

Paul's Address at Athens Acts 17:16-34

Introduction:

Paul is sent to Athens by the brethren because the Jews from Thessalonica were persecuting him (17:13-14). While he is in Athens, he was waiting for Silas and Timothy to rejoin him (17:15). Before they can meet with him, Paul begins to teach those in Athens also.

I. Before we look at the actual sermon of Paul, notice the setting of the sermon at the Areopagus (17:16-21).

- A. Paul could not stand the fact that they were given over to idols (17:16).
 - 1. Paul knew that there was only one true God.
 - 3. This sin by the Athenians was driving Paul to do something about it.
- B. Paul talked with everyone about God (17:17).
 - 1. Notice where Paul was preaching about God (17:17).
 - a. Synagogue (with Jew and Gentile worshipers)
 - b. Marketplace (with those who happened to be there)
 - 2. Paul was fulfilling the great commission of Jesus.
 - a. **Mark 16:15** - **And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."**
 - b. As Paul was waiting for Silas and Timothy, he was working for God.
 - c. He was using his time for good, instead of just killing time.
- C. Paul was taken into the Areopagus because of what he was teaching the Athenians (17:18-21).
 - 1. The Athenians loved to hear new things (17:21).
 - 2. They loved different philosophies and wanted to hear more about this doctrine that Paul was preaching to them.

II. The actual sermon at the Areopagus (17:22-32).

- A. It is interesting to notice as we begin looking at this sermon that Paul did not use any Old Testament scriptures in this sermon to the Athenians.
 - 1. Certainly, Paul is not giving us an example of not using scripture.
 - 2. Why would Paul not use scripture?
 - a. The people that he was talking to were Greek, and they probably did not even know of the Old Testament.
 - b. Paul is giving us a great example of taking people from wherever they are to Christ.
 - 1. It would be useless for us to use the Bible to convince an atheist that there is a God.
 - 2. Since the atheist does not believe the Bible is inspired, they would not believe anything in it.
 - 2. Notice, as we look throughout this sermon, how Paul uses what they know to teach them what they need to know.
- B. Paul notices immediately that these people are a religious people (17:22-23).

1. Paul commends them on the fact that they are religious.
 2. They already had a foundation about the spiritual world, and Paul is going to build on it.
 3. Even though they were wrong on what they believed, they were willing to listen to what Paul had to say.
- C. There are three main parts to this message (remember: this message is used to teach those who do not know God).
1. God's relationship to the world (17:24-25).
 - a. God made the world and everything in it (17:24).
 - 1) Gen. 1:1 - In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
 - 2) John 1:3 - All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.
 - 3) Col. 1:16 - For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.
 - b. God does not dwell in temples made with hands (17:24).
 - 1) I Kgs. 8:27 - But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!
 - 2) Acts 7:48-50 - However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says: {49} 'Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me? says the Lord, or what is the place of My rest? {50} Has My hand not made all these things?'
 - 3) God was not in the idols that they were worshipping.
 - c. God gives life, breath, and all things (17:25).
 - 1) Gen. 2:7 - And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.
 2. God's relationship to the human race (17:26-29).
 - a. God made the entire human race from one man.
 - 1) Gen. 2:7 - And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.
 - 2) Gen. 2:21-22 - And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. {22} Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.
 - 3) From these two people the entire human race was formed.
 - b. God "has determined their preappointed times" (17:26).
 - 1) This certainly does not mean that God has preappointed our eternal destiny.

- 2) It simply means that God as determined the seasons (times) and the boundaries (between sea and land).
- 3) **Gen. 8:22** - While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease.
- c. Because God is so great (He created all things and sustains us on this earth), He cannot be found in lifeless objects (**17:29**).
 - 1) Remember: they were making idols to worship everything they considered to be a god.
 - 2) They were taking lifeless objects (however precious the metal may have been) and trying to worship a living being.
 - 3) Even their own poets said that “we are also His offspring” (**17:28-29**).
 - a) Because they were “His offspring,” they should know that He could not be found in inanimate objects.
3. The call to repentance (**17:30-31**).
 - a. God had previously overlooked these sins of idol worship.
 - 1) But now God commanded all men to repent.
 - 2) Repent means more than just admit that you are wrong; it means to change the direction you are going.
 - b. God has appointed a day in which He is going to judge the world in righteousness (**17:31**).
 - 1) There will come a day in which we will give an account of our actions.
 - 2) We must make sure that we are following God’s laws because He is going to be the one to judge us.
 - c. The assurance that God has given us is that He raised His Son from the dead (**17:31**).
 - 1) Even though Jesus was dead and in the tomb, God raised Him up.
 - 2) **Acts 2:24** - whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.

III. The reaction of the people to the sermon (**17:32-34**).

- A. Anytime the word of God is preached, there is a reaction to it.
 1. The reaction can be either good or bad.
 2. Some will react positively and obey God, others will react negatively and reject His word.
- B. Some of the Athenians believed and obeyed, others did not.
 1. Each of them was given the same opportunity to believe or not.
 2. The same message was preached to all of them.
- C. The simple command that was given to them was “repent.”

Conclusion:

There was a message preached to the Athenians that day. That same message is now preached to us today. Some of them obeyed the words of Paul, others rejected it as foolishness. What will your reaction be?