

Subject: *What the World Needs to Know*

Scripture: *Acts 17:16-34*

In verse 16 we find the reason for Paul's message in Athens. The city was full of idolatry.

In verses 17-31 we find the message Paul gave them. They needed the truth from God.

In verses 32-34 we find the reaction to Paul's message.

1. The world needs to know the truth about God

The world is full of people who have false gods (vs. 16) and some people have no god (Eph. 2:13, "having no hope, and without God in the world"), so they desperately need to know about the one true God.

Athens was the home to almost every man-made god in the world. A writer named Petronius once said it was easier to find a god in Athens than a man. This is what drove Paul to preach the gospel. The foundation for the gospel is the truth about God.

As Paul passed through the city he noticed all the idols and images, and one of them had this inscribed, "To the unknown God." The people of Athens were superstitious and they didn't want to offend any god, so they made an image for one they might not have heard about. Paul uses that as a launching pad for his message, "Let me tell you about that God you don't know."

The people of Athens had a keen interest in learning "what's new" (vs. 21). Paul was only interested in "what's true." Paul's first point was "You are ignorant, and I'm going to give you the truth about God." I believe he had their attention, don't you? He is not one God among many gods, but He is the one and only God. Whenever Paul spoke to a Jewish audience, he always started with the Scriptures. But whenever Paul spoke to a pagan crowd, he taught them the truth about God.

- He is the knowable God (vs. 23)
- He is the creator God (vs. 24)
- He is the unlimited God (vs. 24)
- He is the self-sufficient God (vs. 25)
- He is the sustaining God (vs. 25)
- He is the sovereign God (vs. 26)
- He is the ever-present God (vs. 27-28)

2. The world needs to know the truth about man

Everything around us gives evidence that there is an awesome God. Inside us God put a conscience so we would know right from wrong. These men of Athens could not plead ignorance. Their own poets acknowledged the existence of God. The poet Epimenides said, "In Him we live and move and have our being." The poet Aratus said, "For we are God's

offspring.” Paul could have quoted from the Old Testament, but instead he chose to quote from writers that his audience would be familiar with. If God created man, He must be more than a man-made idol. Paul used their own poets to show the people just how foolish it is to worship idols.

- Man is created and sustained by God
- Man has a wrong concept of God
- Man is accountable to God

3. The world needs to know the truth about sin

Paul did not address the sins of the flesh, even though Athens was like any major city of the ancient world. He focused his message on the greatest of all sins.

- God commands all people to repent
- The world is guilty of rejecting and replacing God

***Psalms 50:21** ...you thought that I was altogether like you*

- All other sins are rooted in this sin

In the past, God overlooked man’s ignorance and did not always bring immediate judgment against those who did not know Him. But now, God is declaring that all men everywhere must repent. Notice, this is a message for all people everywhere. No one is excluded. The command is to repent, to have a change of mind and heart that leads to a change of action.

4. The world needs to know the truth about judgment

- God has an appointed time for judgment

***Hebrews 9:27** And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment*

- God has a perfect standard for judgment

5. The world needs to know the truth about Christ

- Jesus is the divine Son of God
- Jesus died for our sins and rose again
- Jesus will judge the world

At the end of Paul’s message we see three different reactions: Some mocked. Some agreed to hear Paul again, but they never had that opportunity (see verse 33 and 18:1). Some believed. Like Paul we are responsible for telling people the truth. They are responsible for what they do with it. We have an appointment with God. The day is set. The judge is ordained. The command is given...repent and trust in Christ.