the most exclusive and inclusive religion of all. Christ said that He Himself is the truth and the only way to God (Jn. 14:6). But forgiveness of sin and knowledge of the true God are available to all who put their faith in Christ and His atoning death. It's no wonder that Paul could not remain silent when he saw an altar in Athens addressed "to the unknown god."

Father, we believe that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Help us by Your power to let Him have His way in our lives so that others may know You, the one true God. By Dennis J. DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

He is the way, the truth, the life—  
That One whose name is Jesus;  
There is no other name on earth  
That has the power to save us.  
—Sper

You can have tons of religion without one ounce of salvation.

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Acts 17:22-34 **The One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you.**—Acts 17:23

It is said that in ancient Greece a plague once swept through Athens. To pacify the gods they supposed were responsible, altars were erected to every god known to the Greeks. Yet the scourge continued. Finally in desperation, another altar was built bearing these words: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Soon afterward, the plague subsided. Many years later, when Paul visited Athens on his second missionary journey, he walked about the city and saw that inscription. Seizing the opportunity, he proclaimed to his listeners, "The One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you." That one God, of whom they knew nothing, Paul knew personally. He presented Him as the "Lord of heaven and earth" (Acts 17:24). But the apostle didn't stop there. He also called for repentance, for the world would someday be judged in righteousness by Jesus Christ. We don't need to go through life searching for an unknown god, for the one true God has already revealed Himself to us through His Son. The moment we turn from our sin and accept Jesus as our personal Savior, we come to know the Creator Himself. Do you know Him, or is He still unknown to you? Author: Dennis J. De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Man gropes his way through life's dark maze,  
To gods unknown he often prays,  
Until the day he meets God's Son --  
At last he finds the Living One!  
--DJD

In creation, God shows us His hand;  
in redemption, He shows us His heart.

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Acts 17:22-31

God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him. - Acts 17:27

TODAY IN THE WORD

Tracing one's family tree is a popular hobby for many Americans. In fact, in 2001, the U.S. Senate passed a resolution declaring October as Family History Month. It stated, "Within the last month some 14,167,329 people researched their family history and 24 million people have used the Web and e-mail to locate or hunt for family or friends." Kim Farah, a spokesperson for the Family History Library, says that it touches a fundamental need: "It crosses faith and cultures. The positive benefits of knowing our heritage . . . gives us a sense of responsibility and self-esteem."

As believers, our self-esteem can and should be directly linked to our relationship to God. In today's passage, Paul is giving a speech in Athens, a city filled with idols (v. 16). Paul stressed the distinction between being religious and knowing the true God, and he detailed how his own God was the one true God who created the heaven and the earth (vv. 23-24).

This God is not "served by human hands" (v. 25). In other words, God does not need us in order to survive. He made us and made the world—what could He need? Yet, in this passage, Paul revealed what God desires. God made all of this "so that men would seek him" (v. 27). God loves us, but He does not manipulate our minds and hearts. He made us, and it is His desire that we would want to know Him, to find Him, and to have a relationship with Him. He does not view us as puppets on His string.

"For in him we live and move and have our being" (v. 28). Our heritage is directly linked to the divine Creator. It is natural for offspring to want to know their parents. It is natural, then, that since we are God's offspring, we will want to find our image in Him. Only in God—not in our own accomplishments, possessions, personality, or family history—can we find the source of our true identity.

APPLY THE WORD



What part of you resembles your ancestors? You might have your mother's eyes or your grandfather's nose; those attributes are an unmistakable link to your heritage. Spend some time today considering what attributes you have that link you to God, your heavenly Father. Your list might include patience with a difficult loved one, generosity toward the needy, or forgiveness of someone who hurt you. Pray that the Holy Spirit will strengthen you as you mature to look more like your Father every day.

**Acts 17:23 "For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.**

- **devotions or, gods that ye worship.** Romans 1:23-25; 1Corinthians 8:5; 2Thessalonians 2:4
- **To the unknown** - Psalms 147:20; John 17:3,25; Romans 1:20-22,28; 1 Corinthians 1:21; 2 Corinthians 4:4-6; Galatians 4:8,9; Ephesians 2:12; 1 Timothy 1:17; 1 John 5:20
- **ignorantly** Acts 17:30; Psalms 50:21; Matthew 15:9; John 4:22; 8:54
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Acts 17:22-24 Getting to Know the Unknown God, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur

### PAUL BEGINS TO MAKE KNOWN THE UNKNOWN GOD!

**Steven Cole** notes that the "two schools of philosophy were Paul's main audience for his sermon at Athens. Since they did not know about the Bible, Paul did not quote Scripture. But, as F. F. Bruce observes (*The Book of Acts* [Eerdmans], p. 355), "Like the Biblical revelation itself, his argument begins with God the Creator of all and ends with God the Judge of all." He hits on sin, righteousness, and judgment, the three areas where Jesus said the Holy Spirit would convict people."

Paul first established some common ground with his audience. He did not quote immediately from the Bible which was foreign to them. Paul's presentation is tailored to these Biblically illiterate pagan intellectuals which gives us a pattern to consider as we share the Gospel with an increasing Biblically illiterate audience. In short Paul took the approach he advocated in First Corinthians

To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some.(1 Corinthians 9:22)

**Brian Bill** says it this way "When he was courteous, he broke down barriers; when he was contemporary, he built bridges to the heart of his audience." (Ibid)

**For** - Always pause and ponder and query this small but strategic word, a **term of explanation**. **Robertson** says "Paul gives an illustration of their religiousness from his own experiences in their city."

**While I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship** - Notice that Paul was where the pagans were! Too often believers especially as they mature in the Christian life tend to congregate with believers ("holy huddle") and lose their connections with the lost of this world. Paul went where the people lived and worked (the agora). As stated above Paul does not say that he was deeply provoked in his spirit by their idolatry which in fact was the case when he had arrived. That would probably put them on the defensive! And in fact he does not use the word idols but refers to them as **objects of your worship**.

**Examining** (333)(**anatheoreo** from **ana** = emphatic + **theoreo** = to view) means view or behold attentively. **Present tense** = Paul was continually "checking out" the objects. Paul was looking carefully at these objects with much mental thought! He was serious and did not just (as we say) "blow them off!" Perhaps he was gleaning ways he could appeal to them. The only other NT use is Hebrews 13:7.

And why is examining so important? He was taking time to know the city and the people which is critical if you want to talk to them intelligently! He looked for some way to connect to them, to make a bridge from their materialistic, cultured world to the Gospel message.

**Objects of Worship** (4574)(**sebasma** from **sebazomai** = to worship, venerate) "something that relates to devotional activity" (BDAG), an object of worship or veneration, a thing worshipped. The only other use is 2 Th 2:4 where the Antichrist "opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or **object of worship**." In Athens their main objects of worship were Zeus and Aphrodite, but they also had objects of worship to abstract concepts such as justice, modesty, energy, and virtue. As we might say today, the Athenians were trying to cover all the bases to make sure they did not miss any gods!



**I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.'** - (or unknowable god which is less preferable) The altar (see another [pix](#)) is located on Palatine Hill, Rome, where once stood the palaces of the Caesars. It dates from about 100 B.C. and has the same inscription Paul encountered at Athens **To the unknown God** (Agnosto Theo). This is simply another substantiation (as if it was needed) that the Bible is God's fully inspired, inerrant, eternal, omnipotent Word.

**Brian Bill on to an unknown god** - There were a number of these in Athens. Here's the background: Several centuries before this, a plague had hit the city and a man from Cyprus advised them to take a flock of black and white sheep to the Areopagus and let them go. Wherever a sheep stopped, they would kill the sheep and offer it on the nearest altar. If there was no altar nearby, they built one and dedicated it to "**the unknown God.**" The plague eventually lifted and the altars stayed. They attributed their deliverance to one of the "unknown gods." Evidently, Paul found one of these altars and used it as his opening illustration. Think about this for a moment. 30,000 altars in one city and still they weren't sure they had enough. When you don't know the true God, you always turn to idols. And not just one, but to many of them, because one is never enough. Some of our friends and neighbors have idols as well though they might not be the kind you can see on a shelf in their house they might be a little more hidden than that. **Brothers and sisters, are you spending enough time with non-Christians? Do you know what their interests are? Do you know what they are concerned about? Do you know those things that make them happy? The things that make them cry? Have you discovered any idols in their hearts?** Be contemporary up-to-date with your neighbors, co-workers and extended family members. ([Sermon](#))

**Related Resource:**

- [An Unknown God - Wikipedia](#)

**Illustration** - Elvis was apparently fond of wearing lots of gold jewelry from various religions. When someone asked him why he wore things from so many different beliefs, he said something like, "Just coverin' all my bases. Uh-huh!"

**Robertson on to an unknown God** - Paul was quick to use this confession on the part of the Athenians of a higher power than yet known to them. So he gets his theme from this evidence of a deeper religious sense in them and makes a most clever use of it with consummate skill. ([Word Pictures in the New Testament](#))

**Barclay** - 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 steps in his sermon. ([Acts 17 - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

**Brian Bill** comments that "The phrase something **unknown** really means "in ignorance" though the hearers wouldn't have taken it that way. He tactfully tells them they don't know what they are talking about—which is literally true. It's as if he is saying, "You admit there is a God you don't know. Very well, then. I happen to know that God and I will now proclaim him to you. I will begin where you end." This is tremendous evangelistic strategy. How could they be offended when he starts by quoting from one of their own altars - "To the unknown God?" By admitting there is more to God than they know, they have opened the door for Paul to preach the gospel boldly. This is what I mean by finding common ground. It doesn't mean compromising your values in order to share the gospel. Paul here isn't compromising anything. He's just finding a way to gain a hearing with these highly intelligent people. And how did he find it? The same way you will in your own evangelism—by listening, by reading, by watching, by observing, by paying attention to what people say and do. Ecclesiastes 3:11 says that God has set eternity in every human heart. Sooner or later, that longing for eternity will express itself in one way or another. Pay attention and you'll see it when it happens. That's your common ground. That leads me to suggest a simple prayer: "Lord, give me an open door to share Christ this week. Amen." If you pray that prayer, just keep your eyes open and your ears tuned in because sooner or later, you'll sense the "God-shaped vacuum" inside the heart of those who don't know Jesus. When the door opens, be courageous and just step in. That's what Paul did. You can do it, too. ([Sermon](#))

**Unknown (57)**(**agnostos** from **a** = not + **gnostos** = known) in classic Greek meant not knowable, withdrawing oneself from being known, unrecognizable. In Acts 17:23, agnostos is used with a passive meaning, **the unknown god**, or the god who did not make himself known to man. In the pantheon of Athenian gods, there were those who the Greeks thought did not reveal themselves to man. The altars were to these unknown deities and not to the true God. The Apostle Paul revealed to them the true God Whom, likewise, they did not know, but Who did desire to make Himself known to all men!

**Agnostos** gives us our English **Agnostic** meaning "a person who holds the view that any ultimate reality (as God) is unknown and probably unknowable; broadly : one who is not committed to believing in either the existence or the nonexistence of God or a god." (Webster) ([See Agnosticism](#))

**Vincent** - to an **unknown God**. The origin of these altars, of which there were several in Athens, is a matter of conjecture. Hackett's remarks on this point are sensible, and are borne out by the following words: "whom therefore," etc. "The most rational explanation is unquestionably that of those who suppose these altars to have had their origin in the feeling of uncertainty, inherent, after all, in the minds of the heathen, whether their acknowledgment of the superior powers was sufficiently full and comprehensive; in their distinct consciousness of the limitation and imperfection of their religious views, and their consequent desire to avoid the anger of any still unacknowledged god who might be unknown to them. That no deity might punish them for neglecting his worship, or remain uninvoked in asking for blessings, they not only erected altars to all the gods named or known among them, but, distrustful still lest they might not comprehend fully the extent of their subjection and dependence, they erected them also to any other god or power that might exist, although as yet unrevealed to them ... Under these circumstances an allusion to one of these altars by the apostle would be equivalent to his saying to the Athenians thus: 'You are correct in acknowledging a divine existence beyond any which the ordinary rites of your worship recognize; there is such an existence. You are correct in confessing that this Being is unknown to you; you have no just conceptions of his nature and perfections.'" ([Acts 17 - Vincent's Word Studies](#))

Calvin said it is better to have knowledge of God than to worship without knowing Him, for God cannot be worshiped reverently unless He first becomes known. What irony -- Athenians the bastion of "learning" does not know the "god" and yet worships him. In so doing, they are in effect acknowledging that such a deity exists, but they have no knowledge of Him. Their worship is deficient because their knowledge is deficient. Worship is related to the word "worthy." If you do not know something, it is ludicrous to ascribe it worth! It is into this "spiritual (deity) vacuum" that Paul introduces the Worthy One, the Only God worthy of our worship! Paul proceeds to explain that this God is not only their Creator and Giver of breath (Acts 17:25), the Determiner of the length of their life ("having determined their appointed times" - Acts 17:26) but He will one day be their Righteous Judge! (Acts 17:31)

**A. W. Pink** has the following note regarding knowing God - God can only be known by means of a supernatural revelation of Himself Apart from the Scriptures, even a theoretical acquaintance with Him is impossible. It still holds true that 'the world by wisdom knew not God' (1Cor 1:21). Where the Scriptures are ignored, God is "the unknown God" (Acts 17:23). But something more than the Scriptures is required before the soul can know God, know Him in a real, personal, vital way. This seems to be recognized by few today. The prevailing practice assumes that a knowledge of God can be obtained through studying the Word, in the same way as a knowledge of chemistry may be secured by mastering its textbooks. An intellectual knowledge of God maybe; not so a spiritual one. A supernatural God can only be known supernatural (i.e. known in a manner above that which mere nature can acquire), by a supernatural revelation of Himself to the heart. 'God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ' (2Cor 4:6). The one who has been favored with this supernatural experience has learned that only 'in thy light shall we see light' (Ps 36:9-[note](#)).

## PAUL IS BOLD

**Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you** - More literally this reads "that you worship without knowing." Earlier they had accused him to be a **proclaimer of strange deities**. Now he proceeds to explain to the the identity of the unknown God. He is seeking to correct their **ignorance** by describing Him in the following passages. Paul's sermon might be entitled "Getting to Know the Unknown God!"

As MacArthur says "That God can be known is the clear teaching of the Bible (Deut. 4:35; 1 Kings 8:43; 1 Chron. 28:9; Ps. 9:10; Jer. 9:24; 24:7; 31:34; John 17:3). This God who can be known is the believer's message of hope to the lost world." (Ibid)

**Guzik** - Many ancient observers noticed the religious character of Athens, and some thought that Athenians were the most religious of all people. But when Paul said this of the Athenians, he didn't necessarily mean it in a positive way. Religion can lead one away from God, and if we trust in a false religion, it is little credit to say of us that we are "religious." (**ED**: The most difficult and most resistant people for me to witness to are those who claim to be religious and practice a religion filled with rituals and non-biblical traditions which ensnare their hearts and serve as a "vaccination" so to speak preventing them from hearing the true Gospel.)

**NET Note** - Paul, in typical Jewish Christian style, informs them of the true God, of whom their idols are an ignorant reflection.

**A T Robertson** observes that Paul is a proclaimer "of a God, both old and new, old in that they already worship him, new in that Paul knows who he is. By this master stroke he has brushed to one side any notion of violation of Roman law or suspicion of heresy and claims their endorsement of his new gospel, a shrewd and consummate turn. He has their attention now and proceeds to describe this God left out of their list as the one true and Supreme God."

**Worship** ([present tense](#))([2151](#))(**eusebeo**) means conducting oneself with reverent regard for divinity. **BDAG** says **eusebeo** "refers to a sense of awesome obligation arising within a system of reciprocity in which special respect is showed to those who have the greatest investment in one's well-being, such as deities and parental figures." In 1 Ti 5:4 the sense is to "practice piety in regard to

their own family." In other words "show special respect for the members of one's own household" (BDAG)

**Ignorance** (present tense)(50)(**agnoeo** from **a** = not + **noéo** = perceive, understand) not have information about, to not know, to not understand (Mk 9:32, Lk 9:45), to be unaware of, to not recognize (Ac 13:27), to be ignorant of (to lack information concerning something).

**Proclaim** (2605)(**kataggello** from **kata** = an intensifier, down + **aggelos** = messenger and **aggello** = to declare, report) literally means to "declare down". It means to announce, with focus upon the extent to which the announcement or proclamation extends and so to proclaim throughout. It means to declare plainly, openly and loudly! It was used of solemn religious messages. Webster adds that our English "proclaim" (from **pro** = before + **clamare** = to cry out) means to "declare publicly, typically insistently... in either speech or writing... and implies declaring clearly, forcefully, and authoritatively." (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary)

**Present tense** of **kataggello** points to an action in progress. Can you not even now hear Paul's voice announcing boldly in the Spirit in the agora? O to be so continually Spirit filled that we are "always ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence." (1 Pe 3:15-note).

As **Dennis Fisher** says "In our increasingly pluralistic world, the people around us may worship a multiplicity of deities. Yet their spiritual journey need not end there. We never know when someone might be moving toward the kingdom of God. Following the example of Paul, we should respect a person's religious background, watch for spiritual receptivity, and then point him or her to the one true God of Scripture." (Our Daily Bread)

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### What Is Your Style of Evangelism? Source unknown

A true heart of compassion will let those on the way to destruction know they can escape, but the only escape is through Jesus Christ. We need to tell people they're in trouble with God and that God alone has provided a way to escape.

But How? Do we all have to share the same way? No, the unbelieving world is made up of a variety of people: young, old, rich, poor, educated, uneducated, urban, rural, with different race, personalities, values, politics, and religious backgrounds.

It's going to take more than one style of evangelism to reach such a diverse population!

So what is your style?

1. **Confrontational?** (Acts 2) Repent and be baptized, save yourselves from this corrupt generation.
2. **Intellectual?** (Acts 17) Paul debated with the philosophers on Mars Hill to convince them.
3. **Testimonial?** (John 9) One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!
4. **Relational?** (Mark 5) Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you.
5. **Invitational?** (John 4) The Samaritan woman at the well begged the people of the city to come and hear Jesus for themselves.
6. **Serving?** (Acts 9) Dorcas impacted her city by doing deeds of kindness. Don't ever think you're a second class Christian because you don't proclaim Christ like Peter or Paul. Discover your own method. Then get out of your chair and use it, for the Glory of God. Live by faith, not fear!!!

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### Evangelistic Activities in Acts

#### Greek Term - Lexical Meaning- Scripture References

anaggello report, announce Acts 14:27; 15:4; 20:20, 27

anapeitho persuade Acts 18:13

anoigo open Acts 26:18

apaggello proclaim, report Acts 26:20

apodidomi give out Acts 4:33

apokrinomai answer Acts 3:12

apologeomai defend oneself Acts 25:8; 26:1

apologia defense Acts 22:1

apophtheggomai declare boldly Acts 2:14; 26:25

diakatelegchomai defeat, refute Acts 18:28

dialegomai discuss Acts 17:2, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8, 9; 20:7; 24:25

diamarturomai warn Acts 2:40; 8:25; 10:42; 18:5; 20:21, 24; 23:11; 28:23

dianoigo explain Acts 17:3  
diapher spread a teaching Acts 13:49  
didasko teach Acts 11:26; 15:35; 18:11, 25; 20:20; 21:21, 28; 28:31  
didacha teaching Acts 13:12  
ekdiageomai tell in detail Acts 15:3  
ektithami explain, set forth Acts 18:26; 28:23  
exageomai explain, interpret Acts 15:12  
epistarizo strengthen Acts 14:22; 15:32, 41; 18:23  
euaggelizo preach the gospel Acts 5:42; 8:4, 12, 25, 35, 40; 11:20; 13:32; 14:7, 15, 21; 15:35; 16:10; 17:18  
zatisis debate Acts 15:2  
katageleus proclaimer Acts 17:18  
katagello proclaim Acts 4:2; 13:5; 15:36; 16:17; 17:3, 13  
karusso preach, announce Acts 8:5; 9:20; 10:42; 19:13; 20:25; 28:31  
laleo speak Acts 2:11; 4:1, 20, 29, 31; 5:20, 40; 8:25; 9:29; 11:19; 16:6, 13; 17:19; 18:9, 25; 26:26  
leitourgeo render service to God Acts 13:2  
martureo bear witness, testify Acts 23:11  
marturomai testify Acts 20:26; 26:22  
martus witness Acts 2:32, 3:15; 5:32; 10:39; 26:16  
noutheteo warn Acts 20:31  
hodageo lead, guide, instruct Acts 8:31  
homileo talk Acts 24:26  
parakaleo appeal to Acts 2:40; 11:23; 14:22; 15:32; 16:40; 20:1  
paraklisis exhortation Acts 13:15  
parrasiazomai speak fearlessly Acts 9:27, 28; 13:46; 14:3; 18:26; 19:8; 26:26  
peitho convince Acts 13:43; 17:4; 18:4; 19:8, 16; 28:23  
proskartereo be busily engaged in Acts 2:42; 6:4  
proslaleo speak to Acts 13:43  
stasis dispute, argument Acts 15:2  
stereoo make strong, make firm Acts 16:5  
sugcheo confound Acts 9:22  
suzateo dispute, debate, argue Acts 6:9; 9:29  
sumballo converse Acts 17:18; 18:27  
sumbibazo prove, offer proof Acts 9:22  
sunecho absorbed in Acts 18:5  
huparetas servant, helper Acts 26:16  
phtheggomai call out loudly Acts 4:18

**SOURCE** - [Carl B. Hoch, Jr., All Things New, \(Baker Books, Grand Rapids: 1995\), pp. 228-231](#)

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### **How Paul Witnessed**

As a Christian, do you know how to communicate the message of Christ to the different audiences you encounter? Or do you use the same old formula time after time, no matter who is listening? For that matter, do you remain silent when you have the opportunity to speak up for Christ, because you simply don't know what to say? Paul had no prepackaged gospel message. He varied his approach with the situation. He was as aware of the differences between his audiences as he was of the content of his faith. Acts records numerous encounters, among them:

#### **(1) Jews in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:14–43).**

- Paul reviewed the history of the Jewish faith, summarizing it from the Old Testament (Acts 13:17–22).
- He told how that history led to Jesus (Acts 13:23–37).
- He pointed out his audience's need to accept Jesus as their Messiah (Acts 13:38–41).
- He responded to their resistance by clearly explaining the alternative (Acts 13:46–48).

#### **Result:**

- Many chose to follow the way of Christ (Acts 13:43).
- Others reacted negatively and opposed Paul (Acts 13:45).
- Troublemakers incited city leaders to persecute Paul and his companions (Acts 13:50).

#### **(2) Intellectuals at Athens (Acts 17:16–33).**

- Paul prepared by observing and reflecting on their culture (Acts 17:16).

- He addressed them on their own turf, the Areopagus (Acts 17:19, 22).
- He established common ground, beginning with what was familiar and meaningful to them (Acts 17:22–23a, 28).
- He bridged to a description of God as the Creator and sustainer of life, distinguishing Him from the pagan idols that the Athenians worshiped (Acts 17:23b–29).
- He challenged them to repentance and appealed to the resurrection of Christ as proof that what he was telling them was true (Acts 17:30–31).

**Result:**

- Some mocked (Acts 17:32).
- Some wanted to hear more (Acts 17:32).
- Some believed (Acts 17:34).

**(3) An angry mob in Jerusalem (Acts 21:27–22:21).**

- Paul built a bridge by reminding them of his own Jewish heritage (Acts 21:30).
- He reminded them that he, too, had once detested Jesus' followers; in fact, he had persecuted them (Acts 22:4–5).
- He explained the process by which he had changed his mind and joined a movement that he once opposed (Acts 22:6–17).

**Result:**

- Already at fever pitch (Acts 21:27–30), the crowd erupted violently, demanding Paul's death (Acts 22:22–23).

**(4) High officials in a Roman court (Acts 26:1–32).**

- Paul described his religious heritage (Acts 26:4–5).
- He related his view of his opponents' charges against him (Acts 26:6–8).
- He recalled his previous opposition to Jesus' followers (Acts 26:9–11).
- He recounted his own life-changing encounter with Christ (Acts 26:12–19).
- He explained the fundamentals of Jesus' message and the implications for his non-Jewish listeners (Acts 26:20–23).

**Result:**

- The rulers listened carefully (Acts 26:24, 31–32).
- They challenged his application of the gospel to them (Acts 26:24, 28).
- They passed him on in the Roman judicial process, thereby foiling a Jewish plot against him (Acts 26:31–21).

**The gospel itself is forever the same, but as Christ's followers we are called to shape our message to fit our various audiences.**

- How do your coworkers and friends differ from each other? (Ed: Have you even taken time to study them that you might have a point of common ground? Are you as convicted as I am! How selfish and/or indifferent we often are, those of us who do not have to worry about our eternal destiny!)
- What effect should that have on your life and message for them? (Ed: Convict us and enable us to be bold in Your Power Holy Spirit! Amen)
- What aspects of the good news would they most likely respond to?
- Do you know how they view faith? (Shame on us if we answer "No" to this question! How can we not care when they are but one heartbeat away from eternal separation of our great and holy God?!)
- Why not ask them—before you speak? (**Ed:** And remember your conduct has already been preaching the power of the Gospel to them! Has it been an "accurate sermon?" Or do you need to ask their forgiveness for conduct unbecoming to a Gospel believer?)

Source unknown

**Learning the Language**

Read: Acts 17:22–32

As I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. Acts 17:23

I stood before the gathering at a small Jamaican church and said in my best local dialect, "Wah Gwan, Jamaica?" The reaction was better than I expected, as smiles and applause greeted me. In reality, all I had said was the standard greeting, "What's going on?" in Patois [pa-twa], but to their ears I was saying, "I care enough to speak your language." Of course I did not yet know enough Patois to continue, but a door had been opened.

**Before you tell others about Christ,**

let them see how much you care.

When the apostle Paul stood before the people of Athens, he let them know that he knew their culture. He told them that he had noticed their altar to “an unknown god,” and he quoted one of their poets. Of course, not everyone believed Paul’s message about Jesus’s resurrection, but some said, “We want to hear you again on this subject” (Acts 17:32).

As we interact with others about Jesus and the salvation He offers, the lessons of Scripture show us to invest ourselves in others—to learn their language, as it were—as a way to open the door to telling them the good news (see also 1 Cor. 9:20–23). As we find out “Wah Gwan?” in others’ lives, it will be easier to share what God has done in ours. Show us, Lord, what is important to others. Help us to think of their interests first, and allow opportunities to speak about the love of Jesus. By Dave Branon [Our Daily Bread](#), Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved

**Acts 17:24 “The God Who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands;**

- **that made** Acts 17:26-28; 4:24; 14:15; Ps 146:5; Isaiah 40:12,28; 45:18; Jeremiah 10:11; 32:17; Zechariah 12:1; John 1:1; Hebrews 1:2; 3:4
- **seeing** Genesis 14:19,22; 2Kings 19:15; Psalms 24:1; 115:16; 148:13; Jeremiah 23:24; Daniel 4:35; Matthew 5:34; 11:25; Luke 10:21; Revelation 20:11
- **dwelleth** Acts 7:48; 1 Kings 8:27; 2 Chronicles 2:6; 6:18; Isaiah 66:1; John 4:22,23
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Acts 17:22-24 Getting to Know the Unknown God, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur

Isaiah 40:12 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, And marked off the heavens by the span, And calculated the dust of the earth by the measure, And weighed the mountains in a balance And the hills in a pair of scales?...15 Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, And are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales; Behold, He lifts up the islands like fine dust.

Isaiah 40:28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth Does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. Play [Do You Not Know? \(Scroll Down\)?](#)

Isaiah 45:18 For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create it a waste place, but formed it to be inhabited), “I am the LORD, and there is none else.

## GOD IS CREATOR OF THE COSMOS

**John MacArthur** makes a great point - The best starting point for evangelizing pagans with no knowledge of the Scripture is to explain the power and Person behind the creation. Satan's invention of evolution cuts off that path of reason that leads to God. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

**THOUGHT** - I would add that if you as a true follower have bought into the **lie of evolution**, then you have bought into the **lie of Satan!** And you need to beware if you teach this lie to your children, lest they develop a "resistance" to the truth of God as the Creator of everything! If you as a believer have "bought" into evolution, I pray you take a moment to read Ken Ham's online book [The Lie: Evolution](#). And remember that if your children are attending a public school, you need to be aware that most public schools are **required by law to teach evolution only!** Whoever said Satan plays fair! You need to counter this anti-Biblical, anti-creation bias with lots of time in the book of Genesis with your children (especially before they enter the public schools), even claiming God's immutable promise in Isaiah 55:11! In fact you might even want to take your children to Kentucky to visit the [Ark Encounter \(Wikipedia background\)](#).

**The God Who made the world** - Notice carefully not "a God" but "**the God**," the one and only God is the implication of using the definite article (ho = "the") in the Greek sentence. God is THE Creator of the Cosmos (komsos). As the Creator, God could not be contained which was a problem for these pagans who struggled with a God Who could not be seen or depicted in some way. Since Jehovah transcends Creation, nothing material can represent Him. God is infinite whereas the Greek gods were finite.

**Related Resources:**

- [Is religious iconography considered idolatry? What is an icon?](#)
- [What is iconoclasm?](#)
- [What is the Greek Orthodox Church?](#)
- [Do Catholics worship idols / practice idolatry?](#)

This teaching contradicted the **Epicureans** who believed matter was eternal and therefore had no creator, and it contradicted the Stoics, who were pantheists and as such they believed God was part of everything and could not have created Himself. **John Stott** adds that "This view of the world is very different from either the Epicurean emphasis on a chance combination of atoms or the virtual pantheism of the Stoics."

That God is Creator echoes throughout the pages of Scripture.

How blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, Whose hope is in the LORD his God; Who made heaven and earth, The sea and all that is in them; Who keeps faith forever; (Psalm 146:5-6 [note](#))

Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, And marked off the heavens by the span, And calculated the dust of the earth by the measure, And weighed the mountains in a balance, And the hills in a pair of scales? (Isa 40:12) (Comment: The entire universe is on a miniature scale when compared to God the mighty Creator.)

See also Ge 1:1; Is 40:28; 45:18; Jer 10:12; 32:17; Jon 1:9; Zec 12:1; Eph 3:9; Col 1:16; Rev 4:11; 10:6

**Jack Arnold** - Notice very carefully how Paul approaches this sermon. He does not argue from the viewpoint of their religion or philosophy. He does not begin with some first principle or talk about presuppositions. He begins with divine revelation. He assumes the existence of God, and while he does not quote the Old Testament, Paul does use correct biblical and theological concepts about God. He started his sermon by talking about the God of revelation. The world is not left to chance or to some impersonal Fate. The world was created by an all-wise, all-powerful and loving God. Matter is not eternal but is made by a [sovereign](#) God. Furthermore, God is the Maker, not the thing made. God is not created by man in sticks and stones but it is God who made man and everything else that exists in this universe. God is not a projection of man but God is greater than man, transcendent above His universe. ([Sermon](#))

**World** ([2889](#)) (**kosmos**) first of all speaks of order, an orderly arrangement, something well-arranged. It can have the sense of that which serves to beautify through decoration (1 Pe 3:3). **BDAG** points out that Paul used a term that would have been very familiar to his educated hearers for it meant "the sum total of everything here and now, the world, the (orderly) universe, in **philosophical usage** (so, acc. to Plutarch., Mor. 886b, as early as Pythagoras; certainly Heraclitus...)"

**Gilbrant** adds that "Originally **kosmos** (see [Wikipedia](#)) denoted "building" or "construction," but it soon acquired a far wider usage. **Kosmos** indicates the presence of "order" and "arrangement," or "organization." The word can represent an arrangement by rank or a battle configuration. Later, **kosmos** came to describe ornaments and jewelry, especially those used by women (Guhr, "Earth," *Colin Brown*, 1:521). It is possible that the use of the term to describe the adornment of women—"sparkling jewelry"—may be related to the use of the term in relation to the "starry sky," the universe, and the order which may be observed there. **In Greek philosophy contemplation about the origin of the kosmos became a principal pastime. Kosmos** represented the total world system, but it also indicated various parts of this system. But principally the **kosmos** was the all-embracing cohesive order which prevented the world from chaotic dissolution (ibid.). The different schools of thought had their own unique opinions of **kosmos**. **Plato** taught that the **kosmos** was formed by a **demiurgos**, a creator or "energizer" (ibid.). Later, **gnosticism** shaped this idea further so the evil, material universe was seen as a work of a **demiurge** who was different from God and distinct from Him. **Aristotle's** worldview, which persisted for several thousand years within European culture, understood the **kosmos** to be the earth surrounded by a series of lower and higher spheres (ibid.). The **Stoics** appropriated from Oriental astrology the idea of an eternal cycle of catastrophe followed by restoration (apokatastasis [600]). **The dualism of Neoplatonism** sharply defined the distinction between the material present **kosmos** and the original true **kosmos** which was the prototype of the present (ibid., 1:521,522). Such dualistic tendencies became fully developed as a result of the invading Oriental cosmologies which penetrated at virtually every level of thought. The former unity of the **kosmos** seen in Hellenism breaks apart into two different regions: the lower parts of the earth and the higher parts of the sky (ibid.). In **gnosticism** this two-part universe is totally separate and distinct. To the Gnostics the **kosmos** is an evil creation produced by demonic forces that originated in the regions of darkness. The material universe is not understood to be a copy of an original prototype; rather, it is viewed as an evil imitation and distortion of this. The separation between the immaterial God and the material **kosmos** is absolute. The material **kosmos** is a prison for preexistent souls who long for deliverance (ibid.). ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**Robertson** - Not a god for this and a god for that like the 30,000 gods of the Athenians, but the one God who made the Universe (**kosmos** on the old Greek sense of orderly arrangement of the whole universe). All the details in the universe were created by this



one God. Paul is using the words of Isaiah 42:5. The Epicureans held that matter was eternal. Paul sets them aside. This one God was not to be confounded with any of their numerous gods save with this "Unknown God."

## **GOD IS RULER OF THE EARTH**

**Since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands**- What is Paul saying here? In essence He is saying God is in charge, in [sovereign](#) control of the universe. He cannot be represented by idols men have crafted, whether known by a name or unknown. Paul flatly declares that God did not live in any of the many temples scattered throughout Athens.

**THOUGHT** - God is apart from these so-called idols and idol temples and is totally unlike them. How foolish to think that something finite could contain the infinite. There is an exception and it is incredible that God has chose to permanently inhabit His children (Jn 14:17, 1 Cor 6:19, 20+). Of course He is still infinite, but He has chosen to make our bodies temples of the Holy Spirit (and of course the Trinity - Son = Col 1:27, Father = Jn 14:23, 1 Jn 4:15). Does this not make us take pause regarding for what purpose we choose to use His temple? Oh my, I am convicted!

**John MacArthur** comments - Because God created them, **He is Lord of heaven and earth**, and their rightful ruler. Genesis 14:19 describes God as "possessor of heaven and earth," while David says in Psalm 24:1, "The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it." The psalmist wrote: "The Lord has established His throne in the heavens; and His [sovereignty](#) rules over all" (Ps. 103:19). Humbled by God's devastating judgment on him, the pagan king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, was forced to admit - "But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What have You done?' " (Da 4:34-35) (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

**ESV Study Bible** has an interesting thought noting that "it is easy to imagine him gesturing toward the magnificent temple, the [Parthenon](#), that stood just above him and his hearers on the [Acropolis](#). Paul was claiming that the true God of heaven and earth does not live in **temples** like the Parthenon and is not served by the sacrifices which the Athenians regularly brought to their temples."

As **Jack Andrews** says "He does not need a temple to reside in because He is everywhere present. He does not need light to see with because He is the Light of the world! He does not need rest because He does not get faint or grow weary! He does not need food for strength because He is all powerful."

**Lord of heaven and earth** - Mt 11:25, Lk 10:21, Acts 17:24. .

**Barclay** - God is not the made but the maker; and he who made all things cannot be worshipped 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 worshipping man-made things. ([Acts 17 - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

**Vincent on world (kosmos)** - Originally, order, and hence the order of the world; the ordered universe. So in classical Greek. In the Septuagint, never the world, but the ordered total of the heavenly bodies; the host of heaven (17:3; Isaiah 24:21; 40:26). Compare, also, Proverbs 17:6, and see note on James 3:6. In the apocryphal books, of the universe, and mainly in the relation between God and it arising out of the creation. Thus, the king of the world (2Maccabees 7:9); the creator or founder of the world (2 Maccabees 12:15). In the New Testament: 1. In the classical and physical sense, the universe (John 17:5; John 21:25.; Romans 1:20; Ephesians 1:4, etc.). 2. As the order of things of which man is the centre (Matthew 13:38; Mark 16:15; Luke 9:25; John 16:21; Ephesians 2:12; 1 Timothy 6:7). 3. Humanity as it manifests itself in and through this order (Matthew 18:7; 2 Peter 2:5; 2 Peter 3:6; Romans 3:19). Then, as sin has entered and disturbed the order of things, and made a breach between the heavenly and the earthly order, which are one in the divine ideal - 4. The order of things which is alienated from God, as manifested in and by the human race: humanity as alienated from God, and acting in opposition to him (John 1:10; John 12:31; John 15:18, John 15:19; 1Corinthians 1:21; 1John 2:15, etc.). The word is used here in the classical sense of the visible creation, which would appeal to the Athenians. Stanley, speaking of the name by which the Deity is known in the patriarchal age, the plural Elohim, notes that Abraham, in perceiving that all the Elohim worshipped by the numerous clans of his race meant one God, anticipated the declaration of Paul in this passage ("Jewish Church," i., 25). Paul's statement strikes at the belief of the **Epicureans**, that the world was made by "a fortuitous concourse of atoms," and of the Stoics, who denied the creation of the world by God, holding either that God animated the world, or that the world itself was God. ([Acts 17 - Vincent's Word Studies](#))

**David** testifies "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours

forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge. (Psalm 19:1-2)

**Paul** amplifies this truth writing "18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. 21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures." (See notes Ro 1:18; 19; 20; 21; 22; 23)

**Lord (master, owner)** (2962)(**kurios**) ascribes to God His due - He is owner, absolute possessor of both heaven and earth (Isaiah 45:7), not of just parts.

THOUGHT - Am I living like He is Lord of my life?

**Temples made with hands** - "No doubt Paul pointed to the wonderful **Parthenon**, supposed to be the home of **Athena** as Stephen denied that God dwelt alone in the temple in Jerusalem." (Robertson)

**Wayne House** notes that in **Acts 17:24-29**

"Paul presented two arguments. First, he reasoned, since God made all things, He must be infinitely greater than His creatures and therefore infinitely greater than "shrines made by hands" or "gold or silver or stone" (Acts 17:24,29). Second, Paul argued, God is not "an image fashioned by human art and imagination." That is God must be incapable of deriving benefits from human acts of devotion such as bringing sacrifices to "feed" the gods. For God could not bestow on creatures any good if He did not already possess it, and creatures could not offer any good thing to God if He had not already given it to them. A human cannot enrich God therefore by serving Him. He can offer God nothing that God does not already possess. These two arguments of Paul, then, are nothing other than natural theology. Natural theology possesses clear scriptural precedent. Moreover, Scripture also affirms natural theology's two indispensable presuppositions: (a) that God has supplied sufficient data in natural revelation to warrant conclusions about His existence and nature and (b) that human beings are capable of inferring these conclusions from the available data. The fact that Scripture warrants the use of natural theology ought to be uncontroversial. ([Wayne House and Dennis Jowers - Reasons for our Hope](#))

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**John MacArthur on God as Creator** - Paul's bold assertion that **God made the world and all things in it** was a powerful and upsetting truth for some of the Athenians to hear. It ran contrary to the Epicureans, who believed matter was eternal and therefore had no creator, and to the Stoics, who as pantheists believed everything was part of God—who certainly couldn't have created Himself. But it was still the basic approach required. Whenever the logic of a creator has been eliminated, people are cut off completely from God. The truth that God is the creator of the universe and all it contains is just as unpopular in our day. The prevailing explanation by the ungodly for the origin of all things is evolution. It is taught dogmatically by its zealous adherents (including, sadly, many Christians) as a scientific fact as firmly established as the law of gravity. Yet evolution is not even a scientific theory (since it is not observable, repeatable, or testable), let alone an established fact. The impressive scientific evidence against evolution can be briefly summarized as follows. First, the [second law of thermodynamics](#) shows that evolution is theoretically impossible. Second, the evidence of the fossil record shows evolution in fact did not take place. (Among the many helpful books presenting the scientific case against evolution are Michael Denton, [Evolution: A Theory in Crisis](#) [Bethesda, Md.: Adler and Adler, 1985]; Duane T. Gish (ED: And his second book in 2016 - [Evolution: Still a Theory in Crisis: Michael Denton](#)), [Evolution: The Fossils Still Say NO!](#) [El Cajon, Calif.: Institute for Creation Research, 1995]; Henry M. Morris, [The Biblical Basis for Modern Science](#) [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985]; Henry M. Morris and Gary E. Parker, [What Is Creation Science?](#) [San Diego: Master Book Publishers, 1984].) The [second law of thermodynamics](#), one of the most well-established principles in all of science, states that the natural tendency is for things to go from a more ordered to a less ordered state. Noted atheist [Isaac Asimov](#) acknowledged that "as far as we know, all changes are in the direction of increasing [entropy](#), of increasing disorder, of increasing randomness, of running down" (cited in Henry M. Morris, ed., [Scientific Creationism](#) [San Diego: Creation-Life, 1976], 39). Yet, incredibly, evolutionists argue that precisely the opposite has happened. According to them, things have gone from a less ordered state to a more ordered one. Attempts to harmonize evolution with the second law of thermodynamics have not been successful, and it remains a powerful witness against evolution (cf. Emmett L. Williams, ed., [Thermodynamics and the Development of Order](#) [Norcross, Ga.: Creation Research Society Books, 1987]). The only way to determine if evolution has happened is to examine the fossil record, which contains the history of life on earth. Although presented in popular literature and textbooks as proof for evolution, the fossil record is actually a major source of embarrassment for evolutionists. The innumerable transitional forms between phylogenetic groups demanded by evolution are simply not found. Although an evolutionist, [David B. Kitts](#) of the University of

Oklahoma admits,

Despite the bright promise that [paleontology](#) provides a means of "seeing" evolution, it has presented some nasty difficulties for evolutionists the most notorious of which is the presence of "gaps" in the fossil record. Evolution requires intermediate forms between species and paleontology does not provide them. ("Paleontology and Evolutionary Theory," *Evolution* 28 [September 1974]: 467)

Even [Stephen Jay Gould](#) of Harvard University, perhaps the most well-known contemporary defender of evolution, candidly admits,

The extreme rarity of transitional forms in the fossil record persists as the trade secret of paleontology. The evolutionary trees that adorn our textbooks have data only at the tips and nodes of their branches; the rest is inference, however reasonable, not the evidence of fossils. ("Evolution's Erratic Pace," *Natural History* LXXXVI [May 1977]: 14) (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

#### Related Resources:

- [Scientific Creationism: The Rock of Ages vs. The Age of Rocks - Kevin Peil](#)
- [What are some flaws in the theory of evolution?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about creation vs. evolution?](#)
- [What is theistic evolution?](#)
- [How does creationism vs. evolution impact how a person views the world?](#)
- [Is the similarity in human/chimp DNA evidence for evolution?](#)
- [Why do many Christians reject the theory of evolution?](#)
- [What was the Scopes Monkey Trial?](#)
- [What is evolutionism?](#)
- [What is the theory of punctuated equilibrium?](#)
- [What is the definition of Darwinism?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about Creation vs. evolution?](#)
- [What is the Intelligent Design Theory?](#)
- [What is Progressive Creationism and is it biblical?](#)
- [What is the God of the gaps argument?](#)
- [What is young earth creationism?](#)
- [What is old earth creationism?](#)
- [Old earth vs. young earth—what are the core issues in the debate?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about dinosaurs? Are there dinosaurs in the Bible?](#)
- [Do faith in God and science contradict?](#)
- [What is the age of the earth? How old is the earth?](#)
- [Why are there two different Creation accounts in Genesis chapters 1-2?](#)

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#### Acts 17:24-31

[God's grace] teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this . . . age. - Titus 2:12

#### TODAY IN THE WORD

Christians in Romania today belong to either the Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church, or the "Repenters." The "Repenters" are the evangelical contingent of Romanian believers who earned their nickname during the Communist rule of Romania. The Communists meant the name as an insult, but the Romanian Christians could have taken it as quite a compliment. They were accurately preaching and portraying what it means to be a Christian.

In today's passage from Acts, Paul calls on people not just to believe, but to repent (v. 30). By this, he wasn't advocating salvation by works. Belief in Christ is enough to save us. Jesus proved this when speaking to the thief on the cross (cf. Luke 23:42, 43). However, one of the marks of genuine faith is repentance. That's why a call to salvation has always included both a call to belief as well as to repentance.

They are two sides of the same coin of faith. Has our belief and confession in Jesus Christ generated a new life (cf. John 3:3, 2 Cor. 5:17)? If our belief in Christ is sincere, repentance makes this evident.

We learn from Paul's sermon two reasons God is building His church. He is merciful and is making a way for men and women to find Him and enjoy the relationship they were created to have with Him (v. 27). Moreover, God is also building the church to spare people from the judgment that is sure to come to all at the end of time. This judgment will be meted out with exact fairness (v. 31),

and if it's justice we're promised, we surely have no hope apart from Christ. This is the urgency of repentance.

Today's key verse explains that repentance is a change in direction. As sinners, we once followed our own whims and desires. Now in Christ we must yield to God, seeking His will for our lives.

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Reflect back to the different times in your life when you've repented and actually changed directions in order to follow God. Thank God for His grace that made those decisions possible. Now consider the areas of sin with which you're struggling now. Do you find yourself in a cycle of sin, confess, sin, and confess without any move towards real repentance? Ask God for an overflow of His grace to help you definitively turn from this sin and turn toward righteousness.

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#### Acts 17:24-28

The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth. - Acts 17:24

#### TODAY IN THE WORD

A theater critic once claimed, "Playwrights are architects . . . and actors are the inhabitants." Only the author of a play or the architect of a building know all the hidden details—they designed the blueprint! Those who see a play or a building may appreciate its beauty, yet never comprehend how it holds together.

Following this analogy, the book of Esther reads like a very good play. On one level, we are reading a narrative "structure," or storyline. At first, Esther can be read like just another great story of love, greed, murder, power, and revenge. In fact, because Esther never explicitly mentions God, many would argue that this is all that the book of Esther has to offer.

This isn't the architect's view. For since Esther has been included in the canon of Scripture, we can argue that God is its author and "architect!" Throughout our study of Esther we'll be answering questions about the why's and how's and so what's in order to learn two things: more about the "Architect" and more about how He builds.

We find ideas about God and His kingdom that have existed since the psalmist's time, as we saw yesterday, to Esther's time, to Paul's time, and even to today. Paul's text for his sermon from today's reading in Acts emphasizes many of the same themes that we'll see in the book of Esther.

First, God is creator and Lord over everything (v. 24), the Grand Architect and the Great King! In Esther, God's presence and His power, though not explicitly mentioned, are unmistakable. Second, God has [sovereignty](#) over when and where we live as humans (v. 26). In Esther, God brings Esther to the throne of Queen of Persia by superintending the smallest details. Finally, God also hears and answers the cries of His people in Esther, proving that "He is not far from each one of us" (v. 27).

All of this reminds us that when we can't understand God's purposes for our lives, we trust by faith that He has the blueprint!

#### TODAY ALONG THE WAY

Verse 27 is a wonderful promise for us to grasp when we feel spiritually distant from God. He desires that "men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us."

If you find yourself in a spiritual wilderness, begin our study of Esther with this prayer of faith: "Father, I know You are near. I know You want to be found. Help me to see You at work, not only in the book of Esther, but in my life today."

**Acts 17:25 nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things;**

- **is** - Job 22:2; 35:6,7; Ps 16:2; 50:8-13; Jeremiah 7:20-23; Amos 5:21-23; Matthew 9:13
- **seeing** - Acts 17:28; 14:17; Genesis 2:7; Numbers 16:22; 27:16; Job 12:10; 27:3; 33:4; 34:14; Ps 104:27-30; Isaiah 42:5; 57:16; Zechariah 12:1; Matthew 5:45; Romans 11:35; 1Timothy 6:17
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Acts 17:25-29 Getting to Know the Unknown God, Part 2](#)- John MacArthur

Job 22:2 "Can a vigorous man be of use to God, Or a wise man be useful to himself?"

Job 35:6 "If you have sinned, what do you accomplish against Him? And if your transgressions are many, what do you do to Him? 7 "If you are righteous, what do you give to Him, Or what does He receive from your hand?"

Ps 50:12 "If I were hungry I would not tell you, For the world is Mine, and all it contains.

## GOD IS THE GIVER OF ALL GOOD GIFTS

**James** writes that "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow." (James 1:17)

**Job** asks ""**Can a vigorous man be of use to God**, Or a wise man be useful to himself? **Is there any pleasure to the Almighty if you are righteous**, Or profit if you make your ways perfect?" (Job 22:2-3)

The **Psalmist** declares "I shall take no young bull out of your house Nor male goats out of your folds. "For every beast of the forest is Mine, The cattle on a thousand hills. "I know every bird of the mountains, And everything that moves in the field is Mine. "If I were hungry I would not tell you, For the world is Mine, and all it contains. (Ps 50:9-12)

God does not need anything from men. To the contrary, He **gives to all life and breath and all things**. The psalmist writes "He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, And vegetation for the labor of man, So that he may bring forth food from the earth, 15And wine which makes man's heart glad, So that he may make his face glisten with oil, And food which sustains man's heart." (Psalm 104:14-15)

**Nor is He served by human hands as though He needed anything**- Paul's point is clear -- God does not need us! This probably shocked these philosophers and may even shock you dear reader. But one of His glorious attributes is that He is [Self-Sufficient](#). Men may pride themselves in serving God, but it is God who serves man. If God is God, then He is self-sufficient and needs nothing that man can supply. Not only do the temples not contain God, but the services in the temples add nothing to God! In two brief statements, Paul completely wiped out the entire religious system of Greece!

It is God who gives to us what we need: "life, and breath, and all things." God is the source of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17-note). He gave us life and He sustains that life by His goodness (Matthew 5:45-note). It is the goodness of God that should lead men to repentance (Romans 2:4-note). But instead of worshiping the Creator and glorifying Him, men worship His creation and glorify themselves (see notes Romans 1:18; 19; 20; 21; 22; 23; 24; 25).

**Jack Arnold** - God is the giver and does not have any needs Himself. Pagan idolatry taught that men had to please the gods, bring gifts to the gods, make sacrifices to the gods and serve the gods. However, the true God is the giver of everything, and He in no way needs man, but it is man who desperately needs God.

**John Piper** reasons that "If you feel strong and self-sufficient and morally in sync with God and able to serve God and make independent contributions to God and his work, then this is bad news when Paul says, "God is not served by human hands as though he needed anything." In other words, if this message is true about God, then self-sufficient people who think they can negotiate with God are deluding themselves.....If you are weak and helpless and sinful and know that any good you do, you need God's help to do, then this comes as the best news in the world. That God is the kind of God who cannot be served, but loves to serve. His message to the world—the Christian gospel—is not a "help-wanted" sign, but a "help available" sign. He is not served as though he needed anything, but he gives to all people life and breath and everything. To those who feel morally self-sufficient this is bad news. It threatens to take away our basis for boasting. But to those who feel morally desperate and hopeless before a holy and infinitely righteous God, this is good news. Maybe a God who doesn't need me would be willing to be for me what I need." ([Why God Cannot be Served but Loves to Serve](#))

"God has no need for us to meet.

No, He glorifies Himself in meeting our needs."

-- John Piper

**THOUGHT** - Sometimes we get caught up in the erroneous thinking that "**God needs me.**" He needs me to write this website. He needs me to disciple men. He needs me to pray for the missionaries, etc, etc. And you can add your own items to the list - He needs me to begin a prayer ministry at church. He needs me to preach at this church. He needs me to lead the worship time. He needs me to \_\_\_\_\_. (Fill in the blank). Paul is saying something that is (or should be) a blow to our old fleshly ego and pride. Let me paraphrase it -- "Get over yourself! God does not need your puny efforts in any venue!" On the other hand, in His great grace and lovingkindness, God has chosen to allow us to co-labor with Him (His Spirit initiating and empowering all good works as we abide in the Vine - John 15:5). And when we begin to get a small handle (that's about as much as our finite minds will allow), we find ourselves in absolute awe with an overwhelming sense of gratitude that He would use us for ANYTHING of eternal value or merit! But wait! It gets even better! Not only has He prepared good works for us in Christ Jesus (Eph 2:10+), He even promises to reward us for these good works! That is surely amazing grace indeed, grace piled on top of grace! O, that these incredible truths would sink into

our mind and heart and set aflame an abiding love for Him. Then motivated by love and His glory we go forth in the power of His Spirit and in the Name of His Son. Hallelujah! Amen! Our "mantra" should ever be 2 Cor 3:5-6+ (and many other similar passages)!

**He needed** (4326)(**prosdeomai** from **prós** = beside, in addition to + **déomai** = want, need, or make a request) is used only here in the NT and means to want or need something more. In this context it is in the negative sense which speaks of God's absolute self-sufficiency - He needs absolutely nothing!

**Gilbrant** - This verb appears in classical Greek from the Fifth Century B.C. and means "need in addition or further" (Bauer). It is used only once in the New Testament, at Acts 17:25. Here Paul contrasted the philosopher's worship of the "unknown god" at "Mars' hill" with the true Creator who "is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath" (NIV).

**Robertson** adds "**prosdeomai** = to want besides, old verb, but here only in the N.T. This was **strange doctrine** for the people thought that the gods needed their offerings for full happiness. This self-sufficiency of God was taught by Philo and Lucretius, but Paul shows that the Epicurean missed it by putting God, if existing at all, outside the universe." ([Acts 17 - Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament](#))

**Since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things** - Paul is explaining why God does not need anything. He is the Giver of everything. How could such a God need anything? And of course the ultimate gift God gives is physical (and spiritual) life (and breath).

Paul writes "For from Him and through Him and to Him **are all things** (HOW MANY THINGS?). To Him be the glory forever. Amen." (Ro 11:36)

Writing to Timothy Paul said "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on **God, Who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.**" (HOW MANY THINGS?) (1 Ti 6:17)

And God is not just good to those who are in His family (John 1:12), but to all of mankind for Jesus said that God the Father "causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." (Mt 5:45).

**Jack Arnold** - The true God has providential control over His world, for, because of Him, men live and draw every breath. All men, whether they recognize it or not, are dependent on God for their very existence, and it is He who gives His creatures all things. How arrogant and stupid it is for men to declare their independency of God. With one simple command God can stop a man's breathing and snuff out his life!

**Breath** - This is the only occurrence of "**breath**" in the New Testament. The Greek word **pnœ** occurs elsewhere only in Acts 2:2, speaking of the Holy Spirit coming as a "rushing mighty **wind**."

Genesis 2:7 Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the **breath of life**; and man became a living being.

Da 5:23-[note](#) (Daniel to Belshazzar) But the God in Whose hand are your **life-breath** and your ways, you have not glorified.

This was strange doctrine for the people thought that the gods needed their offerings for full happiness. This self-sufficiency of God was taught by Philo and Lucretius, but Paul shows that the Epicurean missed it by putting God, if existing at all, outside the universe. This Supreme Personal God is the source of life, breath, and everything. Paul here rises above all Greek philosophers. Paul brushes aside the necessity, let alone appropriateness, of idolatrous worship servicing the divine nature by affirming that, conversely, it is God who gives all men life and breath and everything else (Ge 1:29; 2:7; 9:3; Isa 42:5; Acts 14:17).

What good news Paul had for the Epicureans and Stoics living as they did under impersonal chance or inexorable fate! Behind or within reality stands neither of these but rather a gracious, personal Creator, Ruler and Sustainer of all. For modern scientific humanity, living as it does within an impersonal universe that has evolved quite by "chance" from the big bang to the last whimper of a dark and frigid night without starfire, Paul's message is also very good news. And for postmodern humanity this gracious, personal God breaks the bonds of pantheistic "karma."

#### **Related Resources:**

- [The Self-Sufficiency of God](#) - A W Tozer
- [Self-Sufficient God - AllAboutGOD.com](#)

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## Acts 17:25 Grace, Mercy, And Peace

By Albert Lee

2 Timothy 1:1-10

Bless the Lord, . . . who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies. —Psalm 103:1,4

The words grace and peace are found in all of Paul's greetings in his New Testament letters to the churches. And in his letters to Timothy and Titus, he also includes mercy: "Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord" (2 Tim. 1:2). Let's examine each of these words.

Grace is what our holy God gives that we, as sinful people, don't deserve. In Acts 17:25, we learn that **He gives to all life, breath, and all things.**" His gifts include our very next breath. Even in our darkest hour, strength is given by God so that we can endure.

Mercy is what God withholds that we do deserve. In Lamentations 3:22, we read, "Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed." Even when we're wayward, God gives time and help for us to turn back to Him.

Peace is what God brings to His people. Jesus said: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you" (John 14:27). Even in the worst of times, we have inner tranquillity because our God is in control.

We can be encouraged that throughout our lives the Lord will give us the grace, mercy, and peace we need to live for Him. [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,  
He sendeth more strength when the labors increase;  
To added affliction He addeth His mercy,  
To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace.  
—Flint

God's grace is immeasurable,  
His mercy is inexhaustible,  
His peace is inexpressible.

### Acts 17:26 and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,

- Genesis 3:20; 9:19; Malachi 2:10; Romans 5:12-19; 1 Corinthians 15:22,47
- **having determined** Acts 15:18; Deuteronomy 32:7,8; Job 14:5; Psalms 31:15; Isaiah 14:31; 45:21; Daniel 11:27,35; Hebrews 2:3
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Acts 17:25-29 Getting to Know the Unknown God, Part 2](#)- John MacArthur

CSB From one man He has made every nation of men to live all over the earth and has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of where they live,

ESV And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place,

KJV And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

NET From one man he made every nation of the human race to inhabit the entire earth, determining their set times and the fixed limits of the places where they would live,

NIV From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.

NLT From one man he created all the nations throughout the whole earth. He decided beforehand when they should rise and fall, and he determined their boundaries.

YLT He made also of one blood every nation of men, to dwell upon all the face of the earth -- having ordained times before appointed, and the bounds of their dwellings --

## GOD IS MAKER OF EVERY ETHNOS

The Greek word [ethnos](#) means nations or peoples. God created every ethnos! God is the originator of man!

As **John Piper** explains "This has a special wallop when you ponder why he chose to say just this to these Athenians on the Areopagus. The Athenians were fond of boasting that they were [autochthones](#), which means that they sprang from their native soil and were not immigrants from some other place or people group. (See Lenski and Bruce, ad. loc.) Paul chooses to confront this ethnic pride head on. God made all the ethnic groups—Athenians and Barbarians—and he made them out of one common stock. So you Athenians are cut from the same cloth as those despised Barbarians and Scythians." (Racial Reconciliation)

**And He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth-** Talk about a blow to the national pride of the pride filled Greeks who derisively referred to all other men as "barbarians!" This passage places all men on equal footing, because all were created by God. God made the human race one family, descending from one progenitor, Adam. Thus **One man** is an allusion to Adam, which his hearers would not have understood if he had used the specific name. So in a sense Paul continues with allusions to the book of beginnings, the book of Genesis, having alluded to creation of the kosmos and now creation of God's highest creation Adam.

**Jack Arnold** - We know that this is a scientifically sound statement, for science admits today that there is only one race of man, one species, [Homo sapians](#). Despite differences of pigment, stature and features in the human race, all men came from one source. This statement was a real blow to the Athenian's racial pride. They thought themselves superior to all men because they were Greeks who spoke the Greek language, and all others were barbarians. The Athenians also felt themselves superior to all Greeks because they believed that they evolved from the soil of Athenian land. Paul said that these Athenians were not some special section of humanity, but were made of the same stuff as the rest of mankind. All kinds of racial prejudices are shot down in this one verse. Hitler thought the Germans were the super race. Some whites think they are superior to blacks. Racial prejudice is a horrible sin and one of the hardest attitudes to break. ([Sermon](#))

**ESV Study Bible** says that **one man** "in whom all people find their ancestral unity, (is) an idea that would appeal to the Stoics' strong sense of human brotherhood."

The concept of "**race**" has no basis in Scripture for all men are descended from Adam, through Noah, and thus all are members of only **one race**--the **human race**. The term "**race**," as ordinarily used, is strictly an evolutionary concept, with "**race**" understood as a sub-species in the process of evolving into a new species. There is no observational scientific evidence for such evolutionary transformations, among either men or animals.

**Robertson** - What Paul affirms is the unity of the human race with a common origin and with God as the Creator. This view runs counter to Greek exclusiveness which treated other races as barbarians and to Jewish pride which treated other nations as heathen or pagan (the Jews were — laos the Gentiles — ethnē). The cosmopolitanism of Paul here rises above Jew and Greek and claims the one God as the Creator of the one race of men. The Athenians themselves claimed to be antochthonous (indigenous) and a special creation. Zeno and Seneca did teach a kind of cosmopolitanism (really pantheism) far different from the personal God of Paul. It was Rome, not Greece, that carried out the moral ideas of Zeno. Man is part of the universe (Acts 17:24) and God created (epoiēsen) man as he created (poiēsas) the all (Heb 11:3-note). ([Acts 17 - Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament](#))

### Related Resources:

- [How Many Races Did God Create? | Answers in Genesis](#)
- [What is the origin of the different races?](#) - The Bible does not explicitly give us the origin of the different "races" or skin colors in humanity. In actuality, there is only one race—the human race.
- [What does the Bible say about racism?](#) - The first thing to understand in this discussion is that there is only one race—the human race. Caucasians, Africans, Asians, Indians, Arabs, and Jews are not different races. Rather, they are different ethnicities of the human race.

## GOD IS THE CONTROLLER OF WORLD HISTORY

As someone has said all of history is His-Story! And similarly in the word sovereign, notice the word "reign!" God reigns over His world and is in full control.

**Having determined their appointed times** - God sovereignly and wisely determines and orchestrates the rise and fall of every nation in the history of the world. In ways unknown, yet real, God raises nations up and puts them down, as He will in accordance



with their faithfulness to His respective purposes for them (Deuteronomy 32:7, 8, 9). "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD" (Psalm 33:12-[note](#)). "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God" (Psalm 9:17-[note](#)). Deut 32:8; Job 12:23; Dan 4:35)

As Daniel testified

Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, For wisdom and power belong to Him. It is He who **changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings;** He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding. (Daniel 2:20,21+)

**Barclay** - God has guided history. He was behind the rise and fall of nations in the days gone by; his hand is on the helm of things now. ([Acts 17 - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

**Jack Arnold** - An all-wise, sovereign God has a predetermined plan for this world. This plan is not based on His foreknowledge whereby He looks down the corridors of time and sees how all things will turn out and then sets His plan. No, God knows how all things are going to turn out because He has a plan. "Appointed times" refers to the fact that God is in control of the rise and fall of nations and cultures. God is also providentially governing the world in which He has set man's boundaries. He has determined where men shall live and how long they will live there. God has distributed people all over this earth for He is the governor of history. ([Sermon](#))

**Determined** (fix, predetermine) ([3724](#))(**horizo** from **horos** = boundary, limit; English "horizon" which is "the apparent line that divides the earth and the sky" which leads to the thought that Jesus is the "line" that divides all time into BC/AD!) means strictly speaking "to limit" and then figuratively "to fix," "to appoint." Time as well as space can be limited. Horizo means to mark out, to bound ("horizon") and figuratively to appoint, decree or specify. It means to mark out definitely. The boundary set can be (1) of time (fix, appoint - cf Heb 4:7) or (2) of space (fix, determine - Acts 17:26-27). Horizo referring to persons means to appoint or designate (Acts 17:31). In Lk 22:22 horizo refers to the making of a definite plan (decide, determine, cp Acts 2:23, 10:42, 11:29). BDAG adds that from the basic meaning., 'to separate entities and so establish a boundary', derives the sense 'to define ideas or concepts': set limits to, define, explain.

**Cleon Rogers** - The determination of man's home preceded his creation in the divine plan

**Robertson** - Paul here touches God's Providence (**See The Providence of God**). God has revealed himself in history as in creation. His hand appears in the history of all men as well as in that of the Chosen People of Israel.

**John MacArthur** - God sovereignly controls the rise and fall of nations and empires (cf. Da 2:36-45-[note](#); Lk 21:24+).

**Appointed** ([4367](#))(**prostasso** from **prós** = to + **tássō** = to arrange) means to set in order toward, in regard to a person or thing, to order towards or to someone, to command, prescribe to,) means to be formally ordered with official authorization. To arrange in a prescribed manner. To appoint, to assign, to prescribe, to fix. Perfect tense indicates the abiding results.

"The perfect passive participle of prostassō old verb to enjoin, emphasizes God's control of human history without any denial of human free agency as was involved in the Stoic Fate." ([Robertson](#))

**Friberg** - (1) of those who have a valid right to command order, tell, instruct (Mt 1.24 ); (2) perfect passive, of historical epochs of mankind's history as arranged by God prostetagne, noi kairoi, appointed or prescribed periods of times (Acts 17.26) (Analytical Greek Lexicon)

**BDAG** - to issue an official directive or make a determination, command, order, give instructions, determine (Mt 1:24; 21:6; of thing order, prescribe something (Mt 8:4; Mk 1:44)

**Liddell-Scott** - 1. to place or post at a place, 2. to attach to, assign to, to assign them to his command, 3. reversely, to appoint as commander over others, to give as a command, prescribe, enjoin, to others orders had been given to supply cavalry, orders given, orders that will be given, the order having been given me, to command, order one to do, to be ordered to do, to receive orders

**Gilbrant** - Classic Greek - **Prostassō** is a derivative of tassō (4872), a common Greek verb meaning "to order, arrange, fix, determine; to station, appoint, put in charge of." When the preposition pros is added to tassō, the resulting word prostassō is intensive and means "to command, order, prescribe" (Bauer). This term is often used of those who have the right to command, e.g., rulers, the law of God, nature, kings, etc. In such cases it means "to order," the most predominant usage. Prostassō can also mean "to attach" or "to appoint."...**In the Septuagint** the term appears in Genesis 47:11 (Hebrew tsāwāh) for the command of Pharaoh to give "the best of the land, in the land of Rameses" to Joseph, his father, and his brethren. It is often used of a command made by God, as in Leviticus 10:1; Jonah 1:17 (LXX 2:1); 4:6-8; and of Moses in Exodus 36:6; Deuteronomy 27:1; and of kings, such as in 2 Chronicles 31:13.(Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary).

**Protasso** - Usage: appointed(1), commanded(5), ordered(1).

Matthew 1:24 And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife,

Matthew 8:4 And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest and present the offering that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

Mark 1:44 and He said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

Luke 5:14 And He ordered him to tell no one, "But go and show yourself to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing, just as Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

Acts 10:33 "So I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord."

Acts 10:48 And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.

Acts 17:26 and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,

**Protasso** - 74x in the Septuagint -

Gen. 47:11; Gen. 50:2; Exod. 36:6; Lev. 10:1; Lev. 14:4; Lev. 14:5; Lev. 14:36; Lev. 14:40; Num. 5:2; Deut. 17:3; Deut. 18:20; Deut. 27:1; Jos. 5:14; 2 Chr. 31:5; 2 Chr. 31:13; Est. 1:15; Est. 1:19; Est. 2:23; Est. 3:2; Est. 3:13; Est. 3:14; Isa. 36:21; Isa. 55:4; Dan. 2:8; Dan. 2:12; Dan. 2:14; Dan. 3:10; Dan. 3:13; Dan. 4:14; Jon. 1:17; Jon. 2:10; Jon. 4:6; Jon. 4:7; Jon. 4:8;

Deuteronomy 17:3 and has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, or the sun or the moon or any of the heavenly host, which I have not **commanded** (Lxx = protasso),

Joshua 5:14 He said, "No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the LORD." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, "What has my lord to **say to** (Lxx = protasso - to give an official directive to) his servant?"

**Ray Stedman** - The true God is the God of history. He made man as one race, originating from one source. The interesting thing is that today this statement is as scientifically sound as when it was first uttered. Science today admits that there is only one race of men, one species: Homo sapiens. Despite the differences of pigment, stature, and feature that exist around the world, there is only one race of men. They all come from one source. Furthermore, he has intervened to direct their lives through the course of history. He has determined where they shall live, and how long they will live there, how long a nation or empire should take to rise and then fall again; doing so not arbitrarily, but based upon their reaction to the one great reason for which human beings exist: That they might find God, "that they might feel after him and find him." That is why God has allowed history. The events of human history have all been to this end -- that they might find God, that man might be motivated to search for him. ([Athens Versus Paul](#))

**Times** (season, opportunity, epoch, proper time) (2540) (**kairos** means a point of time or period of time, time, period, frequently with the implication of being especially fit for something and without emphasis on precise chronology. It means a moment or period as especially appropriate the right, proper, favorable time (at the right time). A season. A point of time. A moment. An opportunity. Something that lasts for a season and so is transient, temporary or enduring only for a specific period of time.

**Kairos** can refer to a fixed and definite time, the time when things are brought to crisis, the decisive epoch waited for or a strategic point in time.

**Kairos** speaks of a limited period of time, with the added notion of suitability ("the suitable time", "the right moment", "the convenient time"). **Kairos** refers to a distinct, fixed time period, rather than occasional moments.

**Kairos** is not so much a succession of minutes (Greek **chronos** 5550), but a period of **opportunity**. **Chronos** refers to chronological time, to clock time or calendar time, to a general space or succession of time. **Kairos**, on the other hand, refers to a specific and often predetermined period or moment of time and so views time in terms of events, eras, or seasons, such as the **times of the Gentiles** ([see note](#)) In other words, **kairos** defines the best time to do something, the moment when circumstances are most suitable, the psychologically "ripe" moment.

Below is a link to a good song by Robin Mark to play in light of the length of eternity and the brevity of our life...

[When It's All Been Said and Done](#)

When It's All Been Said and Done

There is just one thing that matters.  
Did I do my best to live for Truth?  
Did I live my life for You?

When It's All Been Said and Done  
All my treasures will mean nothing.  
Only what I've done for love's reward,  
Will stand the test of time.

#### Related Resources:

- [Redeem the Time](#)
- [Redeem the Time \(blog\)](#)
- [Ephesians 5:16 Commentary](#)

**The boundaries of their habitation** - God has [sovereignly](#) "fixed limits of the places where they would live" O yes, nations may gain territory by defeating other nations, but ultimately they cannot do so outside of the sovereign control of God (Read Isa 10:12-15+). God determines the geographical boundaries of every nation. Imagine the intellectual Greeks trying to get their pea sized brains around this incredible truth! Moses records

"When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, **When He separated the sons of man, He set the boundaries of the peoples** According to the number of the sons of Israel. (Dt 32:8)

**The boundaries** - "Same idea in Job 12:23 (He makes the nations great, then destroys them; He enlarges the nations, then leads them away.). Nations rise and fall, but it is not blind chance or hard fate. Thus there is an interplay between God's will and man's activities, difficult as it is for us to see with our shortened vision." ([Robertson](#))

**John MacArthur** - God is responsible for establishing nations as to their racial identity and their specific geographical locations (Dt 32:8) and determining the extent of their conquests (cf. Is 10:12–15). (Study Bible)

**Ray Pritchard** - **Guided history by His own plan.** "And he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live" (v. 26). Please note the word "determined." It speaks of God's direct involvement in the affairs of human history. 1. He made the nations. 2. He determined the times they should exist. 3. He determined their boundaries. Many other verses teach the same truth. "When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel" (Deuteronomy 32:8). "Dominion belongs to the Lord and he rules over the nations" (Psalm 22:28). "The Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes" (Daniel 4:25c). When theologians speak of this truth, they refer to "**the hidden counsels of God.**" This means that what God is doing in history is not directly revealed in Scripture. Many times we look at the world scene and things seem haphazard as if there were no guiding principle. But looking back we can see here and there the Invisible Hand of God at work—raising up one nation, one leader, one army—and bringing down another. **History is His Story.** He has the final say in every battle, every ruler rising to power, every coup, every election, and every government edict. We generally don't see the big picture as it unfolds before us, and sometimes we don't even see it looking back, but Scripture assures us that even in those events that seem to be out of control, God is at work behind the scenes. God arranged everything in your life so that you might seek him. Paul has now informed the men of Athens that they are just like everyone else in the human race and that God has brought their nation to prominence for a specific purpose. We learn that purpose in verse 27. ([Acts 17:26-28 How God Reveals Himself to Us](#))

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#### Acts 17:22–31 Pride And Prejudice

By David H. Roper

He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth. —Acts 17:26

Back in the 1930s, my childhood home was loving and happy, but my parents were often away. On those occasions, the center of warmth in our home was the kitchen and our tiny, joyous housekeeper named Annie. I spent many hours with Annie, sitting at our kitchen table reading books or playing with toys and listening to her sing and hum spirituals and hymns. From her heart sprang a continual flow of wisdom, cheerfulness, and song. One morning, with childish exuberance, I used a racial slur I had heard. "Oh my, no," she said, and then proceeded to pour out her heart in a gentle lecture on the harm and hurt in that, accompanied by a terrible sadness in her eyes. I never used that word again. I learned that we cause unfathomable sorrow when we dishonor and debase others through bigotry. Every human being is created in the image of God—more like God than any other creature and worthy of honor. To demean that image is to wound another human being at the deepest level. There is but one race: the human race. God "has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26). We are of the same family, made to

be treasured and cherished by one another. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Of all creation's treasures rare,  
Not one compares in worth with man,  
In God's own image he was made  
To fill a place in His great plan. —D. De Haan

God desires that we show respect to all people,  
because everyone bears His image.

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### **Acts 17:22-31 Where Did I Come From?**

By Anne Cetas

[God] has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth. —Acts 17:26

My 7-year-old African-American friend Tobias asked me a thought-provoking question the other day: "Since Adam and Eve were white, where did black people come from?" When I told him we don't know what "color" they were and asked him why he thought they were white, he said that's what he always saw in Bible-story books at church and in the library. My heart sank. I wondered if that might make him think he was inferior or possibly not even created by the Lord.

All people have their roots in the Creator God, and therefore all are equal. That's what the apostle Paul told the Athenians: "[God] has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26). We are all "from one blood." Darrell Bock, in his commentary on the book of Acts, says, "This affirmation would be hard for the Athenians, who prided themselves in being a superior people, calling others barbarians." However, because we all descended from our first parents, Adam and Eve, no race nor ethnicity is superior or inferior to another.

We stand in awe of our Creator, who made us and gives to all "life, breath, and all things" (v.25). Equal in God's sight, we together praise and honor Him. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Every life has been created—  
God's handiwork displayed;  
When we cherish His creation,  
We value what He's made.  
—Sper

God loves each of us as if there were only one of us.

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### **Acts 17:26 Unity In The Faith**

By Vernon C. Grounds

Ephesians 4:1-6

[God] has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth. —Acts 17:26

Aristides, a second-century apologist for the Christian faith, wrote this to the Roman emperor Hadrian about believers in his day:

"They love one another. They never fail to help widows; they save orphans from those who would hurt them. If they have something, they give freely to the man who has nothing; if they see a stranger, they take him home, and are happy, as though he were a real brother. They don't consider themselves brothers in the usual sense, but brothers instead through the Spirit, in God."

As human beings, we all belong to the same family. Even though we are divided by all sorts of barriers and differences, "under the skin" we're all the same (Acts 17:26). As believers in Jesus Christ, then, whatever our differences—denominations, preferences, worship styles—we are one spiritual body that acknowledges the same heavenly Father (Ephesians 4:4-6). The example of our spiritual forebears can be an instructive challenge to us as disciples of Jesus in the 21st century.

Let's do all we can to demonstrate our unity in Christ. Unity in our diversity is the most effective witness to this sin-fractured world. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Join hands, then, brothers of the faith,  
Whatever your race may be;

Who serves my Father as a son  
Is surely kin to me.  
—Oxenham

Unity among Christians comes from their union with Christ.

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### **Acts 17:26-27 A Basis For Confidence**

By Herbert Vander Lugt

Read: Daniel 10:1-21

He has . . . determined their preappointed times . . . , so that they should seek the Lord. —Acts 17:26-27

A government official recently said we have no way of making sure that a terrorist group or a madman will not obtain nuclear weapons. Some people responded to his words by saying that the human race is on the verge of destroying itself.

Most people, however, tend to be more hopeful and don't think that such a disaster is likely. Is such a view foolish and naive? What is the proper response to doomsday predictions?

Bible-believing Christians can be optimistic about the future because of their confidence in God's Word. Daniel 10 assures us that God is always in control, so we can be confident that all will end well for those who are trusting in Him. Daniel had fasted and prayed, but for 3 weeks he had heard nothing. Finally an angel appeared and explained that he had been detained by an evil spirit until the archangel Michael had arrived to help him (v.13). He went on to show the prophet that though the battle between the invisible forces of good and evil would continue (v.20), God would surely win the war (ch. 11-12).

It's comforting to know that God permits the rise of evil forces and orchestrates their fall as part of His master plan. Through it all, He draws unbelievers to Himself and brings about the eternal good of His children. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

What God is doing you may not know now;  
But someday you'll understand why;  
Questions that taunt you and trouble your mind  
Will one day have heaven's reply.  
—Hess

Because God is in control, we have nothing to fear.

### **Acts 17:27 that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;**

- **they** Acts 15:17; Ps 19:1-6; Romans 1:20; 2:4
- **he be** Acts 14:17; 1 Kings 8:27; Psalms 139:1-13; Jeremiah 23:23,24
- 
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Acts 17:25-29 Getting to Know the Unknown God, Part 2](#)- John MacArthur

CSB so that they might seek God, and perhaps they might reach out and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.

ESV that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us,

KJV That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:

NET so that they would search for God and perhaps grope around for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

NIV 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.

NLT "His purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him--

though he is not far from any one of us.

YLT to seek the Lord, if perhaps they did feel after Him and find, -- though, indeed, He is not far from each one of us,

## SEEKING GOD WHO IS NEAR

**That they would seek God** - Seek him, not turn away from him as the nations had done (Romans 1:18-32-see below). ([Robertson](#))

MacArthur writes "God's providential activity as creator, ruler, giver, and controller should move men to seek Him. Reason should send them from the greatest effect (the universe) back to the first cause—God. In all that He has done in creating and sustaining the universe, God has revealed Himself to mankind. Such self-disclosure should encourage men to grope for Him and find Him. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

**Jack Arnold** - God has placed every man where he is on the face of the earth and in the culture he lives in order to **seek** the true **God**. God did not make an arbitrary decision, but God predestinates out of a loving heart and expects men to **seek** Him wherever they are in this world. God is very near every man because He is everywhere present. If men will but **seek** Him, they will find Him. "And you will **seek** Me and find Me, when you **search** for Me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13). God allows catastrophes, wars, violence and hard times so that men will **seek** Him, and acknowledge their dependence on Him. It is pure self-delusion, ridiculous and absurd to think that anyone can operate without God. The reason men think they can exist apart from God is that they have placed some idol, whether physical or mental, as a substitute for God in their lives. ([Sermon](#))

**Paul** explains God's "nearness" in His [Natural Revelation](#) in the Creation (do you see why the debate over evolution is so crucial!!!)...

because (explaining God's wrath in Ro 1:18-[note](#)) that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. (Ro 1:19-25-[note](#))

### Related Resources:

- [What is general revelation and special revelation?](#)
- [Can a person be saved through general revelation?](#)
- [What happens to those who have never heard about Jesus?](#)

**John MacArthur** - The Lord's objective for man in revealing Himself as the Creator, Ruler, and Controller of the world. **Men have no excuse** (Ro 1:20) for not knowing about God because He has revealed Himself in **man's conscience** (read Ro 2:14-15+) and in the **physical world**. (read Ps 19:1-6) (Study Bible) (Bold added)

**Gilbrant** - By saying God has fixed the boundaries of mankind's dwelling, Paul did not mean mankind could not or should not move from one place to another. All people have done that throughout history to a greater or lesser extent. Rather, Paul meant God brought mankind to the places and times where they would have opportunities to seek God, "if perhaps they might touch Him and find Him," though He is actually not far away, not distant from each one. So it should not be hard to find Him. (Romans 1:20, 21 points out that "the invisible things of him are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." Just looking at the greatness, the complexity, and the beauty of creation should have let the Athenians understand that it was not some little god in a corner who brought all this into being.) (Complete Biblical Library Commentary)

**Barclay** - God has made man in such a way that instinctively he longs for God and gropes after him in the darkness. ([Acts 17 - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

**Seek** ([2212](#)) ([zeteo](#)) implies giving attention and priority to and deliberately pursuing after. The most common sense of this word is to "seek". **Webster** says that to **seek** means to go in search or quest of, to look for, to try to discover, to search for by going from place

to place. To inquire for; to ask for; to solicit; to endeavor to find or gain by any means. **Zēteō** in classical Greek is often used as a technical term for philosophical investigation, something "examined, considered" or "deliberated." The Old Testament tradition of seeking after God, the prophets, false gods, etc., was shown by Paul (Ro 10:20). The most striking application of zēteō is the New Testament religious application. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost which implies far more than a mere "looking around" (as seen in Mt 6:32,33; 13:45,46; Lk 15:8) and includes the idea of diligently, earnestly, and tenaciously searching after something, sparing no effort, for the sought object is valued to the highest degree. Likewise, believers are to seek God in the same way.

**NLT** "His purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him-- though he is not far from any one of us.

**Grope** (5584) (**pselaphao** from **psáo** = to rub or touch lightly, cp psallo = to play a stringed instrument) means to handle, to touch or to feel for or after an object, groping as would a blind person (Here in Acts 17:27 the ones groping are "spiritually blind!"). To touch lightly, especially touching the surface of something (contrast **haptomai**, Strong's 680 = to handle an object in such a way as to exert a modifying influence upon it as in 1Jn 5:18). To touch by feeling and handling. **Pselaphao** means to make an effort, despite difficulties, to come to know something when chances of success are not particularly great. To manipulate, verify by contact as when Isaac tried to feel for his son Esau (Ge 27:21,22) and was deceived by Jacob having put on the "skins of the young goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck." (Ge 27:16). To grope about expressing motion of hands over someone as when Jesus told His doubting disciples to "touch Me and see." (Lk 24:39). A related word is **psucho** derived from **psao** and used of rubbing the heads of grain in order to loosen some kernels to eat (Lk 6:1)

**Pselaphao** is used by the Greek writers to mean the "blind feeling around" (cp similar use in the Lxx translation of Dt 28:29)

Luke uses **pselaphao** here in Acts 17:27 in the optative mood within a conditional clause, which would point to the possibility (but not certainty) of men finding God through general revelation (but even then, they would need the special revelation of the Gospel for salvation - Ro 1:16-note). This picture reminds me of the popular telephone ad of past years "Reach out and touch someone." (in this case God!) However, on the other hand the idea of groping is more of a negative picture, like a blind person walking down a hall, feeling the wall or like someone stumbling in the dark. Indeed, men in their natural state are in the dark, but God in His great mercy has provided general revelation and specific revelation (the Gospel), for He desires that none perish eternally, but that all come to genuine eternal life giving repentance (2Pe 3:9-note). **The Dictionary of Paul and His Letter** (IVP) adds that "It seems safe to conclude that while the speaker believes that knowledge of God is theoretically possible from nature, yet in practical terms there is little or no hope that this hypothetical possibility will be or has been translated into an acceptable relationship with God. It is hard to imagine a stronger contrast between the God Who is in control of all (Acts 17:24-26) and the ironic pathetic state of the human predicament as here described (Acts 17:27): blindly and unsuccessfully groping for someone who stands so close and desires to be found."

**Grope** (Webster) - feel about or search blindly or uncertainly with the hands; to search for something by reaching or touching usually with your fingers in an awkward way; to move forward carefully by putting your hands in front of you so that you can feel anything that blocks you

**Pselaphao** - 4x in 4v - NAS Usage: grope(1), touch(1), touched(2).

Luke 24:39 "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself;**touch** Me (in order to prove the existence of Jesus' resurrection body) and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."

Heb 12:18 For you have not come to a mountain that can be**touched** and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind,

1John 1:1 What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and **touched** with our hands, concerning the Word of Life

**Pselaphao** - 13 uses in the Lxx - some are relatively well known and very interesting...

Genesis 27:12 "Perhaps my father will **feel** me, then I will be as a deceiver in his sight, and I will bring upon myself a curse and not a blessing."

21 Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come close, that I may **feel** you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not."

22 So Jacob came close to Isaac his father, and he **felt** him and said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau."

Deuteronomy 28:29 and you will **grope** at noon, as the blind man **gropes** in darkness, and you will not prosper in your ways; but you shall only be oppressed and robbed continually, with none to save you.

Judges 16:26 Then Samson said to the boy who was holding his hand, "Let me **feel** the pillars on which the house rests, that I may lean against them."

Job 5:14 "By day they meet with darkness, And **grope** at noon as in the night.

Job 12:25 "They **grope** in darkness with no light, And He makes them stagger like a drunken man.

Psalms 115:7 They have hands, but they cannot **feel**; They have feet, but they cannot walk; They cannot make a sound with their throat.

Psalms 135:17 They have ears, but they do not hear, Nor is there any breath at all in their mouths.

Isaiah 59:10 We **grope** along the wall like blind men, We grope like those who have no eyes; We stumble at midday as in the twilight, Among those who are vigorous we are like dead men.

The other uses in Lxx = Nahum 3:1 Zechariah 3:9 Zechariah 9:13

**Might find** (2147) (**heurisko**) means to find after searching and so to discover (Mt 7:7), to find accidentally or without seeking (Mt 12:44), to experience for oneself and to obtain or procure (He 9:12). Figuratively, **heurisko** speaks of a spiritual or intellectual discovery gained through observation = reflection, perception, investigation (Ro 7:21).

**Richard Mayhue** addresses the question "**Is God knowable?**" - God surrounds us on all sides with knowledge about Himself. When we look up at the heavens, they declare God's glory (Ps. 19:1). A knowledge of God resides intuitively evident within mankind (Rom. 1:19). Scripture everywhere tells of God from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21. The person of Jesus Christ explained God the Father (John 1:18). God certainly does not engage in a game of hide-and-seek, but rather has gone out of His way to be obvious. What's more, God made known His salvation (Pss. 16:11; 98:2) through Jesus Christ. All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him (Matt. 11:27). However, if we search for God through human resources alone, the data will be misinterpreted and mankind will bypass the obvious. For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe (1 Cor. 1:21). ([Seeking God](#))

**Though He is not far from each one of us** - If he is not far, then He is near! In fact Paul is alluding to His being **omnipresent** which makes Him "near" every person.

As **C H Spurgeon** said "This shows us how vain is all hope of escape from God. Where can we fly? Where can we hide? What will we do? We have provoked him. "The LORD will never leave the guilty unpunished" (Nah 1:3). This is the solemn side of the matter. But there is a bright side to this great truth of God's nearness. **If God is not far from each of us, then how hopeful is our seeking of Him! If I seek God and he is not far from me, I will surely find Him.** I do not have to climb to heaven or to dive into the abyss, for he is near. Where I sit, or stand, I may come to him. It is written, "If you seek him, he will be found by you" (1Ch 28:9). And again, "Seek the LORD while He may be found; call to Him while He is near" (Is 55:6). **Omnipresence** yields good cheer to those who are panting for God. If the Lord is near, there is no reason he should not grant pardon right now to all who seek it. God is near, and therefore hope is near."

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**THE POWER OF NATURAL REVELATION** - While it does not save a person who has never heard the Gospel, if a "seeker" responds to the **natural revelation** of God, He will bring them the necessary **special revelation**! If you are skeptical of the role and the "power" of God's natural revelation to kindle in a good heart (Lk 8:15+) a response that seeks for God (Isa 55:6), there is a fascinating book entitled [Eternity in their Hearts](#), which you must consider reading, for in it the author Don Richardson gives concrete examples of the effect of natural revelation on primitive people groups. Here is a snippet from the back cover of this fascinating book that should stimulate you to want to read the incredible supernatural saga of how unreached people groups after unreached people groups were stirred by God's Creation, or Natural Revelation to know the Creator, the true and living God...

The year is 1795, and deep in the jungles of Burma hundreds of native tribesmen rush out to a clearing to greet a white-skinned stranger. Could he be the one to bring the **book** their forefathers lost so many centuries ago -- the **book** that tells the secrets of **Y'Wa**, the Supreme God? Yes! And later missionaries were astounded at the way in which God had prepared these people for one of the greatest mass conversions in history!

These and twenty-five other incredible-but-true stories prove the truth of the words in Ecclesiastes 3:11: "He (God) has also set eternity in the hearts of men." (Richardson, Don: [Eternity in their Hearts](#) - Highly Recommended)

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**Ray Pritchard** - Paul has now informed the men of Athens that they are just like everyone else in the human race and that God has



brought their nation to prominence for a specific purpose. We learn that purpose in verse 27.

## II. Why God Did It

### A. That we would seek him.

"God did this so that men would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him" (v. 27). Have you ever wondered why you were born into a particular family at a particular moment in history? After all, you could have been born 500 years ago or in Brazil or India or New Zealand. Why did you end up where you are right now? Paul tells us clearly that God arranged everything in your life so that you might seek him. You are where you are right now because God wants you to seek him and to find him. He desires a personal relationship with you.

What difference does this truth make? I offer four answers:

- 1) We were made to know God. That's the longing in our hearts to understand the universe and our place in it.
- 2) Sin has blinded us so we cannot find him. That's the result of the Fall.
- 3) We keep groping for him anyway. That explains all the various religions of the world.
- 4) No one will ever find God unless God reveals Himself to him. That's where the saving grace of God comes in.

Two things are needed at this point in order for a person to come to Christ:

1. Someone to preach the gospel.
2. The work of the Holy Spirit to open our eyes so we can see.

It is our job to preach the gospel, it is the work of the Holy Spirit to draw men to Jesus. Therefore, we preach and pray, and then leave the results with the Lord. Behind Acts 17:27 is the wonderful truth that God rewards those who diligently seek him. "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13). "Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon" (Isaiah 55:6-7). God often uses catastrophes as a means of urging men to seek him.

We find this same truth echoed in the words of Jesus in Luke 11:9-10. "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened." In his sermon on this text, Ray Stedman notes that God often uses catastrophes as a means of urging men to seek him. This explains why God allows wars, violence, outbreaks of evil, and terrible natural disasters. It also sheds some light on things like cancer, the death of a loved one, financial collapse, and the breakup of a marriage. Why would God allow such things? One part of the answer is that God uses these awful events to teach that we can't make it without the Lord. Many of us could testify that it wasn't until we hit rock bottom that we finally found the Lord. When you are flat on your back, totally broke, health gone, marriage dissolved, children estranged, career ruined, with nowhere to turn and no hope in the world, in the blackness of that moment you cry out, "Oh God, have mercy," and he responds, "I've been waiting for you to ask for my help." So it is that we learn the hard way that life is meaningless without the Lord.

### B. That we would discover that he is not far away.

"**Though He is not far from each one of us**" - Idolaters made their statues of gold and silver so that their gods would be near them always. How foolish! God is always near us because God is present everywhere at all times. There is no place you can go where he is not already there. I wonder if God seems far away from you right now. If so, could it be that God has not moved away from you but you have moved away from God? Oftentimes our personal sense of estrangement from the Lord has to do more with our own disobedience than to anything else. When I was a teenager, my buddies and I would often greet someone with this question, "How's the Lord been treating you?" The answer was always, "He's been treating me just fine." Then the second question: "How have you been treating the Lord?" That's a different issue, isn't it? God is always near us, whether we see him or not. "Closer is he than breathing, and nearer than hands or feet," said Tennyson, and he was right. ([Acts 17:26-28 How God Reveals Himself to Us](#))

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## Acts 17:22-31 From A Distance

By David H. Roper

Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it. —Genesis 28:16

A popular song from years ago titled "From a Distance" envisions a world of harmony and peace. It says, "God is watching us from a distance." Indeed God is watching us, but not from a distance (Pr 15:3). He is present, in the room with you, right in front of you, gazing at you with unbounded love in His eyes. I think of the example of Brother Lawrence, who spent long years working in a kitchen washing pots and pans and repairing the sandals of other monks. He wrote: "As often as I could, I placed myself as a worshiper before Him, fixing my mind upon His holy presence." That is our task as well. But we forget and sometimes need reminders of His presence. I have driven an old handmade nail into the shelf over my desk to remind me that the crucified and resurrected Jesus is always present. Our task is to remember to "set the Lord always before [us]" (Ps 16:8)—to know that He is with us to "the end of the age" (Mt. 28:20) and that "He is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:27).

Remembering may be as simple as calling to mind that the Lord has promised to be with you all through the day and saying to Him, "Good morning," or "Thank You," or "Help!" or "I love You." ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

So near, so very near to God—  
I cannot nearer be;  
Yet in the person of His Son,  
I am as near as He.  
—Paget

No one can come so near that God is not nearer still.

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## Finding God In The Darkness

Read: Acts 17:24-31

The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. —Luke 19:10note

When our boys were small, we played a game called “Sardines.” We’d turn out all the lights in our home and I would hide in a closet or some other cramped place. The rest of the family groped about in the darkness to find my hiding place and then hide with me until we were squeezed together like sardines. Hence the name.

Our smallest family member at times became frightened in the dark, so when he came close, I would whisper to him softly: “Here I am.”

“I found you, Dad!” he would announce as he snuggled against me in the darkness, not realizing that I let myself be “found.”

Likewise, we have been made to search for God—to “grope for Him,” as Paul put it so vividly (Acts 17:27). But here’s the good news: He is not at all hard to find, for “He is not far from each one of us.” He desires to make Himself known. “There is a property in God of thirst and longing. He hath longing to have us,” wrote Dame Julian of Norwich centuries ago.

Before we come to know Christ, we grope for God in the darkness. But if we search for Him in earnest, He will make Himself known, for He rewards those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6). He will call to us softly: “Here I am.”

And He awaits our reply: “I found You!” By David H. Roper [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

Man gropes his way through life’s dark maze;  
To gods unknown he often prays,  
Until one day he meets God’s Son—  
At last he’s found the Living One!  
—D. De Haan

Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. —Isaiah 55:6

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## Acts 17:27 Reframing The Picture

By Julie Ackerman Link

Deuteronomy 32:7-12

As an eagle stirs up its nest, . . . spreading out its wings, . . . so the Lord alone led [Jacob]. —Deuteronomy 32:11-12

For 3 months I had a ringside seat— or should I say a bird’s-eye view—of God’s amazing handiwork. Ninety feet above the floor of Norfolk Botanical Garden, workers installed a webcam focused on the nest of a family of bald eagles, and online viewers were allowed to watch. When the eggs hatched, Mama and Papa Eagle were attentive to their offspring, taking turns hunting for food and guarding the nest. But one day when the eaglets still looked like fuzzballs with beaks, both parents disappeared. I worried that harm had come to them. My concern was unfounded. The webcam operator enlarged the camera angle, and there was Mama Eagle perched on a nearby branch. As I pondered this “reframed” picture, I thought of times when I have feared that God had abandoned me. The view in the forest heights of Virginia reminded me that my vision is limited. I see only a small part of the entire scene. Moses used eagle imagery to describe God. As eagles carry their young, God carries His people (Deut. 32:11-12). Despite how it may seem, the Lord “**is not far from each one of us**” (Acts 17:27). This is true even when we feel abandoned.

Under His wings I am safely abiding;  
Though the night deepens and tempests are wild,  
Still I can trust Him—I know He will keep me;  
He has redeemed me and I am His child.

**Because the Lord is watching over us,  
we don't have to fear the dangers around us.**

**Insight** - Today's reading provides us with a wonderful template for instructing the next generation in the provision of God. The entire "Song of Moses" extends from Deuteronomy 31:30–32:43. In it we see praise given for the God of Israel in spite of the nation's periodic lapse into disobedience. In His good providence, God created for Himself a chosen people whom He has both redeemed and preserves. This theme of divine love that will not let go is to be reiterated to each new generation so that God's covenant people may continue in relationship with their Creator and Sustainer. We learn from the New Testament that through Christ's atoning work on the cross, this covenant has been extended to all who believe (Rom. 5:6-11). ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**Acts 17:28 for in Him we live and move and exist(are), as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.'**

- **in him** 1 Sa 25:29; Job 12:10; Ps 36:9; 66:9; Luke 20:38; John 5:26; 11:25; Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3
- **as** Titus 1:12
- **we are** Luke 3:38; Hebrews 12:9
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Acts 17:25-29 Getting to Know the Unknown God, Part 2](#)- John MacArthur

CSB For in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'

ESV for "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring.'

KJV For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

NAB For 'In him we live and move and have our being,' as even some of your poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.'

NET For in him we live and move about and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.'

NIV 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'

NLT For in him we live and move and exist. As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'

YLT for in Him we live, and move, and are; as also certain of your poets have said: For of Him also we are offspring.

## **GOD IS NOT HARD TO FIND**

**For** - See value of observing this [term of explanation](#). He is explaining why God is not too hard to find. Paul quotes two secular poets in this passage, not because they were inspired, but because they are true. God is indeed the Source of our existence and is near us.

**Jack Arnold - God is Immanent** - God is so close to each person and it is by Him we live and move and exist. The true God does not want men to depend on idols, whether physical or mental, but on Him. He wants men to acknowledge that they are totally dependent upon Him for everything. ([Sermon](#))

[God's immanence](#) refers to His presence within His creation. (It is not to be confused with imminence, which refers to the timing of Jesus' return to earth.) A belief in God's immanence holds that **God is present in all of creation, while remaining distinct from it. In other words, there is no place where God is not. His sovereign control extends everywhere simultaneously.** [Pantheism](#) and [deism](#) twist many people's view of how God relates to His creation. Pantheists believe that everything is God or is a part of God, making Him

equal with His creation and unable to act upon it. Deists hold that God is distinct from His creation but deny that He plays an active role in it. Contrary to these and other false views of God, the Bible says that God is both different from His creation and actively upholding it. **Transcendence** (God exists outside of space and time) and immanence (God is present within space and time) are both attributes of God. He is both “nearby” and “far away,” according to Jeremiah 23:23. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:9). That is God’s transcendence. “In him all things hold together” (Colossians 1:17). That is God’s immanence. God’s **omnipresence** is closely related to His immanence, and Psalm 139:1-10 describes it in beautiful detail. In the New Testament, Paul declares that God “Himself gives all men life and breath and everything else” and “in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:25, 28). God guides, governs, and provides for His creation, even though He is so far above it (Ephesians 1:11; 4:6). The immanence of God is also supported in the story of the Bible as a whole. The very existence of God’s Word in written form testifies to God’s interest and action in His world. Israel’s survival throughout biblical history and Jesus’ Incarnation bear powerful witness that God is present and involved. He is literally “sustaining all things by His powerful word” (Hebrews 1:3). He is Immanuel, “God with us”; He is immanent.

**Gilbrant** - Paul’s words emphasize that God as Creator is not only above and beyond us as created beings, He is also everywhere present in His creation and wants to be a Friend to all, even to fallen men and women who have lost their way. The Gentile poets did not, of course, understand the full implication of what they said. But the Holy Spirit brought them to Paul’s memory to catch the attention of these Athenians and turn their thoughts toward God. Paul, however, made it clear later (Acts 17:30, 31) that having their source in God did not make them ready to meet God. They still needed to repent because a final judgment is coming. (Ibid)

**Robertson** notes that Paul’s “three verbs (**live...move...exist**) form an ascending scale and reach a climax in God (life, movement, existence).

**Ray Pritchard** - “**For in him we live and move and have our being**” (v. 28). I fear that these words are so familiar that they will lose their force. Let’s consider each phrase separately. Your life is not really yours—it comes from God and he can take it back any time he wants.

**1) “In him we live.”** Our very life is held in God’s hand. Do you understand you are completely dependent on God for the life you possess? Your life is not really yours—it comes from God and He can take it back any time He wants. James 4:14 reminds us that life itself is like a vapor that appears for a brief moment and then vanishes away. Anyone who has ever blown hot breath on a cold windowpane knows you have to work fast to write your name in the vapor before it disappears. That’s your life—all 70 or 80 years of it. It’s a vapor that begins to disappear the moment you are born. Sometimes we forget how fragile life can be. This week someone reminded me that there is a thin line between where you are right now and utter catastrophe. Just one phone call and your life could be changed forever. Things happen so quickly—a speeding car, a stray bullet, a sudden stroke, an unexpected heart attack, and people are saying, “Doesn’t she look so natural?” (Ed: He’s speaking of the corpse in the coffin!) Sometimes the line is so thin as to be nonexistent. If you want to know what your life is like, go to the cemetery and look at any headstone. There is a name, two dates and a dash. That’s what you get when you die: a little “-” to summarize your whole earthly existence. We move because He first moves in us.

**2) “In him we move.”** Raise your arm above your head. Now wave it around. What made your arm move? Your muscles did. Who told the muscles to move? The electrical impulses did. Where did those impulses come from? From the brain through the nervous system. How does that all work? I’m not sure but the scientists can explain it. Now here’s the important question: Where did the power come from to make all that happen? It comes from God. You cannot move a hand or a foot or open your mouth to speak unless God gives you the strength to do it. We move because He first moves in us.

**3) “We have our being.”** Have you ever wondered why you are the way you are? (Your friends have probably wondered that from time to time.) Where did your personality come from? Who gave you your unique genetic blueprint? We know that inside each cell in your body is a DNA code that contains every secret to your physical existence. For one person it reads: Blue eyes, brown hair, 5’7”, good at tennis, bad at math, with a tendency to overeat, and a birthmark above your right knee (plus a few million other details). Everything about you is in your DNA—that double-helix code that contains all your secrets. Who arranged your DNA? God did. That’s what Psalm 139:13 means when it says he knit you together in your mother’s womb. The things that make you unique come from God. ([Acts 17:26-28 How God Reveals Himself to Us](#))

**Holman Apologetics Commentary on In Him we live and move and exist** - Some have thought that Paul’s statement here

implies [pantheism](#) (all is god) or [panentheism](#) (all is in god), but such thought was foreign to Paul, a theologically trained Jew. Paul's point is that we are all accountable to God because we live in his world, the universe he created and governs. Every human being lives in God's presence and by his enablement, whether they recognize it or not. As such, they are and will be accountable to him.

**As even some of your own poets** - Paul is not quoting these pagan poets because they were prophets or to suggest that their teachings were from God, but because their words expressed a Biblical truth. Paul quotes these familiar poets to build a bridge to his audience.

As **MacArthur** says "The Greeks certainly could not plead ignorance. Even their **poets** acknowledged the revelation of God in nature, though they wrongly saw it as a revelation of their false gods. The Cretan poet Epimenides noted that **in Him we live and move and exist**, while Aratus, from Paul's home region of Cilicia, added, **For we also are His offspring**. Those quotes illustrate the universal revelation of God as Creator, Ruler, and Sustainer. While Paul could easily have documented those truths from the Old Testament, he chose instead illustrations familiar to his pagan audience, who were unfamiliar with Scripture. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

**Jack Arnold** - Paul, being a good preacher, quoted from two Greek poets, [Aratus](#) and [Cleanthes](#), who were Stoics, to show that the Greeks believed that men were the creatures of God, and not the creation of man. Man is a sinner but he was originally created in the image of God; therefore man has value and worth as a human. It is not biblical to say that man is nothing. It is true he can do nothing to save himself because he is a sinner, but he is not "nothing." He is a creature of God, created in the image of God, and of great value, even though he is sinful because of the Fall. ([Sermon](#))

**A T Robertson** on **some of your own poets** - [Aratus](#) of Soli in Cilicia (ab. b.c. 270) has these very words in his *Ta Phainomena* and [Cleanthes](#), Stoic philosopher (300-220 b.c.) in his Hymn to Zeus has *Ek sou gar genos esōmen*. In 1 Corinthians 15:32 Paul quotes from [Menander](#) and in Titus 1:12 from [Epimenides](#). J. Rendel Harris claims that he finds allusions in Paul's Epistles to Pindar, Aristophanes, and other Greek writers. There is no reason in the world why Paul should not have acquaintance with Greek literature, though one need not strain a point to prove it. Paul, of course, knew that the words were written of [Zeus](#) (Jupiter), not of **Jehovah**, but he applies the idea in them to his point just made that all men are the offspring of God. ([Robertson](#))

**For we also are His children** - Be careful in this verse. First note that **Children** is probably better translated "**offspring**." Not all of mankind can refer to themselves as sons or daughters of God. The only way to eternally join God's intimate family as a son or daughter is by believing in the Gospel. John is quite clear writing

But as many as **received** (= believed in) Him, **to them** He gave the right ([exousia](#)) to become **children** ([teknon](#)) of God, even to those who believe in His name," (John 1:12<sup>+</sup>; cf 1 Jn 3:1<sup>+</sup>)

**Children** (offspring) ([2085](#)) (**genos** from **ginomai** - to become) means a descendant, a person descended from some ancestor or race. Friberg give four sense of **genos** - (1) of common ancestry posterity, descendant, family (Rev 22.16); (2) of common identity as an ethnic group race, people, nation (Acts 7.19); of common identity of believers nation, people (1Pet 2.9); (3) of members of a family circle kindred, relatives, (extended) family (Acts 7.13); (4) of a distinctive species of something kind, class (1Cor 12.10) (Analytical Lexicon)

**BDAG** - 1. ancestral stock, descendant 2. a relatively small group with common ancestry, family, relatives (Acts 7:13) 3. a relatively large people group, nation, people (Acts 7:19, Gal 1:14) 4. entities united by common traits, class, kind (Ge 1:11 same species).

**Genos** - 20v - Usage: birth(2), children (1), countrymen(2), descendant(1), descent(1), family(2), kind(3), kinds(3), nation(1), native(1), race(3).

Matthew 13:47 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind;

Mark 7:26 Now the woman was a Gentile, of the Syrophenician race. And she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter.

Mark 9:29 And He said to them, "This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer."

Acts 4:6 and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent.

Acts 4:36 Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement),

Acts 7:13 "On the second visit Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph's family was disclosed to Pharaoh.

Acts 7:19 "It was he who took shrewd advantage of our race and mistreated our fathers so that they would expose their infants and they would not survive.

Acts 13:26 "Brethren, sons of Abraham's family, and those among you who fear God, to us the message of

this salvation has been sent.

Acts 17:28 for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.'

Acts 17:29 "Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man.

Acts 18:2 And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them,

Acts 18:24 Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures.

1 Corinthians 12:10 and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues.

1 Corinthians 12:28 And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.

1 Corinthians 14:10 There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning.

2 Corinthians 11:26 I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren;

Galatians 1:14 and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.

Philippians 3:5 circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee;

1 Peter 2:9 But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

Revelation 22:16 "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

#### **Genos - 118x in 106v in the Septuagint -**

Gen. 1:11 ("after their **kind**" - same for all uses in Genesis 1); Gen. 1:12; Gen. 1:21; Gen. 1:24; Gen. 1:25; Gen. 6:20; Gen. 7:14; Gen. 8:19; Gen. 11:6; Gen. 17:14; Gen. 19:38; Gen. 25:17; Gen. 26:10; Gen. 34:16; Gen. 35:29; Gen. 40:17; Exod. 1:9; Exod. 5:14; Lev. 20:17; Lev. 20:18; Lev. 21:13; Lev. 21:14; Lev. 21:17; Jos. 4:14; Jos. 11:21; 2 Chr. 4:3; 2 Chr. 4:13; 2 Chr. 16:14; Est. 2:10; Est. 3:7; Est. 3:13; Est. 6:13; Est. 8:12; Job 8:8; Job 41:6; Isa. 22:4; Isa. 42:6; Isa. 43:20; Isa. 49:6; Jer. 29:32; Jer. 31:1; Jer. 31:36; Jer. 31:37; Jer. 36:31; Jer. 41:1; Dan. 1:3; Dan. 1:6; Dan. 3:5; Dan. 3:7; Dan. 3:10; Dan. 3:15; Dan. 6:28; Dan. 7:14;

**Holman Apologetics Commentary on we also are His children** -Mormons believe this verse teaches that God is literally our biological Father, and that he begot us with a Mother God, but such an idea is foreign to biblical revelation. Rather, it is a way of saying that we are God's children made in his image, as Genesis 1 teaches. It also is a way of saying that every child of God is accountable to the Father for their response to him.

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#### **Norman Geisler - ACTS 17:28**—Does Paul's quotation support the pantheistic belief that God is everything?

MISINTERPRETATION: The apostle Paul told the philosophers on Mars Hill, "In him we live, move, and have our being." Christian Scientists see in this verse support for their pantheistic belief that "as a drop of water is one with the ocean, a ray of light one with the sun, even so God and man, Father and son, are one in being" (Eddy, 361).

CORRECTING THE MISINTERPRETATION: There is no reason here or anywhere else in the New Testament to believe that the apostle Paul was teaching pantheism. First of all, he was by training and conviction an orthodox Jew—a Pharisee (Phil. 3:4–6)—and accordingly a strict monotheist (Deut. 6:4; 1 Cor. 8:4, 6). Second, Paul referred here to the "God who made the world and everything in it" (Acts 17:24 NIV), whereas pantheists believe that God is the world and everything in it. Third, Paul only asserted that we have our life and being "in him" (God), not that we are him, as pantheists claim. That is to say, God is the sustaining Cause of all, as well as the originating Cause (Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:17). (When Cultists Ask)

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#### **Acts 17:19-31 Becoming Bilingual**

By Bill Crowder

In Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, "For we are also His offspring." —Acts 17:28

Is it possible—in a society that seems increasingly indifferent to the gospel—to communicate the Good News to people who don't share our faith?

One way to connect with people who are unfamiliar with the things of Christ is to become culturally “bilingual.” We do this by communicating in ways people can easily relate to. Knowing about and discussing music, film, sports, and television, for example, can offer just such an opportunity. If people hear us “speak their language,” without endorsing or condoning the media or events we refer to, it could open the door to sharing the timeless message of Christ.

Paul gave us an example of this in Acts 17. While visiting the Areopagus in Athens, he spoke to a thoroughly secular culture by quoting pagan Greek poets as a point of reference for the spiritual values he sought to communicate. He said, “In Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring’” (Acts 17:28). Just as Paul addressed that culture by knowing what they were reading, we may have greater impact for the gospel by relating it to people in terms they can readily embrace.

Are you trying to reach a neighbor or a co-worker with the gospel? Try becoming bilingual. [Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

To earn your neighbor's ear  
And prove you really care,  
Use terms he understands  
To show you are aware.  
—Branon

The content of the Bible must be brought into contact with the world.

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### **Acts 17:28 'No God, No Potatoes'**

By Dennis J. De Haan

Colossians 1:13-18

In Him we live and move and have our being. —Acts 17:28

It's been said that in the former Soviet Union the peasant farmers often enjoyed telling a humorous story to lighten their dreary lives.

It seems that one day a government official came to a farmer and inquired about the year's potato crop. “Oh, it was wonderful,” the farmer replied slyly. “It was so big it reached up to the very foot of God.”

The commissar's countenance quickly changed. With a scowl, he said, “But comrade, this is a communist state and we are atheists. You must not forget, there is no God!”

“Ah, that's my point,” the farmer replied. “No God—no potatoes!”

Yes, whether we believe it or not, God is the source of all things (Psalm 136:25). The apostle Paul told a pagan audience, “In Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). And in Colossians 1:16-18, he focused on the great creating and sustaining work of God in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. Without Him, we couldn't draw a single breath, and our bodies could not function.

Do we who confess faith in a personal God, to whom we owe our very existence, respond with thanksgiving, worship, and praise? If not, we differ little from that commissar who saw no connection between God and potatoes. —D J De Haan ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Part of God's name divinely stands  
On every work impressed;  
Each is the labor of His hands,  
By each His power confessed.  
—Anon.

God is the first link in our life's chain of events.

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### **Acts 17:28 Our Dependency**

By Anne Cetas

Read: 1 John 2:24–3:3

In Him we live and move and have our being. —Acts 17:28

While enjoying the arrival of a new great-niece, I was reminded of how much work it is to take care of a newborn baby. They are needy little creations who want feeding, changing, holding, feeding, changing, holding, feeding, changing, holding. Totally unable to care for themselves, they depend on those older and wiser people surrounding them.

We're dependent children too—reliant on our Father in heaven. What do we need from Him that we can't provide for ourselves? "In Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). He supplies our very breath. He also meets our needs "according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19).

We need our Father for peace in our troubles (John 16:33), love (1 John 3:1), and help in time of need (Ps. 46:1; Heb. 4:16). He gives victory in temptation (1 Cor. 10:13), forgiveness (1 John 1:9), purpose (Jer. 29:11), and eternal life (John 10:28). Without Him, we "can do nothing" (John 15:5). And from Him, "we have all received one blessing after another" (John 1:16 NIV).

Let's not think of ourselves as totally independent—because we're not. The Lord sustains us day by day. In many ways, we're as needy as a newborn baby. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

We are dependent on the Lord  
Who showers us with blessing;  
He gives us everything we need—  
Without Him we are nothing.  
—Sper

**Depending on God isn't weakness;  
it's acknowledging His strength.**

**Acts 17:29 Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man.**

- **we ought** Psalms 94:7-9; 106:20; 115:4-8; Isaiah 40:12-18; 44:9-20; Habakkuk 2:19,20; Romans 1:20-23
- **graven** Exodus 20:4; 32:4; Isaiah 46:5,6; Jeremiah 10:4-10
- [Acts 17:29 Warning Against Modern-Day Baal Worship](#) - Sermon by Ray Pritchard
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Acts 17:25-29 Getting to Know the Unknown God, Part 2](#)- John MacArthur

BGT γ νος ο ν π ρχοντες το θεο ο κ φε λομεν νομ ζειν χρυσ ο ρ γ ρ λ θ , χαρ γματι τ χνης κα νθυμ σεως νθρ που, τ θε ον ε ναι μοιον.

CSB Being God's offspring, then, we shouldn't think that the divine nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image fashioned by human art and imagination.

CJB So, since we are children of God, we shouldn't suppose that God's essence resembles gold, silver or stone shaped by human technique and imagination.

ESV Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.

KJV Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

GWN So if we are God's children, we shouldn't think that the divine being is like an image made from gold, silver, or stone, an image that is the product of human imagination and skill.

NET So since we are God's offspring, we should not think the deity is like gold or silver or stone, an image made by human skill and imagination.

NAB Since therefore we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the divinity is like an image fashioned from gold, silver, or stone by human art and imagination.

NIV "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.

NLT And since this is true, we shouldn't think of God as an idol designed by craftsmen from gold or silver or



stone.

YLT "Being, therefore, offspring of God, we ought not to think the Godhead to be like to gold, or silver, or stone, graving of art and device of man;

## THE FOLLY OF IDOLATRY

**MacDonald** writes that "Paul's argument continues. If men are the offspring of God, then it is impossible to think of God as a gold or silver or stone idol. These are shaped by art and man's devising, and therefore are not as great as men. These idols are, in a sense, the offspring of human beings, whereas the truth is that human beings are the creation of God." (Believer's Bible Commentary)

**MacArthur** reasons that "God created man, He must be more than a mere man-made idol." (Ibid)

**Being then the children of God** - "So since we are God's offspring" (NET) - **Offspring** is a more accurate translation than **children** which as discussed in the previous verse might be misleading to some readers not familiar with how one becomes a true child of God (Jn 1:12).

Ge 1:27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

**Ryrie** "**Being then the children of God**, not in the sense that all have something of the divine in them, nor that all are His redeemed children, but that all people were created and given life by God." (RSB)

**We ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone**- Idolatry is not even logical!

As **John Polhill** so aptly puts it "Only the creature can express the true worship of the Creator, not the creation of the creature, not something made by human design and skill." (NAC-Acts)

**Constable** - If God created people, God cannot be an image or an idol. Paul was claiming that God's divine nature is essentially spiritual rather than material. (Expository Notes)

**Toussaint** - The conclusion is inevitable: since humans have been created by God, the divine Being, He cannot possibly be in the form of an idol, an image conceived and constructed by man (cf. Rom. 1:22–23)...This would be a revolutionary concept to the Athenians, whose city was "full of idols" (Acts 17:16) and "objects of worship" (Acts 17:23). (BKC)

**Lumby** - As man is of more honour than material things, how far above these must the Godhead be. The Athenians, the Apostle would teach them, had formed not too high but too low a conception of themselves. (Acts of the Apostles)

**Wiersbe** - This led to Paul's logical conclusion: God made us in His image, so it is foolish for us to make gods in our own image! Greek religion was nothing but the manufacture and worship of gods who were patterned after men and who acted like men. Paul not only showed the folly of temples and the temple rituals, but also the folly of all idolatry. (BEC)

**Divine nature** (2304)(**theios**; See [ISBE note](#) below) describes an attribute of God such as His power and not His character in its essence and totality. **Theios** is used five times in the Septuagint (LXX) (Ex. 31:3; 35:31; Job 27:3; 33:4; Pr 2:17) three times in the NT (Acts 17:29; 2Pe 1:3, [4+](#)) and is translated divine, 2; divine nature, 1. The KJV translates theios once as "Godhead". **Theios** pertains to having the nature of God or as related to God by nature.

See also the commentary associated with **tó theíon** in Acts 17:29+, the [commentary](#) associated with **tó theíon** in 2 Pe 1:3,[4+](#); the [commentary](#) associated with **theiôtēs** in Ro. 1:20+; and the [commentary](#) associated with **theótēs** in Col. 2:9+;

**Robertson** on **theios** - **To theion** is strictly "the divine" nature like *theiôtēs* (Romans 1:20) rather than like *theotēs* (Col. 2:9). Paul may have used to theion here to get back behind all their notions of various gods to the real nature of God. The Athenians may even have used the term themselves.

**ISBE (Revised)** entry under "**Deity**" - DEITY [Gk. *tó theíon*] (Acts 17:29+); AV GODHEAD; [*theiôtēs*] (Rom. 1:20+); AV GODHEAD; [*theótēs*] (Col. 2:9+); AV, NEB GODHEAD. These three closely related Greek terms are descriptive of the basic nature of God. They seem to vary but slightly in connotation.

**A. Tó Theíon.** *Tó theíon* ([theios](#)) "the divine thing," is derived from the adjective *theíos*, meaning "pertaining to God," "divine" (2 Pet. 1:3f+). It signifies "God" in an impersonal sense. In Acts 17:29+, in Paul's speech to Greek intellectuals on Mars Hill, the term *tó theíon* draws attention to the qualitative aspect of God. Paul

demonstrates the Greeks' shallow conception of God, seeking to heighten their receptivity to the revealed truth of the gospel of Christ. The term *tó theíon* was common in their discussions, being used to designate the deity apart from any reference to a particular god. Paul focuses attention upon that quality of "the divine" which distinguishes God from all else. English terms based on the word "divine," however, are used too commonly and are therefore inadequate to set forth the connotation of *tó theíon* (see II. A, B below). The idea is more adequately represented by "the Deity," so that an appropriate translation of Acts 17:29 might be: "It is inconceivable that 'the Deity' can be appropriately represented by the artistic talents of men working with mere earthly elements."

**B. Theiôtēs** The term **theiotes** is an abstract noun closely related to *tó theíon*, derived from the same adjective, *theós*. It is commonly understood as a summary term for the attributes of deity. However, the term merely "defines" with regard to essence, signifying "the quality of the divine," that character which makes God God, and sets Him apart as worthy of worship. The Greeks used the term of their deities. Later it was applied to men by the Roman imperial cult as a term for the divinity of imperial majesty. It is rarely used in later Jewish works and occurs in biblical literature only in Wisd. 18:9 and Ro 1:20<sup>+</sup>. The term is not as impersonal as *tó theíon*, but its abstractness does not lend a readily discernible distinction. Its meaning is approximated by "deity," perhaps "divineness."

In Ro. 1:20<sup>+</sup> **theiôtēs** is used of that nature of the Creator discernible to the mind by observation of the existing worlds. Verse 19 states, "For what can be known about God is plain to them, because he has shown it to them." Verse 20 affirms that man's mind is able to form a concept of the invisible nature of God by visual perception of the universe. The discernible features of His transcendent being ("his invisible nature") are specifically His "eternal power" and "deity." The universe displays the eternal power it took to bring the universe into existence; in addition it displays the divine character of the one who created it, i.e., His deity. Specific attributes are not in view in the term *theiôtēs*, simply His quality of "Godness," which depicts Him as worthy of worship. But men suppressed this truth in unrighteousness (v 18), and are without excuse, subject to the wrath of God revealed from heaven (v 20). They did not acknowledge "his deity" as it is discernible in the things He has created.

**C. Theótēs - Theotes** is a kindred term (to *theiotes*), but is distinctive in that it is derived from the word "God" (*theós*). On this basis it is the most personal of the three terms (**to theion** - Acts 17:29<sup>+</sup>, **theiotes** - Ro 1:20<sup>+</sup>, **theotes** - Col 2:9<sup>+</sup>), and is nearly a name. Whereas *tó theíon* marks "the quality of deity," and *theiôtēs* connotes "that which makes God God," *theótēs* signifies "the being of God." **Theótēs** apparently denotes the utmost idea of God. On heathen lips it could do no more than designate their highest concept of God, "The Supreme Being." In Col. 2:9<sup>+</sup> Paul uses **theótēs** in declaring that "the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily" in Christ. Although it conveys the idea of a "being," the use of "Divine Being" here would impersonalize the total expression, "the whole fulness of the Divine Being." The term "deity," or even "the Deity," is likewise impersonal; furthermore, the connotation "being" is lacking. A term that better preserves the personal and qualitative aspect of *theótēs* is "godhead" (see III below). The total expression "the whole fulness of the Godhead," then, signifies the sum of all that enters into the conception of "Godhead," God in nature, character, and being. All this dwells in Christ "bodily," i.e., in such a manner as to be shown in a bodily organism. Cf. Jn. 14:9, where Philip's request that Jesus show them the Father was met by the Lord's response, "He who has seen me has seen the Father."

## II. English Terms

In English the words most representative of these three Greek terms are "deity," "divinity," and "godhead."

**A. Deity** "Deity" means "divine character" or "nature" and is used of false gods as well as of the persons of the trinity. "Deity" is qualitative in its import. The expression "the deity of Christ" is much stronger than "the divinity of Christ," probably because "divinity" is commonly applied to men and things. When used with the article, the resultant term "the Deity" becomes a designation of God the Supreme Being, although it can also be used of specific lesser deities. Hence, the term "deity," when used with the article, is qualitative and somewhat personal in connotation.

**B. Divinity** The term "divinity" is much like "deity" in that it refers to divine character or nature. But although it is used in connection with the persons of the trinity, it lacks the force of "deity." These Latin derivatives bring into English the basic distinction created by the Latin fathers. Before the controversy about the deity of Christ, Latin had only the general term *divinitas*. The Latin fathers coined the term *deitas* as a distinctive rendering of the Gk. *theótēs*, and employed it to express the "deity" of the persons of the trinity. They, as well as the Greek fathers, needed unique terms to combat the attempt to ascribe to the Son and the Spirit a reduced "divinity."

This distinctiveness is largely preserved in English, although there is a tendency for “divinity” and “deity” to merge in meaning.

**C. Godhead** The English term “godhead” was originally a synonym for “Godhead,” a word that has all but passed out of use. As manhood is that quality which makes a man a man, so godhead is that which makes God God. This significance, however, is not readily discernible in the term today. It is presently a somewhat neutral term for the essential being of God as unique. By prefixing the article, the term becomes an abstract way of saying “God.” In fact, the article prefixed to any of these terms, “the Deity,” “the Divinity,” or “the Godhead,” draws attention to the constitutive qualities that make God the kind of being we call “God.” In strength of affirmation, or personalizing force, “godhead” seems most substantial, with “deity” nearly as strong and “divinity” weakest in this regard. All are abstract terms, nearly synonymous in meaning, yet the context will often decide the choice of one word over another.

### III. Summary

Since the context of Col. 2:9<sup>+</sup> deals with the person of Christ, Paul apparently chose a term distinctive in that respect, **theótēs**. The contexts of Acts 17:29<sup>+</sup> and Rom. 1:20<sup>+</sup> emphasize the character rather than the person of God. The terms used are impersonal in connotation. Because of these differences in context and word derivation it is preferable to use distinctive English terms. “Deity” seems appropriate for the concept of **tó theíon** in Acts 17:29<sup>+</sup> and for **theiótēs** in Rom. 1:20<sup>+</sup>, but inadequate for **theótēs** in Col. 2:9<sup>+</sup>. “Godhead” more adequately portrays the truth that all that constitutes God in person, character and being dwells in Christ the Son. Speaking of God in respect to His “Godness” the term “deity” is sufficient, but in reference to His person and/or being a designation with the word “god” seems preferable. (G. E. Montgomery)

**We ought not** (Greek word for “not” means “absolutely not”) - NLT paraphrases “we shouldn’t think of God as an idol designed by craftsmen.”

**J Vernon McGee** - In other words, he says we ought not to be idolaters. He has shown God to be the Creator. Now he will present Him as the Redeemer.

**Robertson** - It is a logical conclusion (o v [oun], therefore) from the very language of Aratus and Cleanthes.

**Ought** (3784) (**opheilo** from **ophéillo** = heap up) means to owe something to someone. Literally it speaks of financial indebtedness and thus means to owe money, to be in debt, or to describe that which is due (Mt 18:28, Lk 7:41, 16:5, 7, Philemon 1:18). The verb **opheilo** was sometimes used to describe “the debt” itself. Figuratively, **opheilo** describes a sense of indebtedness to someone for something. **Opheilo** in most of the NT uses conveys the sense of necessity, duty or to be under obligation (obligation = moral requirement which conveys the binding force of civility, kindness or gratitude, when the performance of a duty cannot be enforced by law). The idea is that one is held or bound by duty, moral obligation or necessity to do something.

**Vincent on like gold or silver or stone** - These words must have impressed his hearers profoundly, as they looked at the multitude of statues of divinities which surrounded them.

**Like** (3664) (**homoios** from **homos** = one and the same) means *like* when referring to objects and *of the same status* when referring to individuals. This adjective is also used of possessions shared in common.

**Zodhiates on homoios** - It denotes a correspondence in feature, property or nature, while **íisos** (2470), equal, denotes a correspondence in measure, capacity or position. In biblical Gr. it means of the same kind, like, e.g., the two commandments which form the sum of the Law, as on a par with each other (Matt. 22:38, 39; Mark 12:31). It denotes the rest that are of the same kind in Gal. 5:21 after a list of the works of the flesh. (I) Generally, similarity in external form and appearance (John 9:9; Rev. 1:13, 15; 2:18; 4:3, 6, 7; 9:7, 10, 19; 11:1; 13:2, 11; 14:14; 16:13; 21:11, 18); in kind or nature (Acts 17:29; Gal. 5:21); in conduct, character (Matt. 11:16; 13:52; Luke 7:31, 32; 12:36); in conditions, circumstances (Matt. 13:31, 33, 44, 45, 47; 20:1; Luke 6:47-49; 13:18, 19, 21; 1 John 3:2; Rev. 18:18) (II) Just like, equal, the same with, in kind or nature (Jude 1:7). In conduct, character, once followed by the gen. (John 8:55); in authority, dignity, power (Matt. 22:39; Mark 12:31; Rev. 13:4)..(Complete Word Study Dictionary)

**Gilbrant** - The prominent use of **homoios** in the New Testament is to introduce parables and to explain imagery in prophetic passages. This adjective is used by the Lord to introduce the parables of the kingdom in Matthew 13. The kingdom of heaven is “like to a grain of mustard seed” (verse 31), “like unto leaven” (verse 33), “like unto treasure” (verse 44), “like unto a merchantman” (verse 45), “like unto a net” (verse 47), and “like unto a man that is a householder” (verse 52). John used **homoios** 22 times in the Book of Revelation to describe prophetic images. When John saw a vision of Christ, he described Him as “one like unto the Son of man” (Revelation 1:13) with “feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace” (Revelation 1:15). The prophetic hope of believers is that when Christ appears “we shall be like him” (1 John 3:2). ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**Homoios** - 46x in 41x - like(43), one like(2), same(1).

Matt. 11:16; Matt. 13:31; Matt. 13:33; Matt. 13:44; Matt. 13:45; Matt. 13:47; Matt. 13:52; Matt. 20:1; Matt. 22:39; Lk. 6:47; Lk. 6:48; Lk. 6:49; Lk. 7:31; Lk. 7:32; Lk. 12:36; Lk. 13:18; Lk. 13:19; Lk. 13:21; Jn. 8:55; Jn. 9:9; Acts 17:29; Gal. 5:21; 1 Jn. 3:2; Jude 1:7; Rev. 1:13; Rev. 1:15; Rev. 2:18; Rev. 4:3; Rev. 4:6; Rev. 4:7; Rev. 9:7; Rev. 9:10; Rev. 9:19; Rev. 11:1; Rev. 13:2; Rev. 13:4; Rev. 13:11; Rev. 14:14; Rev. 18:18; Rev. 21:11; Rev. 21:18

**Homoios** in the Septuagint -

Gen. 2:20 (helper "**suitable**" - homoios); Ex. 15:11 ("Who is **like** You among the gods, O LORD?"); Lev. 11:14; Lev. 11:15; Lev. 11:16; Lev. 11:19; Lev. 11:22; Deut. 14:13; Deut. 14:14; Deut. 14:17; Deut. 14:18; Deut. 33:29; Jdg. 8:18; 1 Sam. 10:24; 2 Sam. 9:8; 1 Ki. 3:12; 1 Ki. 3:13; 2 Ki. 3:7; 2 Ki. 18:5; 2 Ki. 23:25; 1 Chr. 17:20; 2 Chr. 1:12; 2 Chr. 6:14; 2 Chr. 35:18; 2 Chr. 35:19; Neh. 13:26; Job 35:8; Job 37:23; Job 41:33; Ps. 35:10 ("LORD, who is **like** You,); Ps. 50:21; Ps. 71:19 ("LORD, who is **like** You,); Ps. 86:8; Ps. 89:8; Ps. 115:8; Ps. 135:18; Prov. 19:12; Prov. 26:4; Prov. 26:8; Prov. 27:19; Song. 2:9; 7:1; Isa. 13:4; Isa. 14:14; Isa. 23:2; Isa. 62:6; Lam. 1:21; Ezek. 5:9; Ezek. 16:32; Ezek. 31:8; Dan. 1:19; Dan. 3:25; Dan. 4:10; Dan. 7:5; Joel 2:2

**An image formed by the art and thought of man** - "An image made by human skill and imagination." (NET) Graven work of art or external craft, and of thought or device or internal conception of man.

Psalms 115:7-8 (Context Ps 115:3-6) elaborates on the danger of making idols (of anything...money, power, possessions, prestige, etc)!

They have hands, but they cannot feel; They have feet, but they cannot walk; They cannot make a sound with their throat. **8 Those who make them will become like them, Everyone who trusts in them.**

**THOUGHT** - Is it any surprise that the Spirit gives God's children the repeated warnings in the NT

1 Cor 10:14 = "Therefore, my beloved, **flee** [p<sup>heugo</sup> - escape in the **present imperative** = make it your lifestyle to flee!] from idolatry.,

1 Jn 5:21 in last words of his letter = "Little children, **guard** [p<sup>hulasso</sup> in the **aorist imperative** = JUST DO IT!!!] yourselves from idols."

([See discussion of the Need for the Holy Spirit to obey these vital NT commands](#) or "How to Keep All 1642 Commandments in the New Testament!")

As **Jack Andrews** says "No sculptor can craft Him, no artist can draw Him, no builder can reproduce Him, no museum can unveil Him, no mind can conceive Him, no eye has seen Him."

**Image formed** (5480)(**charagma** from **charasso** = to engrave, carve) refers to a mark or stamp, made by engraving, etching, imprinting, branding and is used 7x in Revelation for the "**mark**" of the Beast or the Antichrist, a **mark** which indelibly damns men to eternal hellfire! How intriguing that the same word is used here by Paul of the thing **formed** (an engraving, sculptured work, likeness, handiwork) referring to the idols in Athens, the worship of which will likewise end in eternal punishment. Are you worshiping idols of men's making or are you worshiping the only true and living God through faith in His Son? Your eternal destiny depends on your answer!

**Gilbrant** - In the broadest sense the Greek word **charagma** refers to a stamp, an impression, an engraving, a mark, or a symbol. In this usage it occurs as a noun form of the Greek verb charassō which means "to cut to a point or to sharpen" (Martin, "Mark," Colin Brown, 2:573). In the days of the ancient Greek world **charagma** originally denoted the bite of a snake (**ED: WOW WHAT A PICTURE OF WHAT IDOLS DO TO THE LIFE OF A MAN'S SPIRIT!**), but as its use developed historically it came to mean an inscription (i.e., on wood, stone, brass, casting dies, minting coins), a writing of any nature, or a stamp of personal identity (e.g., a brand to mark camels). Eventually it denoted an official seal of attestation, validity, and authority (ibid., 2:574; Wilckens, "charagnia," *Kittel*, 9:416). ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**Charagma** - 8x - image formed(1), mark(7) - Acts 17:29; Rev. 13:16; Rev. 13:17; Rev. 14:9; Rev. 14:11; Rev. 16:2; Rev. 19:20; Rev. 20:4

**Art** (5078)(**techne** from **tikto** = to bring forth) refers to an art, a trade, craft, skill, occupation, some an activity involving specialized training and skill. **Gilbrant** says "It is derived from **tektōn**, a "craftsman in wood, stone, or metal."

**Techne** - 3x - art(1), craft(1), trade(1). Acts 17:29; Acts 18:3; Rev. 18:22

**Techne** in the Septuagint - Ex. 28:11; Exod. 30:25; 1 Ki. 7:14; 1 Chr. 28:21; Dan. 1:17

**Thought** (1761)([enthumesis](#) from **en** = in + **thumos** = strong feeling, passion, mind, thought) means an inward reasoning or deliberation and conveys the idea of pondering or thinking out. Our English word "**reflection**" is an accurate translation. Westcott notes that the word refers to the action of the affections and is related to the will, which is intriguing as in the present context it reflects of the will of man to create an object to worship rather than worship the true and living God! Used 4x in the NT - Matt. 9:4; Matt. 12:25; Acts 17:29; Heb. 4:12.

### Related Cross References

Isa 40:18-20 To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare with Him? 19 As for the idol, a craftsman casts it, A goldsmith plates it with gold, And a silversmith fashions chains of silver. 20 He who is too impoverished for such an offering Selects a tree that does not rot; He seeks out for himself a skillful craftsman To prepare an idol that will not totter.

Isa 44:10-17 Who has fashioned a god or cast an idol to no profit? 11 Behold, all his companions will be put to shame, for the craftsmen themselves are mere men. Let them all assemble themselves, let them stand up, let them tremble, let them together be put to shame. 12 The man shapes iron into a cutting tool and does his work over the coals, fashioning it with hammers and working it with his strong arm. He also gets hungry and his strength fails; he drinks no water and becomes weary. 13 Another shapes wood, he extends a measuring line; he outlines it with red chalk. He works it with planes and outlines it with a compass, and makes it like the form of a man, like the beauty of man, so that it may sit in a house. 14 Surely he cuts cedars for himself, and takes a cypress or an oak and raises it for himself among the trees of the forest. He plants a fir, and the rain makes it grow. 15 Then it becomes something for a man to burn, so he takes one of them and warms himself; he also makes a fire to bake bread. He also makes a god and worships it; he makes it a graven image and falls down before it. 16 Half of it he burns in the fire; over this half he eats meat as he roasts a roast and is satisfied. He also warms himself and says, "Aha! I am warm, I have seen the fire." 17 But the rest of it he makes into a god, his graven image. He falls down before it and worships; he also prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god."

**Gilbrant** - Since human beings are the "offspring" of God (in the sense of being created in the image and after the likeness of God), mankind would be totally unreasonable to think of the Godhead (the divine Trinity) as gold, or silver, or stone, an engraved work of the art and meditations or thoughts of a human being. This is one of the strong points of Old Testament teaching. In Deuteronomy 4:15-19 Moses reminded Israel that they saw a genuine manifestation of God's presence at Sinai. But they saw no physical form of any kind. What they saw was glory. (See also Exodus 33:18, 22.) Moses gave this as a reason for not making or worshipping idols. The infinite God does not have the kind of form of which you can make an image. Therefore, when men try to make or fashion images, they are getting further away from what God is really like. When they worship these man-made images they are thus worshipping something other than God. Psalm 115:4-8 points out the foolishness of idols made with human hands. Idols that cannot see, speak, or hear call attention to the stupidity of those who make them (see also Psalm 135:15-18). Isaiah 40:18-22 also uses irony to contrast the goldplated gods that need silver chains to keep them from falling over with the true God who founded the earth and who sits above the sphere of the earth (see also Isaiah 41:24; 44:9-17). The words "ought not" also imply guilt. The heathen are wrong to make idols. Their false worship is sin. It is rebellion against the God who made them. Paul said they should have known better. (Ibid)

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### Gotquestions on the aseity of God...

The **aseity of God** is His attribute of **independent self-existence**. God is the **uncaused Cause**, the **uncreated Creator**. He is the source of all things, the One who originated everything and who sustains everything that exists. The **aseity of God** means that He is the One in whom all other things find their source, existence, and continuance. He is the ever-present Power that sustains all life. There is no other source of life and none other like Him: "For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me" (Isaiah 46:9). The **aseity of God** is expressed in Exodus 3:14. When Moses asked the Lord about His name, God replied, "I AM WHO I AM." God is the eternally self-existent Being who always was and always will be. The aseity of God is related to His complete independence. God has no need. He is complete in and of Himself and always has been. God did not create man because He was lonely or because He needed to create. He is and always has been complete and self-sufficient in and of Himself. ([See full discussion](#))

- [Multiple audios](#)
- [R C Sproul](#)
- [Steven Lawson 2 discusses the Aseity of God - good lecture;](#)

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## Reformation Study Notes - The Self-Existence of God

Children sometimes ask, “Who made God?” The clearest answer is that God never needed to be made, because He was always there. He exists in a different way from us: we exist in a derived, finite, and fragile way, but our Creator exists as eternal, self-sustaining, and necessary. His existence is necessary in the sense that there is no possibility in Him of ceasing to exist.

God’s self-existence is a basic truth. In his presentation of the “unknown God” to the Athenians, Paul explained that the Creator of the world is not “served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything” (Acts 17:25). The Creator has life in Himself and draws His unending energy from Himself, needing nothing. The independent self-existence of God is a truth stated clearly in the Bible (Ps. 90:1–4; 102:25–27; Is. 40:28–31; John 5:26; Rev. 4:10).

In theology, many errors result from supposing that the conditions and limits of our own finite existence apply to God. In the life of faith we can too easily impoverish ourselves by embracing an idea of God that is limited and small. The doctrine of His self-existence is a bulwark and defense against such mistakes. The principle that God exists from Himself alone distinguishes Him from every creature and is a foundation of our thinking about Him. Knowing that God’s existence is independent protects our understanding of His greatness, and so has clear practical value for our spiritual health.

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**Norman Geisler - ACTS 17:28–29**—Does this verse support the idea that the heavenly Father and a heavenly mother gave birth to spirit-children in the “preexistence”?

MISINTERPRETATION: This verse refers to believers as God’s “offspring,” which, according to Mormons, means we were born as spirit children prior to being born physically on earth. “Man, as a spirit, was begotten and born of heavenly parents, and reared to maturity in the eternal mansion of the Father, prior to coming upon the earth in a temporal [physical] body” (Gospel Principles, 1979, 9).

CORRECTING THE MISINTERPRETATION: In this context Paul was preaching to some men in Athens who didn’t even believe in God. Drawing on glimpses of truth in their writings, Paul affirmed that we are all “offspring of God” in the sense that we were all created by him. Paul earlier affirmed that God “made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation” (Acts 17:26 NASB). Paul may have been thinking of Malachi 2:10: “Do we not all have one father? Has not one God created us?” (Mal. 2:10 NASB).

It is important to understand that humankind did not preexist as a spirit being prior to physical birth on earth. Genesis 2:7 tells us, “Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (NASB). Notice that no preexisting spirit entered a physical tabernacle of flesh. Rather, God created the physical being, and then “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,” and the man became a living being at that point. It appears that at that moment God created both man’s material and immaterial aspects. Since then, human beings—in both their material and immaterial aspects—are born into the world through the natural union of their parents (cf. Gen. 5:3). (When Cultists Ask)

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**Acts 17:30 Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent**

NET Acts 17:30 Therefore, although God has overlooked such times of ignorance, he now commands all people everywhere to repent, (Act 17:30 NET)

- **the times** Acts 14:16; Psalms 50:21; Romans 1:28; 3:23,25
- **but** Acts 3:19; 11:18; 20:21; 26:17-20; Matthew 3:2; 4:17; Mark 6:12; Luke 13:5; 15:10; Luke 24:47; Romans 2:4; 2Corinthians 7:10; Ephesians 4:17-32; 5:6-8; Titus 2:11,12; 1Peter 1:14,15; 4:3
- [Acts 17:30 Repent! The Forgotten Doctrine of Salvation](#) - Sermon by Ray Pritchard
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Acts 17:30-31 Getting to Know the Unknown God, Part 3](#)- John MacArthur

## GOD'S COMMAND TO REPENT

**Therefore** - Always take note of this strategic **term of conclusion** and ask at least one question “What is the writer concluding?” Paul like a good preacher proceeds to make an appeal, calling for repentance (Acts 17:30) because of the certainty of judgment (Acts 17:31).

**David Guzik** summarizes Paul's argument - Paul went from knowing who God is (our Creator), to who we are (His offspring), to our responsibility before Him (to understand Him and worship Him in truth), to our accountability if we dishonor Him (judgment). (Enduring Word Bible Commentary – Acts)

**Having overlooked the times of ignorance** - These cultured men were ignorant men concerning God! I think of brilliant men like [Stephen Hawking](#) who wise among men but are ignorant of the revealed truth of God! He passed away in 2018 so he is sadly no longer ignorant!

God is merciful and long suffering and so has **overlooked the times of ignorance**, but now is declaring through the Gospel that it is time to **repent**, to change their minds and attitudes by turning to the living God and His glorious Gospel. The amazing truth is that no man would repent unless God gave him the gift of repentance, for Paul asks the religious person "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that **the kindness of God leads you to repentance?**" (Ro 2:4+, cf Acts 11:18+, 2 Ti 2:25+)

Earlier in Acts Paul made a similar statement that speaks of God's long suffering "In the generations gone by **He permitted all the nations to go their own ways**" (Acts 14:16+). In other words while God had allowed the nations to go their own ways, He had not left Himself without witness.

In Romans Paul makes a statement similar to God's **overlooking the times of ignorance**...

Whom (Jesus Christ - Ro 3:24) God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because **in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed**; (Ro 3:25-[see explanation](#))

Acts 17:30KJV has "**God winked**" but that is a poor translation giving a very wrong impression of God's "opinion" of sin! God's overlooking sins does not mean He "winks" at sin. Sin is still sin and still incurs guilt. The only way to have the slate cleaned of past (present and future) sins is to place one's faith in the Sin Bearer, Christ Jesus, the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29, 1 Peter 2:24-[note](#), Isaiah 53:5-6+).

**John Stott** - The Athenians have acknowledged in their altar inscription that they are ignorant of God, and Paul has been giving evidence of their ignorance. Now he declares such ignorance to be culpable.

**J Vernon McGee** - There was a time when God shut His eyes to paganism. Now light has come into the world. God asks men everywhere to turn to Him. Light creates responsibility. Now God is commanding all men everywhere to repent. He has presented God as the Creator in His past work. He shows God as the Redeemer in His present work. Now he shows God as the Judge in His future work.

**Jack Arnold** has an interesting thought on **times of ignorance** - Some have taken the words "times of ignorance" to refer to the ages of paganism before the coming of Christ into this world. They say that until Christ came God withheld execution of physical judgment upon these Gentile nations. However, "the times of ignorance" may also refer to the life of an individual before conversion. There are times in one's life, as an offspring of God, a creature of God, that one tries to satisfy himself with things that are less than God. These are times of ignorance when men walk in independence of God, forming various idols in their minds. God overlooks these times. He does not bring immediate judgment to the person, waiting patiently for the person to repent. God now calls upon everybody everywhere to repent. When confronted with the truth of Christ, men are to execute their human responsibility and repent; that is, change the mind about idolatry, ignorance, sin, God, Christ and a sinful life style, and receive Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior. Notice that God does not ask men to repent but commands them to repent. ([Sermon](#))

**Overlooked** (has deliberately paid no attention to) ([5237](#)) (**hupereido** 2d aorist of **huperoráo** from **hupér** = over + **eídon** = to see, perceive) means to overlook, act as if one did not see, to disregard intentionally and so to bear with. **BDAG** - 1. to disregard as not worthy of one's notice, disdain, despise (Socrates disdains all human opinion in favor of divine guidance) (Lev 26:37) 2. to indulgently take no notice of, overlook, disregard Josh 1:5; Ps 9:22 Ac 17:30.

**Thayer** - to overlook, take no notice of, not attend to

**Robertson** adds that **hupereido** is an "old verb to see beyond, not to see, to overlook, not "to wink at" of the Authorized Version with the notion of condoning. Here only in the NT. It occurs in the **Lxx** in the sense of overlooking or neglecting (Ps 55:1 [note](#)). But it has here only a negative force. God has all the time objected to the polytheism of the heathen, and now he has made it plain.

Used only once in the NT but 42x in the Septuagint -

Gen. 42:21; Lev. 20:4; Lev. 26:37; Lev. 26:40; Lev. 26:43; Lev. 26:44; Num. 5:12; Num. 22:30; Num. 31:16; Deut. 3:26; Deut. 21:16; Deut. 22:1; Deut. 22:3; Deut. 22:4; Jos. 1:5; Est. 4:17; Job 6:14; Job 31:19; Ps. 10:1;

**Reformation Study Bible on times of ignorance** - That is, God took into consideration the limitations of their knowledge about God, but now Paul has revealed the truth about the living God. With all people, they are called upon to repent of their sins.

**The times of ignorance** - The times (chronos - gives us chronology, an arrangement of events in time) before full knowledge of God came in Jesus Christ. Paul uses the very word for their **ignorance** (agnoountes) employed in Acts 17:23-[note](#)

"For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in **ignorance**, this I proclaim to you.

And here are two related uses of the word **ignorance**

Ephesians 4:18-[note](#) being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God **because of the ignorance that is in them**, because of the hardness of their heart;

1 Peter 1:14-[note](#) As obedient children, do not be conformed to **the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance**,

Though people are under His wrath (Ro 1:18-note) and are without excuse because of natural revelation (Ro 1:19, 20-see notes Ro 1:19; 20), God "in His forbearance ([anoche](#) = holding back, delay - Ro 2:4-note) left the sins committed beforehand unpunished" (Ro 3:25-note). This parallels Acts 14:16, All through time the Gentiles were responsible for the general revelation given to them; now with the worldwide proclamation of the gospel, the Gentiles (WHO HEAR IT) are also responsible to special revelation. That response is to obey God's command to repent of their sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Even the Gentiles who do not hear the Gospel are still under God's wrath.

**Ignorance** ([52](#))([agnoia](#) from the **a** = not + **noēō** = to perceive, understand) means literally "not knowing" and so to not have information about— want of knowledge, ignorance. But ignorance is not "bliss" for it leads to rejection and rebellion against one's Creator! Furthermore ignorance is not innocence, for in Eph 4:18 (above) Paul parallels their ignorance with their hardness of heart. They are culpable and guilty of "high treason" against the Most High God and cannot say I did not know, "because that which is known about God is **evident within them**; for ([term of explanation](#)) God made it evident to them. For [term of explanation](#) - explaining how general revelation is available to ALL men, even those in the darkest jungles) since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that **they are without excuse**." (Ro 1:19-20-[note](#))

#### Related Resources:

- [What happens to those who have never heard about Jesus?](#)
- [Can a person be saved through general revelation?](#)
- [How were people saved before Jesus died for our sins?](#)
- [What happens to babies and young children when they die?](#)
- [Do mentally ill people go to heaven?](#)

**God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent** - The NET has "He now commands all people everywhere to repent."

**Now (nun)** in this context designates a point of time not past or future but at the present time, the momentary present **NOW NOT LATER, BECAUSE LATER MAY BE TOO LATE!** God always punishes sinners but sometimes His judgment is delayed so that men will have time to **repent**. Thus every breath taken by an unsaved man is a sign of God's kindness (goodness - Ro 2:4+), meant to lead him step by step to repentance and faith. If you are reading this note and are skeptical and/or have never repented and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ for your eternal salvation, then "behold, now is "THE ACCEPTABLE TIME," behold, now is "THE DAY OF SALVATION." (2 Cor 6:2) **Believe** ([aorist imperative](#) = command which conveys a sense of urgency. Do this now! Do not delay!) in the Lord Jesus (THAT'S THE CONDITION), and (THIS IS THE PROMISE) you will be saved, you and your household." (Acts 16:31+)

**Is...declaring** (commanding, directing, ordering, prescribing) ([3853](#))([paraggello](#) from **para** = beside, alongside, near by, at the side of + **aggelos** = messenger, **angelo/aggello** = to announce) means to hand on or pass on an announcement from one to another who is at one's side, such as to what must be done, usually with the idea of a command or charge. **Paraggello** often was used in the context of a military command and demanded that the subordinate obey the order from the superior (cf "solemnly charge" in 2Ti 4:1-[note](#)) and required unhesitating and unqualified obedience. (cp Lk 5:14-note, Lk 8:29-note, Lk 9:21KJV-note, Acts 1:4+ [Jesus "commanded them"], Acts 4:18+; Acts 5:28KJV+; Acts 15:5KJV+; 1Th 4:11). It is like a mandate (an authoritative command) or a call to obedience from one in authority. In other words Paul is issuing this appeal not has a suggestion but in essence as a command



for his cultured listeners to repent, to have a thorough change of mind that produces a change in behavior.

Note that **is...declaring** is [present tense](#) indicating that God is continually issuing this command. Notice also that one of the ways this verb is translated is "prescribe" so it is as if the Great Physician is giving His "prescription" which alone can bring about a complete cure of the "sin virus", the deadly "virus" (I am subspecialized in infectious disease which helps you understand why I use this picture) which has "infected" every human being ever born (Ro 5:12+), with one exception, Jesus Christ (cf 2 Cor 5:21+, Hebrews 4:15+).

In short, the Almighty God is issuing a command through one of His chief generals, the apostle Paul, calling for all people everywhere to **repent**. God was asking all mankind to turn to Him and turn away from gods which are no gods. Paul describes this very act of repentance among the pagan idolaters in Thessalonica writing...

For they themselves (those in Macedonia and Achaia) report about us what kind of a reception we (Paul, Silvanus, Timothy) had with you, and how **you turned to God from idols** to serve a living and true God, (1 Th 1:9+)

**John Polhill** writes that "Only one course was open—**repentance**, a complete turnabout from their false worship and a turning to God. The concept of repentance must have sounded strange to the Athenians. Even stranger was Paul's warning of God's coming day of judgment (Acts 17:31). Strangest of all was his reference to the resurrection of Christ. Paul's train of thought was clear enough. God is the one true God and should be acknowledged by his creatures. All people must ultimately stand before God and give an account for their relationship to him. God appointed "the man" who would carry out this judgment. (The "man" was Christ, "the Son of Man," in his role as judge; cf. Da 7:13f.) God clearly demonstrated this truth by the miracle of raising him from the dead. Just as Peter had pointed to the resurrection as proof to the Jews that Jesus is Messiah, so to the Gentiles Paul pointed to the resurrection as proof that he is the coming judge of all humanity. Paul had reached the climax of his testimony and made his appeal. He may have had more to say, but he had said enough to convict at least one Areopagite (Acts 17:34). In any event, with the mention of resurrection the jeering started, and Paul's speech ended (Acts 17:32). (NAC)

**Henry Morris on all men** - Now that God has revealed Himself, not only in creation but also in His human incarnation in the Lord Jesus, He is no longer dealing mainly with just one nation. The gospel of salvation is for all men, and all must "repent" (that is, "change their minds") concerning the true God and their responsibility before Him. (Defender's Study Bible)

**Everywhere** - No exceptions - everyone, anywhere! Couple this with "**now**" and you can sense the urgency in Paul's message! All is changed now that Christ has come with the full knowledge of God.

**Vance Havner** - An Appointment with God (Acts 17:30, 31) God has appointed a day. He has ordained a Judge (John 5:22, 24) He has commanded repentance (Mt 3:2, 4:17, Acts 3:19)

**Repent** (present tense - calls for a lifestyle of repentance)(3340)(**metanoeo** from **meta** = with, among + **noeo** = to think, exercise the mind <> from **nous** = mind; cf [metanoia](#)) means to have another mind. **Friberg** says it literally means to "perceive afterward, with the implication of being too late to avoid consequences." (Analytical Lexicon). **Metanoeo** means to change one's mind (one's heart) in respect to sin, God, and self. To turn to God and from sin (Luke 15:7,10+ = "one sinner who **repents**", cf illustration of repentance = 1 Th 1:9-note). While **repentance** involves an intellectual decision, it is more than that because the intellectual decision must produce a change in one's behavior.

**Repentance** is aptly depicted by the military command "**About, face!**" The repentant person in effect turns around 180 degrees and goes the other direction. And keep in mind that the spiritual dynamics of true repentance are enabled by the Holy Spirit (cf Acts 5:31+, Acts 11:18+, 2 Ti 2:25+). In other words repentance is a work of grace and not merely a human effort, although it does require the repentant individual to make a [volitional](#) choice. Repentance then involves the mysterious interaction of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. Further, this change of mind may, especially in the case of Christians who have fallen into sin, be preceded by sorrow (2 Cor 7:8, 9, 10, 11); but sorrow for sin, though it may cause repentance, is not repentance. Darrell Bock writes "the point is that repentance involves a reorientation of perspective, a fresh point of view. When dealing with God's plan, it means to see that plan in a new way and to orient oneself to it. Luke demonstrates the fruit of repentance expresses itself concretely (Lk 3:10-14+). Repentance expresses itself in life, especially in how one treats others." (**Gulp!**) There can be no genuine conversion without genuine repentance.

"This word (**repent**) was the message of the Baptist, of Jesus, of Peter, of Paul, this radical change of attitude and life." (Robertson)

**God uses at least four factors to prompt repentance** = (1) The knowledge of God's Truth should prompt repentance (Mt 11:21-24 - where Chorazin, et al refused to repent at the Truth; cp Lk 16:30-31 which also illustrates the sufficiency of the Truth to prompt repentance.) Note the deadly deception - one can have Truth (as well as #2 sorrow) without true repentance! Beware! (2) Sorrow for sin can lead to repentance (2Cor 7:9-10), but the sorrow per se should NOT be confused with true repentance. E.g., Judas felt

sorrow for betraying Jesus but did not repent. (3) God's kindness prompts (leads to) repentance (Ro 2:4). (4) Fear of final judgment (as discussed here in Acts 17:30-31) can motivate one to true repentance. Indeed, realization that there is no other way of escape but through Jesus, should cause any "rational" person to repent.

Repentance is not an act separate from faith, but saving faith includes and implies the true change of mind which is called repentance. As noted in the use of the present imperative (see uses below), to repent is not just an event at the time of conversion, but represents an ongoing lifestyle -- we sin daily, and sometimes we get caught in a "rut" (habit) of sin, and so we are daily in desperate need of God's gracious gift of repentance. In the parable of the two sons, our Lord Jesus Christ gives a beautiful illustration of what true repentance looks like (Read Mt 21:28-31 = notice second son changed his mind and his behavior!). As Albert Barnes wisely said "False repentance dreads the *consequences* of sin; true repentance dreads *sin itself*."

**Zodhiates** writing on the verb **metamelomai** (used in 2Cor 7:8) notes that it is "Contrasted with **metanoeo** (3340), to repent, (because) it expresses the mere desire that what is done may be undone, accompanied with regrets or even remorse, but with no effective change of heart. *Metaméleia* (which does not occur in the NT) is an ineffective repentance for which the forgiveness of sins is not promised (as it is for **metanoia** [3341], repentance, see Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Acts 2:38). **Metamélomai**, on the part of man, means little or nothing more than a selfish dread of the consequence of what one has done, whereas *metanoeo* means regret and forsaking the evil by a change of heart brought about by God's Spirit. On the part of God in Heb. 7:21, *metamélomai* means His plan of salvation for man can have no improvement; He made no mistake. (The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament)

In Acts 26:20 we see the role of repentance which is integral to genuine salvation = "repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance."

Clearly repentance is not optional to salvation, but is integral to it for Jesus made it clear that "unless you **repent**, you will all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3, 5)

It is important to remember that true repentance is a glorious gift of God - read Acts 5:31, 11:18, Ro 2:4note, 2Ti 2:25-note.

**See discussion of similar word - epistrepho** (often used of "returning to God" = Lk 1:16-17, Acts 9:35, 11:21, 14:15, 15:19, 26:18, 20, 2Cor 3:16, 1Thes 1:9-note, 1Pe 2:25-note)

**See Multiple Dictionary Articles - [Repentance](#)**

**Repent** (Webster) - (1) to feel sorry, self-reproachful, or contrite for past conduct; regret or be conscience-stricken about a past action, attitude, (2) (This is the more Biblically sound definition) to feel such sorrow for sin or fault as to be disposed to change one's life for the better.

It is notable (and probably no coincidence) that the most "concentrated" use of **metanoeo** (10/34x) is found in the Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia Minor in Revelation 2-3 (which is intriguing since John the human author of The Revelation, is the only Gospel that does not use **metanoeo**). This begs the question - Does the modern church need to be reminded of its continual need to repent? I recall years ago hearing that the new believers behind the (then) "Iron Curtain" called themselves "Repenters" rather than believers! How wonderful would it be to be part of a local body of Christ full of habitual repenters!

**Kenneth Wuest - Repent** is the translation of *metanoeo* which in classical Greek meant "to change one's mind or purpose, to change one's opinion." The noun *metanoia* meant "a change of mind on reflection." These two words used in classical Greek signified a change of mind regarding anything, but when brought over into the New Testament, their usage is limited to a change of mind in the religious sphere. They refer there to a change of moral thought and reflection which follows moral delinquency. This includes not only the act of changing one's attitude towards and opinion of sin but also that of forsaking it. Sorrow and contrition with respect to sin, are included in the Bible idea of repentance, but these follow and are consequent upon the sinner's change of mind with respect to it. The word *metamelomai* is used in Mt. 21:29, 32, 27:3; 2Cor. 7:8; Heb. 7:21, where it is translated "repent." *Metanoeo* is the fuller and nobler term, expressive of moral action and issues. It is the word used by NT, writers to express the foregoing meaning. In the case of Judas, *metamelomai* means "remorse." In the case of Heb. 7:21 it means only to change one's mind. The act of repentance is based first of all and primarily upon an intellectual apprehension of the character of sin, man's guilt with respect to it, and man's duty to turn away from it. The emotional and volitional aspects of the act of repentance follow, and are the result of this intellectual process of a change of mind with respect to it. This means that the correct approach of the Christian worker to a sinner whom he wishes to lead to the Lord is that of clearly explaining the issues involved. When the unsaved person is made to clearly understand the significance of sin, the intellectual process of changing his mind with respect to it can follow, with the result that sorrow, contrition, and turning away from it will also follow. A mere emotional appeal to the sinner is not the correct one. The Greek word *metanoeo* tells us that the intellectual appeal must come first, since the act of repenting is basically a mental one at the start. (Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader)

**Metanoeo** - 34x in 32v - Translated (NAS) = repent(26), repented(5), repents(3).

Matthew 3:2 "**Repent**, (present imperative = calls for this to be one's lifestyle = a believer is a "repenter"!) **for** (term of explanation = explains why repentance is necessary) the kingdom of heaven is at hand (come near, drawing near)."

Matthew 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach and say, '**Repent** (present imperative) **for** (term of explanation = explains why repentance is necessary) the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'

Matthew 11:20 Then He began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not **repent**. 21 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have **repented** long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

Matthew 12:41 "The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they **repented** at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

Mark 1:15+ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; **repent** (present imperative = calls for this to be one's lifestyle = a believer is a "repenter"!) and **believe** (present imperative = calls for this to be one's lifestyle) in the gospel."

**William Barclay** - There is the word repent. Now repentance is not so easy as sometimes we think. The Greek word *metanoeo* literally means to change one's mind. We are very apt to confuse two things--sorrow for the consequences of sin and sorrow for sin. Many a man is desperately sorry because of the mess that sin has got him into, but he very well knows that, if he could be reasonably sure that he could escape the consequences, he would do the same thing again. It is not the sin that he hates; it is its consequences. Real repentance means that a man has come, not only to be sorry for the consequences of his sin, but to hate sin itself. Long ago that wise old writer, Montaigne, wrote in his autobiography, "Children should be taught to hate vice for its own texture, so that they will not only avoid it in action, but abominate it in their hearts--that the very thought of it may disgust them whatever form it takes." Repentance means that the man who was in love with sin comes to hate sin because of its exceeding sinfulness. ([Mark 1 - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

Mark 6:12+ They went out and preached that men should **repent**.

Comment: They preached the Gospel.

Luke 10:13+ "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have **repented** long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.

Luke 11:32+ "The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they **repented** at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

Luke 13:3+ "I tell you, no, but unless you **repent**, you will all likewise perish.

Luke 13:5+ "I tell you, no, but unless you **repent**, you will all likewise perish."

Luke 15:7+ "I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who **repents** than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

Luke 15:10+ "In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who **repents**."

Luke 16:30+ "But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will **repent**!'

Luke 17:3+ "Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he **repents**, forgive him. 4 "And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I **repent**,' forgive him."

Acts 2:38+ Peter said to them, '**Repent**, (aorist imperative = Do this now! Don't delay!) and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 3:19+ "Therefore **repent**, (aorist imperative = Do this now! Don't delay!) and return, **so that** (introduces clauses of purpose and/or result) your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;

Acts 8:22+ "Therefore **repent**, (aorist imperative = Do this now! Don't delay!) of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you.

**Comment:** While some might opt for the position that Simon was saved (Acts 8:13), the facts (truth) of his

heart attitudes in Acts 8:23 is a better description of a lost person than one who is saved (cf Dt 29:18)

Acts 17:30+ "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should **repent**,

Acts 26:20+ but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should **repent** and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.

2 Corinthians 12:21 I am afraid that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not **repented** of the impurity, immorality and sensuality which they have practiced.

Revelation 2:5+ 'Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and **repent** (aorist imperative = Do this now! Don't delay!) and **do** (aorist imperative = Do this now! Don't delay!) the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place-- unless you **repent**.

16 'Therefore **repent** (aorist imperative = Do this now! Don't delay!); or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.

21 'I gave her time to **repent**, and she does not want to **repent** of her immorality.

22 'Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they **repent** of her deeds.

**Comment:** Properly speaking, metanoein is "to know after" as pronoein is "to know before"; metanoia is "afterknowledge" . . . The next step that metanoia signifies is the change of mind that results from this after knowledge. Thus Tertullian wrote: "In the Greek language the word for repentance is not derived from the admission of a fault but from a change of mind." . . . Last of all metanoia signifies a resulting change of conduct. . . . Only in Scripture and in the works of those who were dependent on Scripture does metanoia predominantly refer to a change of mind, to taking a wiser view of the past, to "the soul's perception of the wicked things it has done." (Trench) Repentance includes a recognition of wrong-doing together with a decision to move in a different direction: "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19). ([A Testimony of Jesus Christ](#))

Revelation 3:3-[note](#) 'So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and **repent** (**present imperative**). Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.

19 'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and **repent** (aorist imperative = Do this now! Don't delay!).

Revelation 9:20+ The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not **repent** of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; **21** and they did not **repent** of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their immorality nor of their thefts.

Revelation 16:9+ Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not **repent** so as to give Him glory.

Revelation 16:11+ and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not **repent** of their deeds.

**Metanoeo** - 18v in the non-apocryphal **Septuagint (Lxx)** - 1Sa 15:29; Pr 20:25; 24:32; 30:1; Isa 46:8; Jer 4:28; 8:6; 18:8, 10; 31:19; Joel 2:13f; Amos 7:3, 6; Jonah 3:9f; 4:2; Zech 8:14. Many of the OT passages use **metanoeo** in the context of God "relenting" from something.

**Gerald Cowen - Repentance: metanoeo, metanoia -**

While preaching in Galilee, Jesus addressed the question of whether or not a group of Galileans who were murdered by Pilate were greater sinners than anyone else because they suffered such a fate. He said, "I tell you, No: but, except you repent, you shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:1-3). Both John the Baptist and Jesus preached, "Re-pent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2; 4:17). Just what did Jesus mean when He said, "Repent"? The Greek word He used is metanoeo, which is a combination of the words meta

(after) and noeo (to understand or perceive). So, literally, the noun form metanoia (repentance) means an "afterthought" or "change of mind." The most important question, however, is, does repentance consist entirely of a mental exercise or does it imply more than that? On one hand, there are those who insist that repentance cannot involve anything more than a change of mind or attitude toward God; otherwise, they contend it would negate the doctrine of salvation by grace. It cannot be understood as a condition of salvation unless it is concluded that repentance is only a "synonym for faith."<sup>3</sup> Obviously, when people move from unbelief to faith in Christ, they have changed their minds, which constitutes repentance. It is argued that "repentance does not mean to turn from sin, nor a change in one's conduct."<sup>4</sup> It does not mean to change one's life because that would constitute works. On the other hand, many others believe that repentance involves more. W. E. Vine says, "In the New Testament the subject chiefly has reference to repentance from sin, and this change of mind involves both a turning from sin and a turning to God." Thayer, in his lexicon, defines metanoia as "esp. the change of mind of those who have begun to abhor their errors and misdeeds, and have determined to enter upon a better course of life, so that it embraces both a recognition of sin and sorrow for it." Moulton and Milligan in their work on Greek vocabulary conclude concerning metanoieo: "Its meaning deepens with Christianity, and in the New Testament it is more than 're-pent,' and indicates a complete change of attitude, spiritual and moral, towards God."

Trench says that metanoia is "the expression of the nobler repentance." He lists four ideas that are included in the meaning of repentance: (1) it means to know (perceive) afterwards; (2) it signifies the change of mind that comes as a result of this knowledge; (3) it involves regret for the course pursued (displeasure at one's own self); and (4) it signifies a change of conduct for the future based on this change of mind. In addition to these, Kenneth Wuest explains that metanoia includes not only the act of changing one's attitude towards and opinion of sin but also that of forsaking it. Sorrow and contrition with respect to sin, are included in the Bible idea of repentance.... The emotional and volitional aspects of the act of repentance follow, and are the result of this intellectual process of a change of mind with respect to it. Those who believe that repentance includes forsaking of sin are accused by those who do not accept that view of teaching a "works salvation," a denial of the doctrine of grace. On the other hand, those who teach that repentance is simply a "change of mind about who Christ is" are charged with teaching an "easy believism." About this view John MacArthur says, "It is utterly devoid of any recognition of personal guilt, any intent to obey God, or any desire for true righteousness."<sup>5</sup> In order to determine who is right, there are several questions that should be explored. First, does repentance necessarily involve sorrow for sin? Second Corinthians 7:10 says, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." Strictly speaking, sorrow and repentance are different entities, because people may have sorrow without repentance. However, can people have repentance without sorrow? "Godly sorrow leads to repentance." Would persons desire to be saved without first realizing they are sinners and lost? Before realizing that fact they may be quite happy in their sin. After being convicted by the Holy Spirit that they are sinners and as a result lost, can they desire to be saved (go to heaven), put their faith and trust in Christ for eternal life, and still be happy about their life of sin? Can people be repentant toward God and unrepentant toward sin and self? The answer is, people could if God would let them. But the same Holy Spirit who causes persons to see the error of their ways and desire to come to Christ is the One who convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. If the Spirit truly convicts people of sin, it would be impossible for them not to have a changed attitude toward their sin, a sense of sorrow at having sinned against God. That change is called repentance. Another question that should be asked is, What does repentance toward God involve? Does it involve receiving Jesus as Savior only, or must one acknowledge Him as Lord also? It is argued by some that it is necessary to receive Jesus as Savior only in order to be saved. However, several Scriptures seem to indicate that the two ideas go together. Acts 16:31 says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." Romans 10:9 says, "That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved." Peter declared at Pentecost "that God has made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Some argue that this use of the word "Lord" simply means to acknowledge that Jesus is God. Yet, if He be God, then He is certainly Lord. Persons do not have to "make Jesus Lord" because He is Lord. What it does mean is that when individuals repent in their attitude toward Jesus, they are changing from unbelief to faith in two facts: (1) that Jesus is who He claims to be—Lord and God; and (2) that He in fact did what He said He would do—die for our sins on the cross and offer us forgiveness based on that sacrifice.

The rest of the Christian life, then, is the struggle to practice daily what we have professed at the beginning. Since Jesus is Lord, believers are to allow Him to be Lord of their lives. The final question concerning the meaning of repentance is, What affect does it have on the will? Can people put their faith in Christ and never

intend to make any change in the direction of their life? It is obvious that the changes in life-style are the fruits of repentance and come as a result, not a cause of salvation. However, what about intentions? One thing is sure: this decision is not a pre-salvation work that is required to set life in order so persons can be saved. Such an attempt at self-reformation is not true repentance. It involves trusting one's own works in-stead of Christ's. But can individuals trust Christ as Savior and never have any intention to change the direction of their lives? To put it another way, can people be true believers in Christ and not followers of Christ? There are three lines of evidence that indicate it is not possible to do so. First, there is the evidence from the ministry of Jesus. In His dealing with people who came to Him, He never offered anything less than a new way of life. One very clear example is that of the rich young ruler. He wanted to know what to do "to inherit eternal life" (Lk 18:18). Jesus answered, "One thing you lack. Sell all that you have, and distribute unto the poor, ... and come, follow me." The man refused to do so, but Jesus made no other offer to the man. The parable of the two sons demonstrates that it is not what people profess but what they actually do that counts. One son said he would obey his father, but did not. The other refused, but later repented and did the will of his father (Matt. 21:28-31). Another line of evidence is that found in 2Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are be-come new." The point is, people cannot be saved without being changed from the inside out. They do not change themselves; it is God who recreates persons. This work of God in believers' lives leads us to a third line of evidence, the fruit of repentance. If people have truly believed and been converted, there must be evidence of a new life. John the Baptist demanded fruits of repentance (Luke 3:8ff.). John also said that this is how we know that we know Christ, "if we keep His commandments" (1John 2:3). (See Gal. 5:21 and Jas 2:14ff. also.) Because of this, it must be concluded that repentance also involves the decision to make a radical change in the direction of our lives. It represents a new departure, the beginning point of a different attitude toward life. The new purpose is to become a follower of Jesus. The proof of repentance is people's deeds. There is no reason to think people have repented if there has been no change in their lives, because words alone do not save. ([Salvation Word Studies](#))

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**John MacArthur** in his book **The Gospel According to the Apostles** has a poignant defense of **REPENTANCE** as an intrinsic, necessary component of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (especially in light of some modern so-called "evangelical" writings stating that repentance is not part of the Gospel! Specifically be wary of writings by **Robert Wilkin** in this regard! [See note on his "strange teachings"](#))

Over the past five years or so, I have had opportunities to minister in many of the nations that we used to call "Iron Curtain" countries. There I have encountered a surprisingly vigorous evangelical church—solidly biblical, doctrinally orthodox, and alive. Western Christians generally do not comprehend or appreciate the vitality of Eastern European churches without visiting them firsthand. The churches are full—often uncomfortably packed—with crowds standing outside looking through windows. The people are earnest in their commitment to Christ in a way that is rare among Western Christians. Their services are worshipful, subdued, yet intensely passionate. Spontaneous weeping is as common as laughter. Prayer for the lost and personal evangelism are on the hearts and minds of these people more than social activities and sports. The focus of their message to the world is a clear call to repentance.

Eastern European Christianity typically refers to new Christians as "**repenters**." When someone comes to Christ, fellow believers say the new Christian has "**repented**." Usually new believers are given the opportunity to stand before the church and verbalize their repentance. In nearly every church service I have attended in the former Soviet Union, at least one new convert has made a public confession of repentance.

It is entirely biblical for the church to make repentance the chief feature of its message to the unsaved world. After all, the gospel calls people to come to the One who can deliver them from sin. People who don't feel guilt and want to be delivered from the power and penalty of sin wouldn't even want a deliverer.

Did you realize that our Lord's Great Commission demands that we preach repentance? Luke alone of all the Gospels records the content of the message Jesus commanded His disciples to preach: "that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations" (Luke 24:47). As we shall shortly see, repentance was the substance of the church's message to a hostile world throughout the Book of Acts.

The Bible is clear: **Repentance is at the heart of the gospel call. Unless we are preaching repentance we are not preaching the gospel our Lord has charged us to preach. If we fail to call people to turn from their sins, we are not communicating the same gospel the apostles proclaimed.**

**The Western church has subtly changed the thrust of the gospel. Instead of exhorting sinners to**

**repent, evangelicalism in our society asks the unsaved to “accept Christ.” That makes sinners sovereign and puts Christ at their disposal.** In effect it puts Christ on trial and hands the judge’s robes and gavel to the inquirer—precisely opposite of what should be. Ironically, people who ought to be concerned about whether Christ will accept them are being told by Christians that it is the sinner’s prerogative to “accept Christ.” This modified gospel depicts conversion as “a decision for Christ” rather than a life-transforming change of heart involving genuine faith, repentance, surrender, and rebirth unto newness of life.

**A. W. Tozer wrote,** “ The formula “Accept Christ” has become a panacea of universal application, and I believe it has been fatal to many.... The trouble is that the whole “Accept Christ” attitude is likely to be wrong. It shows Christ [appealing] to us rather than us to Him. It makes Him stand hat-in-hand awaiting our verdict on Him, instead of our kneeling with troubled hearts awaiting His verdict on us. It may even permit us to accept Christ by an impulse of mind or emotions, painlessly, at no loss to our ego and no inconvenience to our usual way of life. For this ineffectual manner of dealing with a vital matter we might imagine some parallels; as if, for instance, Israel in Egypt had “accepted” the blood of the Passover but continued to live in bondage, or the prodigal son had “accepted” his father’s forgiveness and stayed on among the swine in the far country. Is it not plain that if accepting Christ is to mean anything there must be moral action that accords with it? -- The “moral action” Tozer was referring to is repentance.

(Excerpt from [MacArthur's book "The Vanishing Conscience" which is actually 3 books "The Gospel According to the Apostles"](#) being the one with the quote on "**repenters**")

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### Trench's Discussion of Repent...

**metanoeo** (3340) Repent; **metamelomai** (3338)

Reformation theologians frequently argued that metanoia (3341) and metameleia and their verbs metanoein and metamelesthai are quite distinct. On the one hand, metameliea and its verb express a desire that an action might be undone, express regrets or even remorse, but do not imply an effective change of heart. On the other hand, metanoia and its verb refer to a true change of heart toward God. According to Chillingworth:

To this purpose it is worth the observing, that when the Scripture speaks of that kind of repentance, which is only sorrow for something done, and wishing it undone, it constantly useth the word metameleia, to which forgiveness of sins is nowhere promised. So it is written of Judas the son of perdition (Matthew 27:3), metameletheis apetrepse, he repented and went and hanged himself, and so constantly in other places. But that repentance to which remission of sins and salvation is promised, is perpetually expressed by the word metanoia, which signifieth a thorough change of the heart and soul, of the life and actions.

Before proceeding further, let me correct a slight inaccuracy in Chillingworth’s statement. Metameleia does not occur in the New Testament and is found only once in the Septuagint (Hosea 11:8). Since this is a work on New Testament synonyms, the comparison and distinction can be made only between the verbs, though what is true of them also will be true of their nouns. But still another qualification needs to be made. Jeremy Taylor remarked:

The Greeks use two words to express this duty, metameleia and metanoia. Metameleia is from metameleisthai, post factum angii et crucian, "to be afflicted in mind," "to be troubled for our former folly"; it is dysarestesis epi pepragmenoio, saith Favorinus, "a being displeased for what we have done," and it is generally used for all sorts of repentance; but more properly to signify either the beginning of a good, or the whole state of an ineffective, repentance. In the first sense we find it in Matthew, hymeis de idontes ou metamelethete hysteron tou pisteusai auto, "and ye, seeing, did not repent that ye might believe Him." Of the second sense we have an example in Judas, metameletheis apestrepse, he "repented" too, but the end of it was he died with anguish and despair.... There is in this repentance a sorrow for what is done, a disliking of the thing with its consequences and effect, and so far also it is a change of mind. But it goes no further than so far to change the mind that it brings trouble and sorrow, and such things as are the natural events of it.... When there was a difference made, metanoia was the better word, which does not properly signify the sorrow for having done amiss, but something that is nobler than it, but brought in at the gate of sorrow. For he kata Theon lype, "a godly sorrow," that is metameleia, or the first beginning of repentance, metanoian katergazetai, "worketh this better repentance," metanoian ametameleton [278] and eis soterian (4991).

Later Taylor admitted that "however the grammarians may distinguish them, yet the words are used promiscuously" and that it is not possible to distinguish them in a rigid fashion. Although this is partially true, it is possible to show that each word has a predominant use. There was a well-known conflict between the early

Reformers and the Roman Catholic theologians over whether *paenitentia* (repentance), as the Catholics held, or *resipiscentia* (reformation), as Beza and others affirmed, was the better Latin translation of *metanoia*. There was much to be said on both sides. Had *metameleia* and not *metanoia* been the disputed word, the Catholics would have had a more favorable position. Augustine stated: "Paenitentia is a certain defense of one grieving, always punishing himself for having committed what pained him."

Properly speaking, *metanoein* is "to know after" as *pronoein* (4306) is "to know before"; *metanoia* is "after knowledge," as *pronoia* (4307) is "foreknowledge." As Clement of Alexandria said:

If he perceived afterwards [*metenoesen*] what he had done wrong, if he has understood where he had made a mistake and has had a change of heart, that very thing is after he has realized these things *metanoia* or late knowledge.

And Stobaeus stated: "The wise man must not know after [*metanoein*] but know before [*pronoein*]." The next step that *metanoia* signifies is the change of mind that results from this after knowledge. Thus Tertullian wrote: "In the Greek language the word for repentance is not derived from the admission of a fault but from a change of mind." The third stage of *metanoia* results from this change of mind and consists of regret for the course of action that was pursued and of *dysapestesis* (displeasure) with oneself. Tertullian defined it as "a certain suffering of the mind which comes from a displeasure about a previous opinion," for this was all that the heathen understood by it. At this stage of its meaning, *metanoia* was associated with *degmos*, *aischyne*, and *pothos*. Last of all *metanoia* signifies a resulting change of conduct. This change of mind and consequent change of action, however, may be a change for the worse or a change for the better. The change signified by *metanoia* does not necessarily imply a *resipiscentia* (reformation) as well. That idea is a Christian addition to *metanoia*. Thus A. Gellius stated:

We are accustomed then to say we regret [*paenitere*] when the deeds which we ourselves have done, or have been done through our will and plan, begin to displease us and we change our opinion about them.

Similarly, Plutarch told of two murderers who spared a child but who afterwards "repented" (*metenoesan*) and sought to slay it. Plutarch used *metameleia* in the sense of repenting of something that is good, thus validating Tertullian's complaint:

What the pagans irrationally might include under the act of regret will be sufficiently clear from that fact alone that they apply it also to their good deeds: one regrets loyalty, love, sincerity, patience, mercy when any of these has fallen on the thankless.

The regret that is part of the meaning of *metanoia* may be (and often is) quite unconnected with any sense of wrongdoing, with any sense of violating a moral law. This type of regret may simply be what our fathers used to call "hadiwist." Sometimes, though rarely, *metanoia* has an ethical meaning, as is the case in two other passages in Plutarch. In the former passage, Plutarch's use of *metanoia* is in harmony with its use in Romans 2:4; in the latter passage, Plutarch used *metameleia* and *metanoia* interchangeably.

Only in Scripture and in the works of those who were dependent on Scripture does *metanoia* predominantly refer to a change of mind, to taking a wiser view of the past, to "the soul's perception of the wicked things it has done" (Favorinus), to a regret for the illdone in the past that results in a change of life for the better, to "a turning about of one's life." Or as Plato had already described it, *metanoia* refers to "a turning from shadows to light" and to "a turning about, a turning around of the soul." This meaning was neither an etymological component of the word nor its primary meaning but was imported into it. This usage did not occur frequently in the Septuagint or in the Apocrypha but is common in Philo, who related *metanoia* and *beltiosis* and who explained *metanoia* as a "change to the better." In the New Testament, *metanoein* and *metanoia* are always used in an ethical sense to refer to "a radical transformation in the lifestyle of people, accompanied by painful remorse" (Delitzsch).

The meanings of *metanoein* and *metanoia* gradually expanded until they came to express the mighty, Spirit-wrought change in mind, heart, and life known as repentance. A similar honor was partially bestowed on *metameleia* and *metamelesthai*. Plutarch called the first word "a saving demon," explained it as "the shame from pleasures which are contrary to law and uncontrollable," and associated it with *barythymia*, heaviness of heart. *Metamelesthai* is used five times in the New Testament, *metameleia* not at all. In one case, *metamelesthai* is used to refer to Judas Iscariot's sorrow (Matthew 27:3), which resulted in his death. On another occasion (Hebrews 7:21), *metamelesthai* does not refer to man's repentance but to God's change of mind.



Metanoia occurs twenty-five times in the New Testament and metanoein thirty-five times. Those who deny any discernible difference between these words (either in profane or in sacred Greek) point to passages in secular Greek where metameleia is used in all the senses claimed for metanoia and to other passages where the two are used interchangeably to refer to remorse. In sacred Greek they point to passages in the New Testament where metamelesthai implies all that metanoein would (Matthew 21:29; Matthew 21:32). Although all of that is true, there is a distinct preference in sacred and profane Greek to use metanoia as the word that best expresses the nobler form of repentance. This is in keeping with what we would have expected from the relative etymological force of the words. The one who has changed his mind about the past is on the road to changing everything, but the one who has an after care may have little more than a selfish dread of the consequences of his actions.

We may sum up the long dispute on the relation of these words by quoting from Bengel, who distinguishes them but who does not push the distinction too far.

From its origin metanoia is properly of the mind and metameleia is of the will, since the former would indicate a change of opinion and the latter a change in anxiety or in eagerness.... Either term therefore is used for a person who repents of an act or a plan whether the repentance is good or bad, whether for a good thing or a bad thing, whether it occurs with a change of deeds in the future or without it. However if you consider the use, metameleia generally is a middle term and refers usually to individual actions, while metanoia especially in the New Testament is used in a good sense, which denotes the reformation of the whole life and of ourselves in a measure or it is the entire happy reminiscence after error and sins, with our beloved ones joining in, which produces worthy fruits. Hence it happens that metanoein often occurs in the imperative mood, metamelesthai never but in other places where metanoia is read one may substitute metameleia, but not the reverse. ([Repent - Trench's Synonyms of the New Testament](#))

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**REPENTANCE** - To repent means to turn. In the N.T. repentance means to turn from sin. We were called by God to turn from sin. In fact, all men everywhere are commanded by God to repent of their sins (Acts 17:30). God's longsuffering leads us to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9) as does His kindness (Rom. 2:4).

There is true and false repentance, "For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation; but the sorrow of the world produces death" (2 Cor. 7:10).

Sorrowing over and forsaking sin, a wholehearted turning away from all that is evil. This is more than regret or remorse, attitudes that point to sorrow over sin but no more. Repentance was looked for in Old Testament times (Ezek. 14:6; 18:30). It was the first item in the preaching of John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1-2), Jesus (Matt. 4:17), and the apostles (Mark 6:12; cf. Acts 2:38). Beyond repentance, faith is needed. But repentance is indispensable. Sin must be forsaken decisively. (*The Shaw Pocket Bible Handbook*, Walter A. Elwell, Editor, (Harold Shaw Publ., Wheaton, IL; 1984), p. 355)

**Acts 17:31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.**

- **he hath appointed** Acts 10:42; Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:22,23; Romans 2:5,16; 14:9,10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Timothy 4:1; 2 Peter 3:7; Jude 1:14,15
- **given assurance or, offered faith. in that.** Acts 17:18; 2:23,24,32; 3:15,16; 4:10; 5:30-32; 10:39-41; 13:30,31; Luke 24:46-48; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8
- [Acts 17:31 Here Comes the Judge](#) - Sermon by Ray Pritchard
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Acts 17:30-31 Getting to Know the Unknown God, Part 3](#) - John MacArthur

## THE CERTAINTY OF JUDGMENT

Paul has no fear in speaking about the coming inescapable day of judgment, and boldly proclaims Jesus' resurrection from the dead, for that is the absolute crux of the Gospel. No resurrection means no "Good News!" (Read 1 Cor 15:13-19)

**Because** - [term of explanation](#) - Paul explains why all men, be they Athenians or not, need to **repent!** Judgment is coming on the entire world! Repentance is not optional but imperative! You may have said "I believe in Jesus," but does your life exhibit the "fruit of

repentance?" If not than you need to solemnly read 2 Cor 13:5+ while today is still called "Today." (2 Cor 6:2)!

**Reformation Study Bible** - Rejection by the Athenians of the Man whom God appointed will result in Jesus finally and justly rejecting them on that Day of Judgment. Paul stresses that God's call to repentance and faith is not an invitation but a command.

**J Vernon McGee** - When God judges, it will be right. Judgment will be through a Judge who has nail-pierced hands, the One who has been raised from the dead. Paul always presents the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is a declaration to all men. It is by this that God assures all men there will be a judgment. (Thru the Bible)

**Jack Arnold** - Paul began his sermon with God and ends it with the truth that God has an appointed day in the future when He will judge the world through Jesus Christ. This is an inescapable judgment when the secrets of all men will be made evident. Men shall be judged by a holy God and cast into hell because they are sinners, without a Savior, who failed to repent of their negative attitudes about God, Christ and godly living. A resurrected Christ will be involved in this judgment, and this was a shocker to the Stoics who only believed in the immortality of the soul and not the body. Judgment day is coming for all men whether they believe in Christ and a future judgment or not. Just because men believe there will be no future judgment, does not make it truth. Judgment is certain and men without Christ will be cast into outer darkness where there is gnashing of teeth and eternal separation from God (cf Lk 13:28+, Rev 20:11-15+, Eternal Punishment). Paul calmly, politely and tactfully told these mighty philosophers they were going to be eternally judged if they did not embrace Christ as Lord and Savior (ED: Actually Paul was cut short from this final appeal), and accept the Christian philosophy of life, death and eternity. ([Sermon](#))

**R. Kent Hughes** wrote, "Mankind is not moving toward extinction (as the Epicureans thought), nor toward absorption in the cosmos (as the Stoics supposed). But mankind is moving toward divine judgment....Everything is fine as long as we remain theoretical, but when we call for action, men begin to shift their posture and look at their watches. Seeing their accountability to the true God makes many uncomfortable. (Preaching the Word – Acts: The Church Afire)

**He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness**- God, who created all men, must be the Judge of all men, and "the Judge of all the earth" will certainly "do right" (Ge 18:25). And since God both "created all things by Jesus Christ" (Eph 3:9-note), and has also "made peace through the blood of his cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself" (Col 1:20note), it is appropriate that "He shall judge" all things by Christ (Jn 5:22,27 Mt 25:31).

In English we miss the sense of the Greek verb translated '**will**' which is the verb *mello* which means to be about to do something (in this context to judge), to be on the point of judging. In other words it conveys a sense of this judgment as about to happen.

**Barclay** - The days of groping and ignorance are past. So long as men had to search in the shadows they could not know God and 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. 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. 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. ([Acts 17 - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

**A T Robertson** on **He will judge the world in righteousness** - "Paul is here quoting from Psalm 9:8 ("He will judge [Septuagint = [krino](#), same as in Acts 17:31] the world in righteousness; He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity.") Here Paul adds to the Psalm 9:8 the **place** and **function** of Jesus Christ, a passage in harmony with Christ's own words in Matthew 25....It has been said that Paul left the simple Gospel in this address to the council of the Areopagus for philosophy. But did he? He skillfully caught their attention by reference to an altar to an Unknown God whom he interprets to be the Creator of all things and all men who overrules the whole world and who now commands repentance of all and has revealed his will about a day of reckoning when Jesus Christ will be Judge. He has preached the unity of God, the one and only God, has proclaimed repentance, a judgment day, Jesus as the Judge as shown by his Resurrection, great fundamental doctrines, and doubtless had much more to say when they interrupted his address. There is no room here for such a charge against Paul. He rose to a great occasion and made a masterful exposition of God's place and power in human history. ([Acts 17 - Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament](#))

**Jack Andrews** - [H. L. Mencken](#), agnostic editor, formerly of The American Mercury, died an unbeliever. At his funeral, following his request, there was not to be any songs nor sermon. During his life Mencken admitted he might be wrong in his views about God and the immortality of the soul. He said, "*But if I am wrong I will square myself when confronted in after life by the apostles with the simple apology: 'Gentlemen, I was wrong.'*" That will not get it done for two reasons! First of all, **H.L. Mencken** nor anyone else, will not be appearing before the apostles! Jesus Christ is Judge! Secondly, apologizing after death will do no good. After death the eternity of everyone is fixed! We have to believe the gospel while we are alive and repent of sins and trust the Savior now! The people of the world will not stand before: A council, but Christ, Not an earthly jury, but the heavenly Judge, A man, but the MAN, A pastor, but the Master, Some deacons, but the Deity, Some liberal Judge, but the Lord Jesus! (Read the sobering description of H L Mencken's judgment in Rev 20:11-15+) (Jack Andrews Expository Studies – Understanding Acts)

Obviously **Mencken** had never heard (or believed) the writer of Hebrews who clearly stated

“And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment” (Hebrew 9:27<sup>+</sup>)

#### Related Resources:

- [Will there be a second chance for salvation after death?](#)
- [What does the Bible say about second chances?](#) - This is different than the first article
- [Will there be a second chance for salvation after the Rapture?](#)

**Judge** (decide, determine, condemn)(2919)(**krino** - root of English words like critic, critical) primarily signifies to distinguish, to decide between (in the sense of considering two or more things and reaching a decision).

**Righteousness** (1343)(**dikaioisune** from **dikaiois** = being proper or right in the sense of being fully justified being or in accordance with what God requires) is the quality of being upright. In its simplest sense **dikaioisune** conveys the idea of conformity to a standard or norm and in Biblical terms the "standard" is God and His perfect, holy character. In this sense **righteousness** is the opposite of hamartia (sin), which is defined as missing of the mark set by God.

**Through a Man Whom He has appointed (horizo)** - For the first time Paul refers directly to Jesus which is interesting for his first mention is of Jesus as a righteous Judge. Jesus Himself spoke of His appointment as Judge of all in John 5:22-27

“For not even the Father judges anyone, but **He has given all judgment to the Son**, 23 so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. 24 “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. 25 “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. 26 “For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; 27 and **He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man.**

And in 2 Ti 4:1<sup>+</sup> in His solemn charge to Timothy to preach the Word, he amplifies the solemnity of his charge by reminding Timothy that it is "**Christ Jesus, Who is to judge** the living and the dead (that takes care of everyone!)." And in that same chapter Paul wrote "in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the **Lord, the righteous Judge**, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing." (2 Ti 4:8)

**Appointed** (determined, fixed) (3724)(**horizo** from **horos** = boundary, limit; English "horizon" which is "the apparent line that divides the earth and the sky" which leads to the thought that Jesus is the "line" that divides all time into BC/AD!) means strictly speaking "to limit" and then figuratively "to fix," "to appoint." Time as well as space can be limited. **Horizo** means to mark out, to bound ("horizon") and figuratively to appoint, decree or specify. It means to mark out definitely. The boundary set can be (1) of time (fix, appoint - cf Heb 4:7) or (2) of space (fix, determine - Acts 17:26-27). **Horizo** referring to persons means to appoint or designate (Acts 17:31). In Lk 22:22 **horizo** refers to the making of a definite plan (decide, determine, cp Acts 2:23, 10:42, 11:29). **BDAG** adds that from the basic meaning., 'to separate entities and so establish a boundary', derives the sense 'to define ideas or concepts': set limits to, define, explain.

## THE PROOF OF JUDGMENT IS THE RESURRECTION

**Gilbrant** explains that a "**day** (of judgment) is actually coming and that there will be no escape from it, God guaranteed to all by the fact that He raised that Man (Jesus) out from among the dead. The fact that God raised Jesus from the dead shows He is deity and His teachings are true. He will be the Judge and will judge in righteousness (Isaiah 9:7; 11:4).

**Marshall** says this next statement "gives decisive confirmation of the fact of judgment: the appointment of the judge has already taken place and is to be seen in the fact of his being raised from the dead by God."

**MacArthur** explains that "The resurrection of Jesus Christ showed God's approval of Him, and qualified Him as judge. There are no excuses now—the proof of the Word of the Lord is all in. Sinners will be judged by what they do with that truth." (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Acts)

**Christ's RESURRECTION is the Father's "AMEN"**  
**to His Son's declaration "IT IS FINISHED."**  
(See [Tetelestai](#))

**Furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead** - Death has always been man's greatest, and finally victorious, enemy (1Cor 15:26), and only the Creator of life, the Judge who imposed the sentence of death because of sin (Ge 3:17-20+), can conquer death. The founders and leaders of all other religions and philosophies eventually die, but Jesus Christ is alive! His tomb is empty, and He has ascended in His resurrection body to the Father in heaven. His bodily resurrection, which is the best-proved fact of biblical history, is the certain assurance that He is the Creator and Judge of all. And it is also the greatest assurance that we too will be raised bodily to walk in newness of life in His very presence some day (soon) - see 1 Cor 15:20-22.

**Swindoll** says with the resurrection Paul dropped a bombshell into their philosophical systems - For the Epicureans, who believed death was the disassembly and dissemination of one's atoms—which became parts of a billion other things—resurrection required the destruction of those other things in order to be reassembled. For the Stoics, who embraced death as one's reunification with the logos, resurrection re-created the problem death had solved. (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary – Acts)

**Robertson** - This Paul knew to be a fact because he himself had seen the Risen Christ (Acts 9:3-16). Paul has here come to the heart of his message and could now throw light on their misapprehension about "Jesus and the Resurrection" (Acts 17:18). Here Paul has given the proof of all his claims in the address that seemed new and strange to them.

**Furnished** (3930) (parecho from para = near, beside + echo = hold) basically (literally) means to hold beside, To hold out toward someone, to present, offer. to cause someone to experience something, with the possible implication of a duration - 'to cause to, to cause to experience, to give.' 'let no one give me trouble' or '... cause me trouble' Galatians 6:17. To cause something to happen to someone - 'to cause to happen.' 'why do you cause the woman trouble?' Matthew 26:10; To maintain a state or condition - 'to continue to be, to keep on being.' πᾶρ σὺν σὺχ ἄν 'they kept silent' Acts 22:2. (from Louw-Nida)

In the present context it means to **furnish**, and was used regularly by Demosthenes for bringing forward evidence.

**Zodhiates** - Figuratively, meaning to be the cause, source, occasion of something to a person, to make or do, give or bestow, show, occasion in one's behalf, with the acc. and dat. expressed or implied. With κόπον <G2873>, trouble, to give one trouble, to vex (Matt. 26:10; Mark 14:6; Luke 11:7; 18:5; Gal. 6:17); ergasía <G2039>, work, to make or bring gain to someone (Acts 16:16); pístis <G4102>, faith, having made available to everyone the capacity to experience saving faith so that all who do not believe are responsible for their unbelief (Acts 17:31); hēsuchia <G2271>, quietness, silence (Acts 22:2; Sept.: Job 34:29); philanthrōpía <G5363>, benevolence (Acts 28:2). In the mid. paréchomai, to do or show for oneself, for one's own part (Luke 7:4, "for whom he should [on His part] do this"; Acts 19:24). With τό δίκαιον <G1342>, that which is just (Col. 4:1, "bestow on your part that which is just to servants" [a.t.]); seautón <G4572>, thyself (Titus 2:7, "showing thyself a pattern of good works"). (Complete Word Study Dictionary – New Testament)

**Gingrich** - 1. act.—a. give up, offer, present Lk 6:29.—b. grant, show Ac 17:31; 22:2; 28:2; 1 Ti 6:17.—c. cause, bring about Mt 26:10; Mk 14:6; Lk 11:7; 18:5; Ac 16:16; Gal 6:17; 1 Ti 1:4.—2. mid. e`auto,n ti p) show oneself to be something Tit 2:7. Grant Lk 7:4; Col 4:1. Get for oneself Ac 19:24.

**Gilbrant** - The classical Greek meaning varies with its usage. Actively the word means "hand over" or "deliver" something to someone. Reflexively the idea is submission or giving oneself up for or to something or someone. In law it means "bring forth" a witness, while in mathematics it denotes the sum total (cf. Liddell-Scott). The Septuagint utilizes parechō to translate the hiphil uses of different Hebrew terms for causing trouble (shāqat, Job 34:29) and causing exhaustion (lā'âh, Isaiah 7:13). It also denotes the divine causation of God in nature ('āmadh, Psalm 30:7). The New Testament retains the negative connotation of parechō in such passages as Matthew 26:10; Mark 14:6; Luke 11:7; 18:5; and Galatians 6:17 where the term means "to bother" or "trouble" someone. The classical active sense of bringing an offering is found in Luke 7:4, while the reflexive idea of submission is observable in the quietness of the Jews before Paul (Acts 22:2), the generosity of those on Malta (Acts 28:2), and the justice and fairness of masters toward slaves (Colossians 4:1). In Acts 16:16 the money earned by the spectacular soothsaying of the demonized slave girl "brought her masters much gain" (cf. Acts 19:24; 1 Timothy 1:4; 6:17). Hence parechō can be used to express the idea of causing bother or trouble, as well as the sense of simply presenting or demonstrating something to someone. ([Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary](#))

**Parecho** - 16v - became(1), bother\*(3), bothers\*(1), bringing(2), cause(1), furnished(1), give rise(1), grant(2), offer(1), show(1), showed(1), supplies(1).

Matt. 26:10; Mk. 14:6; Lk. 6:29; Lk. 7:4; Lk. 11:7; Lk. 18:5; Acts 16:16; Acts 17:31; Acts 19:24; Acts 22:2; Acts 28:2; Gal. 6:17; Col. 4:1; 1 Tim. 1:4; 1 Tim. 6:17; Titus 2:7

**Proof** (4102) (pistis) is the conviction of the truth of anything, but in Scripture usually speaks of belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things. Here Paul uses "pistis as conviction or ground of confidence (Hebrews 11:1-note) like a note or title-deed, a conviction resting on solid basis of fact." (Robertson)

**Raising** (450)(**anistemi** from **ana** = up, again + **histemi** = stand, to cause to stand) means literally to get up or stand up (Acts 1:15) or to raise up from the dead, bring to life - "God raised Him up again" (Acts 2:24) (Mt. 17:9; Mt. 20:19 Mk 9:9, 10; Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:34, Lk 9:8, 19; Lk 16:31 Lk 18:33; Jn 20:9; Jn 6:39, 40 Acts 13:34 Acts 17:3, 1 Th 4:14, 16).

#### **Anistemi in Acts -**

Acts 1:15; Acts 2:24; Acts 2:32; Acts 3:22; Acts 3:26; Acts 5:6; Acts 5:17; Acts 5:34; Acts 5:36; Acts 5:37; Acts 6:9; Acts 7:18; Acts 7:37; Acts 8:26; Acts 8:27; Acts 9:6; Acts 9:11; Acts 9:18; Acts 9:34; Acts 9:39; Acts 9:40; Acts 9:41; Acts 10:13; Acts 10:20; Acts 10:23; Acts 10:26; Acts 10:41; Acts 11:7; Acts 11:28; Acts 12:7; Acts 13:16; Acts 13:33; Acts 13:34; Acts 14:10; Acts 14:20; Acts 15:7; Acts 17:3; Acts 17:31; Acts 20:30; Acts 22:10; Acts 22:16; Acts 23:9; Acts 26:16; Acts 26:30

**Lumby** summarizes - It is worth while to notice how St Paul's argument advances through its various stages. He speaks first of God as the Creator of the world and of men, and of the ordinances which He has made for man's abode on earth. Then he argues that all this should inspire men with the thought that as they are more worthy than material things, so God is far exalted above men. This ought to have led them to seek after Him, and even in the darker days those who sought could find Him. But now the days of God's revelation through nature are at an end. He has spoken through that Son of Man whom the resurrection proved to be the Son of God. Through Him will God judge the world, for which judgment men should prepare themselves by repentance. (Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges - Acts of the Apostles).

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#### **Who Says?**

Read: Acts 17:16-31

He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. —Acts 17:31

I had always admired a well-known television news personality and thought of him as someone with high moral standards. So it surprised me one day when I heard him remark that he doesn't want anyone telling him what is right and what is wrong. He made it clear that he answers to no one but himself. The idea that we are not accountable to anyone—not even to God—appeals to many people. But it contradicts the deep-down feeling that there are things we ought to do and things we ought not to do. The Bible calls that inner conviction our conscience.

In Romans 1:18-20, the apostle Paul stated that the voice of conscience reveals God's standards in the hearts of those who've never even heard the Word of God. And Ecclesiastes 3:11-14 declares that God has placed a sense of eternity in everyone's heart, a conviction that what we do has everlasting consequences.

I am thankful that the Bible tells us about the One to whom we are accountable and that it clearly defines what is right and wrong. But I'm also grateful that God offers forgiveness to us through faith in Christ, so we don't need to fear His judgment (Acts 17:31).

Like it or not, we are accountable to God. By Herbert Vander Lugt [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

Our conscience is a gift from God,  
It is a guiding light;  
And when aligned with God's own Word,  
It tells us wrong from right.  
—Sper

Only God has the right to say what's wrong.

**Acts 17:32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer, but others said, "We shall hear you again concerning this."**

- **some** Acts 17:18; 2:13; 13:41; 25:19; 26:8,24,25; Genesis 19:14; 2 Chronicles 30:9-11; 36:16; Luke 22:63; 23:11,36; 1 Corinthians 1:23; 4:10; Hebrews 11:36; 13:13
- **We will** Acts 24:25; Luke 14:18; 2 Cor 6:2; Heb 3:7,8
- [Acts 17:32-34 Power of the Gospel](#) - Sermon by Ray Pritchard
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Acts 17:30-31 Getting to Know the Unknown God, Part 3](#)- John MacArthur

## REACTIONS TO THE GOSPEL

Reception or rejection. Belief or unbelief. Repentance or rebellion. Life or death. There is no middle ground. Jesus was crystal clear when He declared to the Jews "Therefore I said to you that **you will die in your sins**; for **unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins**." (John 8:24)

**And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked**- One group treated Paul's statement of the resurrection of Jesus with derision, scoffing at him, [imperfect](#) tense picturing them mocking him, casting one verbal assault after another. At least they were not like those rejecters at Lystra who cast stones to kill him! We must remember that Paul was a man, and one can only imagine how this hurt him. And yet he rested in the truth that his hope was founded on Jesus' blood and righteousness, not men's mocking taunts! And we need to steel ourselves with a similar biblical mindset, for if we share the Gospel enough, we can be sure that some will mock and sneer and deride us for believing such narrow minded foolish fables! As Paul warned young Timothy " Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." (2 Ti 3:12+).

**Robertson** - The Greeks believed that the souls of men lived on, but they had no conception of resurrection of the body. They had listened with respect till Paul spoke of the actual resurrection of Jesus from the dead as a fact, when they did not care to hear more.

**Hayford** - To the Greeks the idea of the resurrection of the dead was ridiculous, because they believed that death was a release of the soul from the prison of the body. (Spirit Filled Life Study Bible)

**John Polhill** - Epicureans believed in no human existence after death. Stoics believed that only the immaterial spirit survived death. To Greeks the idea of a body surviving death did not make any sense—even a transformed body. (NAC)

**Resurrection** ([386](#)) ([anastasis](#) from **ana** = up, again + **histemi** = to cause to stand) literally means "to stand again" or "to cause to stand again" and most NT uses refer to a physical body rising from the dead or coming back to life after having once died. The resurrection is distinguished from belief in reincarnation, which usually involves a series of rebirths from which the soul may seek release. Resurrection has primary reference to the body. The resurrection is the central, defining doctrine and claim of the gospel for as Paul wrote "if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain." (1Cor 15:14)

**J Vernon McGee** - Do you know why they mocked? Because Platonism denied the resurrection of the dead. That was one of the marks of Platonism. It denied the physical resurrection. When you hear people today talk about a spiritual resurrection but denying the physical resurrection, you are hearing Platonic philosophy rather than scriptural teaching. Paul taught the physical resurrection from the dead. So when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked.

**Sneer** (5512) ([chleuazo](#) from **chleúe** = joke, jest related to **cheilos** = a lip) means to throw out the lip and thus to mock, scoff, deride or sneer. To **sneer** stresses insulting another by contemptuous facial expression, phrasing, or tone of voice. To **scoff** stresses insolence, disrespect, or incredulity as motivating the derision. It means to make fun of someone by joking or jesting.

NET Acts 17:32 Now when they heard about the resurrection from the dead, some began to scoff, but others said, "We will hear you again about this."

**BDAG** - (1) to engage in mockery, mock, sneer, scoff ; (2) to make fun of maliciously, mock, scoff at, sneer at

**Vincent** on [chleuazo](#) - Only here in New Testament (3x in the apocryphal Septuagint - 2Macc 7:27; 4Macc 5:22; Wisdom 11:14) , though a compound, [diachleuazo](#), mock, occurs, according to the best texts, at Acts 2:13. The force of the [imperfect](#), began to mock, should be given here in the translation, as marking the outbreak of derision.

The response is not surprising for whenever one preaches or witnesses of the creation and resurrection to unbelievers, especially to modern day Stoics (atheists) or Epicureans (pantheists, New Agers), many ridicule, some defer judgment, and some believe.

**Robertson** - In contempt at Paul's statement they declined to listen further to "this babblers" (Acts 17:18) who had now lost what he had gained with this group of hearers (probably the light and flippant Epicureans).

## PROCRASTINATION THE DEADLY DECEPTION!

**Procrastination** is the act of putting off, delaying, or deferring an action until a later time. **Procrastination** is the act of willfully delaying the doing of something that should be done. **Procrastination** is the avoidance of doing a task that needs to be accomplished by a certain **deadline** (**ED**: In the present context the "**deadline**" is before one "**flatlines!**") It is an intentional delay of finishing a task despite knowing it might have negative consequences (**ED**: In this case not just "negative consequences" but

"eternal consequences!"). We might say it was not curiosity (like the Athenian's curiosity for something "new") which kills a person (like curiosity killed the cat), but procrastination which kills a person's hope of eternal life! Beware of falling into the deception of procrastination! (See illustration below)

**Jack Arnold** - These were undoubtedly the Stoics who were sincere in their desire to know more about Christ, but they were also **procrastinators**. As far as we know, they never heard Paul a second time. These scholars succumbed to the curse of the intellectual. They were guilty of academic detachment. They were remotely interested in Christ but only in an academic sense. Procrastination in receiving Christ can be just as fatal as total rejection of Christ.

**ILLUSTRATION** - There is a story of Satan having a "planning session" in hell. He asks, "How shall we ruin the souls of men?" One demon stands up and says, "I will go and start a great movement. I will tell men that God is dead." "No, that won't work," replied Satan, "We've already tried it. There is too much evidence for God in the design of creation. Men know there is a God." Another demon stood up and said, "I've got a plan! I'll go tell men the Bible is not true." Satan said, "We've worked a lot on that and haven't had a great deal of success. There is something about the Bible that is self-authenticating." A third demon stood up and said, "I will go and tell men there is a God, the Bible is His Word, Jesus is the Son and He did die for them . . . but there is still time. They don't really have to come to repentance and faith in Him just yet. I will tell them to eat, drink and be merry today because they can always repent tomorrow!" Then Satan stood up and said, "Now, you've got something! That will do the job! **Procrastination will ruin the souls of many, many men!**" ([Sermon](#))

**R Kent Hughes** - Paul's sermon had three results—mockery, delay, and belief. The first two responses show that many did not care about truth. Some said, "Seedpicker... what a waste of time!" When the discussion went beyond fun and games, they cut it off. **Others said, "We want to hear you again," but they cared little whether they actually did or did not, and they never did hear him again.** Acts 17:33 and the opening verse of Acts 18:1 tell the story: "Paul left the Council... After this, Paul left Athens." Praise God—some truly believed and came to faith. But most apparently rejected the apostle's message and the Savior he proclaimed. **When men were angry with him, Paul argued with them. When he was persecuted, he returned again to the place of persecution. But for intellectual flippancy and moral dishonesty he had no stomach.** (Preaching the Word – Acts: The Church Afire)

**And others said, We will hear thee again of this matter** - Were they sincere? We cannot discern from Luke's record. They may have had "good intentions" but the fact that Paul went out of their midst and soon departed from Athens strongly suggest that these "seekers" missed their opportunity of a lifetime! Dear reader, beware of "good intentions" when it comes to the Gospel! Good intentions are like checks drawn on a bank where you have no account! (cf Pr 14:23) As the old adage says "The road to hell is paved with good intentions" which probably comes from Samuel Johnson who said that "hell is paved with good intentions," and the phrase "the road to" got added on later. Beware of falling into the deceptive "Athenian Abyss" of "[mañana](#)!" (Spanish for "Tomorrow") Good intentions are nice, but they are deadly deceptive unless they result in good actions (Acts 16:31+)

#### **LIFE APPLICATION NOTE - WHY GOOD INTENTIONS CAN'T SAVE US**

- Starting out with good intentions does not ensure the results will be good.
- Possessing good intentions does not guarantee that any action will be taken.
- Good intentions by themselves do not fulfill the demand to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.
- Our ever-present bad intentions are often hidden from us. Good intentions can lead to false pride.
- Good intentions can seek to bypass and alter God's clear commands.
- Good intentions can be a cover-up for ignoring or willfully disregarding God's desires.
- Good intentions may appear to do so, but they cannot actually make up for bad deeds.

Many people claim that they are acting with good intentions when, in fact, their efforts are half-hearted. They want to dictate the way God should accept them. But none of our best intentions can save us.

"There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12+)

It is always dangerous to put off until tomorrow what you can do today, especially when what you are putting off is the eternal salvation (or destruction) of your soul. There are many who have delayed only to die before they had another chance. If you are reading these notes and have put off receiving Christ as your Savior, then read Paul's warning in 2 Cor 6:1-2 (notice how Paul piles up time phrases to get our attention!)

And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain— for He says, "AT

THE ACCEPTABLE **TIME** I LISTENED TO YOU, AND ON THE **DAY** OF SALVATION I HELPED YOU." Behold, **now** is "THE ACCEPTABLE **TIME**," behold, **now** is "THE **DAY** OF SALVATION".

**Others** - A more polite group like those who had invited him to speak (Acts 17:19). They were unconvinced, but had better manners and so were in favor of an adjournment. This was done, though it is not clear whether it was a serious postponement or a courteous refusal to hear Paul further (probably this). It was a virtual dismissal of the matter. "It is a sad story--the noblest of ancient cities and the noblest man of history--and he never cared to look on it again" (Furneaux) (Robertson).

**Vincent** - In this remarkable speech of Paul are to be noted: his prudence and tact in not needlessly offending his hearers; his courtesy and spirit of conciliation in recognizing their piety toward their gods; his wisdom and readiness in the use of the inscription "to the unknown God," and in citing their own poets; his meeting the radical errors of every class of his hearers, while seeming to dwell only on points of agreement; his lofty views of the nature of God and the great principle of the unity of the human race; his boldness in proclaiming Jesus and the resurrection among those to whom these truths were foolishness; the wonderful terseness and condensation of the whole, and the rapid but powerful and assured movement of the thought.

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**Jack Andrews** on **others** said, "**We shall hear you again concerning this.**"

We can respond aggressively against the message or we can respond apathetically towards the message. Both responses are wrong. These folks that Luke reminds us of were not aggressive against the message, but they were not accepting of the message. It is an awful thing to receive this kind of response in the world, but it is even worse when there is apathy within the church. R. Kent Hughes wrote, "One of the great sins of the church today is the dispassionate hearing of God's Word. Because of this, there are many who are spiritually ill, unable to comprehend the truths they once held dear. Only God can deliver His children from such apathy!"

The philosophers in Athens were somewhere between rejecting the message and receiving the message. Others stated, "We will hear you again on this matter." Matthew 12:30 Jesus said, "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad." These folks had a "between" response—we will hear you again on this matter. They were closed to the message, but they were not excited and believing of the message.

There are examples of these "between responses" in both the Old and New Testaments. Old Testament Example: 1 Kings 18:20-ff

The prophet Elijah called for Ahab, the prophets of Baal, and the people to gather on Mount Carmel.

Elijah gave the people a proposition. He wanted a show down between the false god Baal and the True God Jehovah!

Before the show down and the futile acts of worship and prayer and sacrifice on the part of the false prophets and before Elijah repaired the altar of the Lord, poured 12 barrels of water on the sacrifice, and the fire of God fell—Elijah gave a challenge and a rebuke to the people.

In 1 Kings 18:21 the Bible says, "And Elijah came to all the people, and said, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people answered him not a word."

New Testament Example: Acts 24:21-27:

Paul had been arrested, arraigned, and was on his way to Rome to appear before Caesar. On his journey there the Lord opened up doors for Paul to share his testimony with powerful rulers of his day. The governor Felix heard Paul's defense before the Jews. Acts 24:21-27 says, "unless it is for this one statement which I cried out, standing among them, 'Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day.'" 22 But when Felix heard these things, having more accurate knowledge of the Way, he adjourned the proceedings and said, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will make a decision on your case." 23 So he commanded the centurion to keep Paul and to let him have liberty, and told him not to forbid any of his friends to provide for or visit him. 24 And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. 25 Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you." 26 Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him. 27 But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound." The governor Felix had a "between" response! These folks in Athens had a 'between' response. Be very careful how you respond to the gospel! They said that they would hear Paul again on this matter, but there is no evidence that they ever did hear Paul again on the message of the resurrection. Joseph Parker wrote, "We say, 'We will come again tomorrow.' So we may, but Paul may not be there." (Jack Andrews Expository Studies



### Acts 17:33 So Paul went out of their midst.

- [Acts 17:32-34 Power of the Gospel](#) - Sermon by Ray Pritchard
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

This is one of those short but deeply profound passages. He had dispensed truth and some mocked the truth. And so we picture him (albeit a bit sad I am sure) turning and walking out of this famous forum, departing the vaunted city of Athens, never to return again.

### Acts 17:34 But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

- **certain** Acts 17:4; 13:48; Isaiah 55:10-11; Matthew 20:16; Romans 11:5,6
- **the Areopagite** Acts 17:19; John 7:48-52; 19:38-42; Philippians 4:22
- [Acts 17:32-34 Power of the Gospel](#) - Sermon by Ray Pritchard
- Acts 17 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## SOME HEARERS HEARD AND BELIEVED!

**But some men** - Praise God for this divine contrasting conjunction **"but!"** This rebuts those critics who say Paul's sermon in Athens was unsuccessful. These men simply fail to read the rest of the story!

Masses did not accept Christ, but the power of the gospel did work among Athen's intellectual elite. God calls us to be salt, to be light, not to make believers. Only God can open a closed heart and blind eyes and deaf ears. It is however notable that there is **no specific record of a church in Athens**. Paul does call certain Corinthians the first converts on mainland Greece (1Co 16:15).

**Jack Arnold** - The vast majority of the philosophers in Athens rejected Christ, but some did believe (cf Mt 7:13-14+ "*Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.*" ). God had decreed that some in the Areopagus would believe and turn to Christ. Even one of the judges of the court, Dionysius, received Christ. There was also a famous woman, perhaps a philosopher, Damaris, who yielded her life to Christ as Savior and Lord. What does this tell us? God saves some intellectuals. It is God's plan to save all types and kinds of men. Yet, not many wise in the world are saved.

For consider your calling, brethren, that **there were not many wise according to the flesh**, not many mighty, not many noble; 27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world **to shame the wise**, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, 29 so that no man may boast before God. (1 Cor 1:26-29)

**J Vernon McGee** - There was quite an aggregation of converts in the city of Athens. When Paul went to a place and preached the gospel, he had converts. He didn't fail. He succeeded. Wherever the Word of God is preached, there will be those who will listen and believe.

**Joined** ("glued") (2853) (**kollao** from **kolla** = glue) means literally to glue, cement, join or fasten together and thus to unite (someone with or to someone or some thing). To fasten firmly together. **Kollao** can mean to attach oneself to a master in a job means to hire oneself out as a servant ("the prodigal son" in Lk 15:15).

**Robertson** - No sermon is a failure which leads a group of men (andres) to believe (ingressive aorist of **opisteuo** - **word study**) in Jesus Christ. Many so-called great or grand sermons reap no such harvest.

**Dionysius** the **Areopagite** was one of the members of the upper echelons of the Athens Council, whose members all had once held some high office of state and were more than 60 years of age. Tradition (Eusebius) maintains that Dionysius was the first bishop of Athens and that he died the death of a martyr. **Vincent** adds **Areopagite** refers to "One of the judges of the court of Areopagus. Of this court Curtius remarks: "Here, instead of a single judge, a college of twelve men of proved integrity conducted the trial. If the accused had an equal number of votes for and against him, he was acquitted. The Court on the hill of Ares is one of the

most ancient institutions of Athens, and none achieved for the city an earlier or more widely spread recognition. The Areopagitic penal code was adopted as a norm by all subsequent legislators" ("History of Greece," i., 307)."

**R Kent Hughes** has a sobering application for all believers in the modern church - If we are believers, if we truly know Christ, **we must never hear or read God's Word in a detached manner.** We must pay attention to God with all our being. **We must never give way to a cerebral detachment when it comes to divine things. We must always respond.** Jesus stated the principle beautifully in Matthew 13:12: "**Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.**" **When truth comes, we must interact with it and appropriate it. One of the great sins of the church today is the dispassionate hearing of God's Word.** Because of this, there are many who are **spiritually ill**, unable to comprehend the truths they once held dear. Only God can deliver his children from such apathy! **Prayer** - O God, help us not to consider your Word in a casual, unfeeling way. May our hearts burn with sacred truth—flames of the Holy Spirit that cannot remain within us but must overflow to others, drawing them into personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. May our grief over the idolatry all around us move us to speak and live the gospel, so that others will come into your precious kingdom. In Jesus' name, Amen. (Preaching the Word – Acts: The Church Afire) (Bold added)

**Robertson** adds this note on [Dionysius](#) - One of the judges of the Court of the Areopagus. That of itself was no small victory. He was one of this college of twelve judges who had helped to make Athens famous. Eusebius says that he became afterwards bishop of the Church at Athens and died a martyr.

**A woman named Damaris** - A woman by name Damaris. Not the wife of Dionysius as some have thought, but an aristocratic woman, not necessarily an educated courtesan as Furneaux holds. And there were "**others**" (heteroi) with them, a group strong enough to keep the fire burning in Athens. It is common to say that Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 alludes to his failure with philosophy in Athens when he failed to preach Christ crucified and he determined never to make that mistake again. On the other hand Paul determined to stick to the Cross of Christ in spite of the fact that the intellectual pride and superficial culture of Athens had prevented the largest success. As he faced Corinth with its veneer of culture and imitation of philosophy and sudden wealth he would go on with the same Gospel of the Cross (1 Cor 1:23), the only **Gospel** that Paul knew or preached. And it was a great thing to give the world a sermon like that preached in Athens.

**Barclay** - It would seem on the whole that Paul had less success in Athens than anywhere else. It was typical of the Athenians that all they wanted was to talk. They did not want action; they did not even particularly want conclusions. They wanted simply mental acrobatics and the stimulus of a mental hike. There were three main reactions. (i) 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. (ii) Some put off their decision. The most dangerous of all days is when a man discovers how easy it is to talk about tomorrow. (iii) Some believed. The wise man knows that only the fool will reject God's offer. Two converts are named. There is Dionysius the Areopagite. As already said, the Areopagus was composed of perhaps not more than thirty people; so that Dionysius must have been one of the intellectual aristocracy of Athens. There was Damaris. The position of women in Athens was very restricted. It is unlikely that any respectable woman would have been in the market square at all. The likelihood is that she turned from a way of shame to a way of life. Once again we see the gospel making its appeal to all classes and conditions of men and women. ([Acts 17 - William Barclay's Daily Study Bible](#))

**Jack Arnold** - What, my friend, is your reaction to Christ? Do you mock and sneer as the Epicureans at the supernatural and the resurrection, refusing to believe you are a sinner under judgment in need of a Savior and repentance? A man mocks either out of ignorance of the facts or as a front to cover up his inward conviction about Christ. Perhaps you, as the Stoics, are interested in the message of Christ but you are procrastinating about true repentance and surrender to Christ. You say, "I'll put off my decision until tomorrow." Tomorrow may never come and then you will face an angry God at the Final Judgment. Perhaps you will be like Dionysius and Damaris. You have heard that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, both undiminished deity and perfect humanity, who died for sinners and was raised from the dead to give men resurrection life. Dionysius and Damaris heard and repented. They changed their attitudes about Christ, and sin, and received Jesus as Savior and bowed to Him as Lord. Have you repented? Have you bowed to Christ as Lord and received Him as Savior? Do not put this commitment off. There may be no tomorrow! ([Sermon](#))