

Who do You Worship?

Acts 17:16-34

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You can be very religious and not know what or who you worship. There are lots of people in our world today who worship something or someone, but they don't quite know the object of their worship. Then you have people whose gods are made up, they want their gods to conform to their desires. Their gods need to fit in their preconceived notions for them to believe in them. You may have a form of religion and even practice it, but still not know God.

Paul visited Athens around 50 AD during his 2nd missionary journey. He was sent to Athens to protect him from some Jews who were trying to kill him. Paul preached in Thessalonica and caused a riot there, then he went to Berea; there the opposition found him and the brothers had to send him off to Athens.

Acts 17: 16 while Paul was waiting for them (Silas and Timothy v.15) in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols.

-Greatly distressed (agitated, irritated) **How many Christians today would be distressed by seeing people worshipping idols?** The church has become apathetic to many of the issues we face today in society. This idolatry stirred something in the apostle's heart.

Paul would reason (discuss, have a dialogue) in the synagogue with the Jews and in the marketplace with whoever was there. Paul's evangelistic approach, he would talk to whoever wanted to engage in a conversation about their beliefs. In order to do this, you must know your beliefs very well.

Paul debated with philosophers. People in our society have this preconceived notion that Christianity can't compete in the same arena with other worldviews and philosophical ideas.

People think that Christianity doesn't sound smart. But it is very smart since it can withstand any scrutiny. Furthermore, it makes sense.

Athens, the home of Plato, Socrates, Aristotle. You may think that this is certainly not a place for an apostle and yet, this is where we find Paul debating with these philosophers.

Epicurians:

-the world is a result of random motion and combination of atomic particles

-man is an accident of matter

-There is no judgment

-death is not to be feared. "When we are, death is not and when death is we won't be"

Pursue pleasures and avoid pain at all cost.

Stoics:

-the world is determined by fate

-humans must live in harmony with nature

-God is nature and nature is God

-submission and endurance of pain emphasized in this philosophy.

Paul debated both groups:

(v.18) "What is the babbling trying to say? "He seems to be advocating foreign gods"

Paul's message: *the good news about Jesus and the resurrection (v.18)*

This sounded weird to the Athenians. (20) You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears."
(They spent their time doing nothing but talking and listening to the latest ideas).

These people had never heard about Jesus. Therefore, it was so strange to them. But they still wanted to know more about Jesus and the resurrection, so they invited Paul to speak at a meeting. Paul didn't water down the gospel, he presented it just as it was.

Paul is given the chance to present his strange views at Mars hill (Areopagus)

"Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious." Paul had walked around the marketplace and found shrines and statues they had for their gods, idols. Paul even found an altar with the inscription (**To an unknown god**). They were very religious but far from God. Paul used this writing of the unknown god, to introduce them to a God who can be known.

That which you worship as unknown, I will proclaim to you..

The God of the Bible is knowable

God (Elohim, Yahweh) is the creator: Made the world.

-does not live on man-made temples

-doesn't need your service (He is the All-powerful and all sufficient)

-He is the source of life-He created mankind (all the nations of the earth), appointed the different locations where they would live.

Made himself approachable so that people would seek him (v.27) This God is personal.

People can develop a relationship with him.

Athenian poets ("In him we live and move and have our being" "We are his offspring" Aratus)

We should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone-an image made by man's design and skill. (that is an offense to God to belittle him into an object). Nothing that we design or create would do justice to the nature of God. He cannot be put into a box.

God overlooked such ignorance in the past, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. **Why do people everywhere need to repent?** Because he has determined a day when he will judge the world with justice. **Judgment is coming!** God appointed Jesus as Judge. He will judge the living and the dead. Jesus's resurrection is the proof that one day the world would go through the judgment seat of Christ.

Some didn't believe the resurrection, but others became believers in the gospel because Paul was brave enough to debate Jesus among seculars and philosophers. He was never ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of anyone who believes.

IN the clash of gods or deities, the God of the Bible is the true God, the God we worship is knowable. He can be known, in fact, only those who know him, can truly worship him in the way he asks to be worship. God became a man in the person of Jesus, so that people be saved.

Do you know God? By knowing Jesus you will get to know him.