

Paul's Address In Athens

Intro: In this city the apostle reasoned with his own countrymen in their synagogue and disputed with certain philosophers in the marketplace. After ascending the steps of the Areopagus he delivered one of the greatest speeches of his life. Here we have:

I. THE THEME ANNOUNCED

A. An Unknown God; Acts 17:22-23 ²² Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, *Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.* ²³ For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you."

B. A more skillful introduction to an address likely to provoke resentment could not be imagined.

1. Paul argued that the fact that this inscription was found was an admission on their part that they did not know the true God.
2. It was possible for them to know God.
 - a. Christ reveals God.
 - (1) Mat. 11:27 ²⁷ All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and *he* to whomsoever the Son will reveal *him*."
 - (2) John 1:18 ¹⁸ No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*."
 - (3) John 14:9 ⁹ Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou *then*, Shew us the Father?"
 - b. By the Bible
 - (1) 1 Cor. 2:7-13 ⁷ But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, *even* the hidden *wisdom*, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: ⁸ Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known *it*, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. ¹⁰ But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. ¹¹ For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. ¹³ Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."
 - (2) John 16:12-15 ¹² I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. ¹³ Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. ¹⁴ He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you. ¹⁵ All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you."
3. Paul's objective was to bring before them the God after whom they were groping.

II. THE THEME DISCUSSED.

A. Acts 17:24-31 It falls into three parts.

B. God and the world.

1. Paul presents the unknown God; Acts 17:24-25 ²⁴ God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; ²⁵ Neither

is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;"

2. As the world's Creator.
 - a. God made the world.
 - (1) Gen. 1:
 - (2) Heb. 11:3 ³ "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."
 - b. The gods of the city were not creators but creatures, the works of men's hands.
3. As Lord of the universe
 - a. If God is Creator, it follows that he must be the Possessor and Ruler of heaven and earth.
 - b. Jer. 18:2-6 ² "Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. ³ Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. ⁴ And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make *it*. ⁵ Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁶ O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so *are* ye in mine hand, O house of Israel."
4. As the Omnipresent One.
 - a. Being Creator, he cannot be limited to one spot or confined to a temple made with hands.
 - b. 1 Kin. 8:27 ²⁷ "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?"
 - c. John 4:24 ²⁴ "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth."
5. As the Self-Sufficient One.
 - a. Unlike the idols, God is not served by men's hands.
 - b. Man can give God nothing that he does not already have in abundance.
6. As the Source of Life.
 - a. The idols were lifeless. How could they give life since life only comes from life.
 - b. 1 John 5:11 ¹¹ "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."
 - c. John 1:4 ⁴ "In him was life; and the life was the light of men."

C. God and the human race.

1. He exhibited the race; Acts 17:26-29 ²⁶ "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; ²⁷ 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: ²⁸ 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. ²⁹ 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."
2. As one family.
 - a. The human race is one in origin, one in nature, one in responsibility.
 - b. Science proves that all races come from a common stock.
 - c. Many did not believe this.
 - (1) To the Jew, everyone else was a Gentile.
 - (2) To the Greek, everyone else was a barbarian. The Greek language, with all its beauty and perfection, had no word to express the brotherhood of man.
3. As guided by the Divine Hand.
 - a. God has fixed the same limits, this world, beyond which men cannot dwell.
 - b. Man may be able to go to another planet but he cannot live there.

4. As capable of knowing God, and our obligation to Him.
5. As convinced of the folly of thinking that God could be material substance.
 - a. Beings with life cannot be the offspring of lifeless, motionless idols, even though they are made with most precious metals.
 - b. Life only comes from life.

D. The Call to repentance.

1. Acts 17:30-31 ³⁰ And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: ³¹ Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”
2. God commands all men to repent.
 - a. Repentance is a change of mind. This exhibits itself in turning from sin and turning to God.
 - b. Luke 13:3, 5 ³ I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish...⁵ I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”
 - c. Luke 24:46-47 ⁴⁶ And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: ⁴⁷ And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”
3. God will call all to answer in judgment.
 - a. 2 Cor. 5:10-11 ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad. ¹¹ Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.”
 - b. Rev. 20:12 ¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”
4. God has given us assurance of this fact by the resurrection.

III. THE REACTION.

- A. Acts 17:32 ³² And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this *matter*.”
- B. There was derision.
 1. Some mocked.
 2. The things they heard were contrary to their preconceived ideas.
 3. The easiest way to escape his powerful arguments was to make fun of it.
- C. There was delay.
 1. “We will hear thee again of this matter.”
 2. They held nothing against Paul, but were not moved to do anything about what he presented.
- D. There was belief.
 1. Acts 17:34 ³⁴ Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.”
 2. Two names are mentioned.
 - a. Dionysius, a member of the august court or tribunal.
 - b. Damaris, a woman.
 3. This is the reaction that is strived for.

Conclusion: What will your reaction be?