

Acts  
 “Jesus” The Sequel  
**III.) Chp. 13-28 “Witnesses to the end of the earth”**  
*Chp. 15-18:21 Traditions and the road less traveled (2<sup>nd</sup> trip)*  
**17:22-34**  
 “What’s playing at the Areopagus? (part b)”

**I.) Intro.**

**II.) Vs. 22-31 Selected scenes**

**III.) Vs. 32-34 Three reactions to the feature**

**I.) Intro.**

Paul’s message of Jesus in Athens was aimed at three distinct groups:

- Vs. 17 **RELIGIOUS**: Those who had left the emptiness of the worship of 30,000 idols and sought instead a religious experience to make sense out of life.
- Vs. 17 **SUPERSTITIOUS**: Those that met daily at the market place holding onto the Greek gods as good luck charms. They did not as much follow after the 30,000 idols as they wanted to make sure that they covered all their bases.
- Vs. 18 **PHILOSOPHERS**: These were the people who used intellectual arguments as truth to govern their lives. Luke recorded two of the philosophies that were popular.
  - a. **Epicurean**: They sought to enjoy life. This produced a life style that “*lived for the moment*”.
  - b. **Stoics**: They sought to endure life. This produced a lifestyle seen in self-mastery and apathy.

All of three of these were seeking answers for the questions of life, trying to find a system that would govern their lives in a world that was chaotic. And to each of these three Paul is going to show why *Jesus has the answers that will make sense out of life.*

#### IV.) Vs. 22-31 Selected scenes

Paul starts his address in the exact location where 450 years earlier a group condemned Socrates to death on the same charges they are bringing against Paul, proclaiming foreign gods. His speech has four parts to it and effectively shows why Jesus has the answers to what the world is searching for.

Vs. 22-23 **INTRODUCTION**: Paul started this message with words that showed that he understood where they were spiritually. *“I can see by walking around your city that you fear the gods!”* Folk’s it is always good to start a conversation around what people believe and then ask them to tell you **“WHY”** they believe it? Paul saw that they were interested in spiritual things; he does not say that what they worshiped was good or bad, just that it was so! His point is to ask them, *“Does what you have as the system which governs your life work?”*

Paul continues to show that he was paying attention to what he saw when he noticed a temple dedicated to *“The unknown God”*. The history of this idol goes back 100’s of years earlier when there had been a severe plague in the city of Athens and it was suggested by Epimenides to turn a herd of a sheep loose in the city and where ever the sheep stopped to sacrifice them in the name of the nearest idol and in case where they stopped had no Idol they were to build an altar to the *“Unknown God”*. Paul noticed the emptiness of mans religions, superstitions and philosophies as far as offering hope to the human heart.

Vs. 24-25 **LIVING GOD**: Compared to the religious rules, stone idols, and vain philosophies, Paul proclaims that the unknown God is radically different than the idols they worshipped.

- a. Vs. 24 **CREATOR OF EVERYTHING: *He is the maker of hands not the one made by hands.*** The Epicureans believed that matter was eternal and had no creator. The Stoics believed that everything was a part of God. To these competing philosophies Paul declares that God “*Is both the creator and personal*”. Since God is the creator it would not be logical that events happen by indiscriminate chance. Since He is also personal then things can not be as fickle as fate. God does not live in things made by the hands of man. Have you ever gone into a temple made to some deity and found the deity there? Religion also keeps the attention on things as a ritual or practice ends up being worshiped.
- b. Vs. 25 **SUSTAINER OF LIFE: *He is the giver not the one given too.*** You can't add to God, or give Him anything to make Him more complete if you could then He would not be God. God is not looking for anything from man He only wants to give to man! I've gone into some Chinese restaurants and seen this gold fat guy with apples by him. I think its funny trying to feed a statue of a fat man. What kind of help can this guy be to you if he can't feed himself?

Vs. 26-27a **SEEKS TO KNOW AND BE KNOWN**: Paul declares that this unknown God is the God of history and He made one race of people, today science agrees calling us all Homo sapiens (*wise mammal*). Regardless of the differences in the pigment of our

skin, stature or features we are all one race. By acknowledging this fact Paul is showing that God wants all of mankind to know Him.

For years the evolutionist has been trying to find the missing link a bridge between the animal kingdom and man but all they have come up with is some pretty weird looking monkeys. The problem is they are looking in the wrong place for Him. In Gen. 1:26 the Godhead has a conversation and they say, “*Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness*”. The Godhead did not say, “*Let Us make man in the image of a monkey*”; no they said, “*In Our image*”. **The missing link is not between man and monkeys it’s between man and his Creator.** In Phil. 2:5-8 Paul tells us that the missing link is, “*Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*” **Jesus is the One that shows us what we were suppose to be like, He is the One that alone made it possible for us to come back into the relationship with our Creator as He designed.**

Paul declares that God has intervned in human lives so that they all would have an opportunity to know Him. He allows the events of life to drive us to the knowledge of Him. **It is not random chance or blind fate that propels the affairs of your life it is a God who desires to have a relationship with you!** Friends, the events of your life have been ordered so that, as Paul says in verse 27, “*that they should seek the Lord.*” Have you been blaming God rather than seeking to know Him? God is ordering the times and boundaries of your life so that you would seek Him.

Vs. 27b-31 **THE TRUTH ABOUT OURSELVES**: Look at what Paul is saying here. **He says that it takes the catastrophes of life to drive you to Him even though He is not far from each one of us!** The pride of the human heart won't turn to God even though He is right next to us unless we have no other option. Paul points out that God created us with a free will; He did not make us robots. Athens was full of idols showing that they were trying to find their missing link but they were looking at things that they created rather into the One who created them. Paul would say to the Romans; *“Since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man; and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.”*

Paul says that with the incarnation of His Son God it is time to turn from the worship of things to the worship of the true God. In verse 31 Paul gives them **three facts that would encourage them to turn from the worship of idols to the worship of God.**

1. **An inescapable day**: *“He has appointed a day on which He will judge”*. There is coming a day when all will have to give an account of their lives. Those who want to do so can give account of their lives based upon their “good works”. The standard is not their good works compared to the rest of mankind; God does not grade on a curve He grades on the Cross! Jesus said, *“unless your righteousness exceeds*

*the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.” Paul defines it this way in Romans saying, “There is none righteous, no, not one.” The standard of good works is Jesus’ so all you have to do to be good enough is to equal Jesus’ life here on earth! IMPOSSIBLE!*

2. **A perfect Judge:** *“He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained.”* There is a **specific Judge** that will hear each of our cases. Rom. 2:16 says that, **“God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ”**. Paul told Timothy in 2 Tim. 4:1 that, *“Lord Jesus Christ, ... will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom.”* Think of it in light of Heb. 4:15 where we are told that Jesus, *“was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”* **As great a comfort this is for all Christians because He understands our weakness it ought to bring fear into the heart of every non-believer.** Think of the scene at the judgment as billions of people are gathered together. In the air is a low rumble of conversation and all seem to be saying, *“It’s just not fair!”* A young lady with a tattooed number on her arm who was killed at Auschwitz for just being of a religion others hated. A man who has rope burns around his neck just because of the pigment of his skin. In fact all people could point to several reasons why they did what they did in life and therefore shouldn’t be judged. *“We want a judge who had to face all of the horrible injustices that we*

*did*". "Before you can judge us, you have to have walked in our shoes!" they will cry.

- **“You need to be born to a poor family in which they question your birth.”**
- **“You need to be raised in a culture that is hated and despised among all the nations.”**
- **“You need to be raised with out education and without a father.”**
- **You need to be miss understood, made fun of and thought crazy by those around you.”**
- **“You need to have been abandoned by your closest friends, rejected by your family and handed over to the authorities by one whom you trusted.”**
- **“You need to go through an unfair trial and sentenced to the most inhuman death for something you were innocent of.”**

Jesus knows the suffering and injustices that we use as excuses so there will be no excuse that will work before Him!

3. **Undeniable proof:** *“He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”* In 1 Cor 15:4-8 Paul declares concerning the resurrection that Jesus, *“was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen*

*asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also.”* Folk’s many eyewitnesses saw Jesus dead and then proclaimed that He was alive and ascended into heaven!

Vs. 32-34 Now Luke concludes Paul’s message at Mars Hill with three recorded reactions to the message of Jesus compared to, religion, superstition and philosophy and they are the same responses that people have today. “*And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead*”:

1. “**some mocked**”: Pride is threatened, and to mask conviction people resort to making fun of the truth. When all people have in response to Christianity is sarcasm and put-downs then it is a sign that the person knows that they are apart from Him.
2. “**others said, We will hear you again on this matter.**”: By far the most popular way of dealing with the truths concerning Jesus is **procrastination**.  
**Do you realize that all a person has to do to end up in hell is do nothing!**  
Just keep putting Jesus off.
3. “**some men joined him and believed**”: Here is the last group and the one that I’m praying all here will fit into. **Even though the conscious is offended and pride is wounded, they say, “Jesus, I’m yours!”** Luke lists two of their names for us.
  - a. Dionysius the Areopagite, his name means, “*divinely touched*” and he sure was even though he was a leader of vain philosophies.
  - b. Damaris, whose name means “**little woman**”, but she was more than that this day! Luke says that these were just two among **others**.