

PREACHING JESUS & REPENTANCE

Unmasking & Exposing the Unknown God of the Very Religious



REPENTANCE: *They needed to change the way they thought about God.*

OUTLINE ... (Acts 17:16-34 ESV)

1. Vexed by the rampant idolatry of Athens, Paul preaches Jesus and his resurrection, 17:16-21.

- (Acts 17:16-21 ESV) Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. 17 So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. 18 Some of the Epicurean and Stoic

philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, "What does this babblers wish to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. 19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? 20 For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean." 21 Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing

something new.

2. Paul identifies the unknown god which forms the subject matter for their religious and philosophical discussions, 17:22-28.

A. Paul addresses them as “very religious” worshipers, 17:22-23a.

- (Acts 17:22–23a ESV) So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. 23 For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: ‘To the unknown god.’”

B. Paul announces his intent to make known their unknown god, 17:23b.

- (Acts 17:23b ESV) What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.

C. Paul reveals the identity and attributes of their unknown god—he is God, 17:24-25.

- (Acts 17:24–25 ESV) The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, 25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

D. Paul addresses God’s ordained involvement over the face of the earth as the Lord of the Earth, 17:26-28.

- (Acts 17:26–28 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, 27 that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, 28 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.’”

The “unknown god” is identified as God who will one day make himself known to all on a fixed day when he judges every person from every age from the entirety of human history on Earth.

Paul instructs them concerning ...

- ... humanity’s origins and God’s established epochs in human history.
- ... God’s established boundaries for human population and development.
- ... the tone and tenor through God’s sovereign and providential rule over his created order which yields an environment conducive to humans seeking to know God.

The evidence throughout creation—within and without—should push people to seek the transcendent, known God, not an unidentified, impersonal, “force” or influence.

- (Romans 1:19–20 ESV) For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

3. Paul preaches repentance, 17:29-34.

- (Acts 17:29–34 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. 30 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, 31 because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.” 32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, “We will hear you again about this.” 33 So Paul went out from their midst. 34 But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

Paul calls for them to change their thinking—repent—concerning “the divine being” in view of a “fixed” day in which God will make himself known to everyone in his judgment.