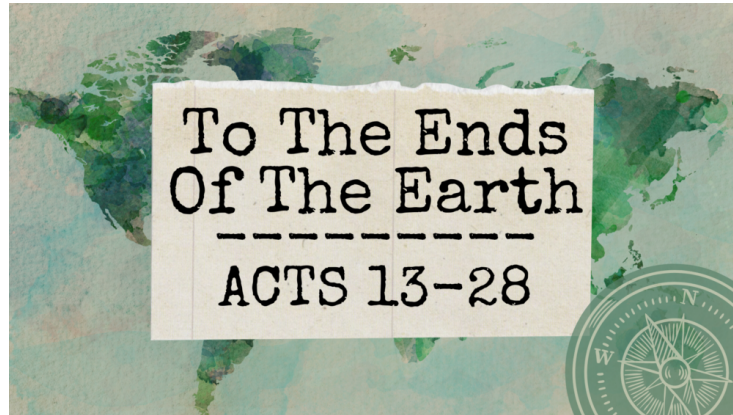


Paul at Mars Hill



Acts 17:16–34

Bro Kory Cunningham

Over fall break, I got to take my family to Athens and we got to visit the Parthenon. We got to go in and we got to see the statue of Athena. Now, it was the Athens of the South, otherwise known as Nashville, but it was an epic trip. Actually, if I am honest, we went to the Parthenon to kill time. We had a few different things we were doing but we had some downtime, so we decided to go. We got there and one of the kids realized that you can actually go in the thing, and I did not even know you could go in the Parthenon. Apparently, it is a whole deal. So we paid more than I would like to, to go into the Parthenon to see a 42-foot statue of the goddess Athena! There was a lot of stuff that I did not really care about. It is kind of a long buildup to when you actually see the statue, but when you walk in and you see this 42-foot statue, it was pretty wild. It sort of took my breath away. It was a big statue! It is a replica of what would have actually been in Athens in the Parthenon. She is the goddess of wisdom, the

protector of the city. They say you can see her spear from 40 miles away – that is how glistening it was with gold.

That would have been a sight for the Athenians to see, and even with this replica in Nashville, the kids thought it was awesome. At the same time, it struck me how strange this was — how strange it was for a civilization to build a Parthenon and to put a golden statue in it that is 42-feet tall to say she is going to protect the city. Which by the way, she did not do a very good job. If you go to Athens, you can see it did not work. She did not protect the city. It is just ruins now. But it seemed so strange. Why would a civilization do that? Why would they build a temple, and come to and worship an idol? And here we were in Centennial Park thinking this is really strange. But then, of course, we went just up the road to Opry Mills Drive and we walked into a building. I began to notice what seems strange for the Athenians to do, to walk in a temple to worship, to get ultimate value, ultimate satisfaction, to get something that would make them whole and happy and feel fulfilled, well, maybe it is not much different than what some of us do walking into other buildings even in our culture. Perhaps maybe a shopping mall is not always a shopping mall, perhaps sometimes they become temples where we go and we give a sacrifice and we come out with a god.

It reminded me of a missionary's story. There is a missionary who went to India and he was doing some work there, and he met a lady who later came to the United States to spend time with this missionary and his family. After a couple of weeks with this missionary family, she was getting ready to go back to India and the missionary said, "How did you like America? What did you find exciting, maybe strange? What did you think about America?" She said, "Well, the thing that was the most strange is how many temples and how many idols you have." And he thought... *wait, what? I have been to India. You guys have way more temples and way more idols! Your whole culture with Hinduism — you have a lot of gods, millions of gods, and they are everywhere, little statues. Americans? We don't have any temples and we don't have any idols that we worship!* But here this girl from India who came to America for a few weeks saying I have seen you have a lot of temples and you have a lot of idols. He said,

"You have got to explain to me because I don't know where there is one temple that you can go and worship an idol exists in America." She said, "Well, for one, your god is your stomach. On every corner, you have little temples that you drive in, you pay a tithe, you get a sack of food, and you worship your god, which is your stomach." He was a little taken aback. She said, "Then every weekend, in droves, you will go into a building, a stadium, on Saturday and Sunday and you will do things that seem to me like worship. You will stand and you will praise, you will shout and you will wear jerseys, and you will do things that seem to me a lot like we do in our culture, which is what we call worship." And then she said, "I see every day you going into these buildings, paying a tithe, and coming out with a sack filled with something that you really don't need, you just want. You just wanted it to be happy. That is what we do in our culture. We go into the temple and give a sacrifice so that somehow that god will give us a little bit of happiness, a little bit of joy."

Of course, this American was taken aback because he had never ever even considered in America that perhaps we might have some of the same rituals, some of the same practices they do in India. We don't call them temples and we don't say it is worship, but perhaps at times we can go into a shopping mall and it is not a shopping mall. It is really easy for a shopping mall to turn into a temple. Maybe we can go into a restaurant and it not be a place we eat but a place we worship. Perhaps we can go into a stadium and not just cheer for a team — as I saw a grown man crying on TV in the fourth overtime of the Iron Bowl. That is not a fan; that is a worshiper! It is real easy to blur the lines between doing something that is acceptable to morphing into the area where maybe it is a temple and maybe it is worship.

Paul is going to go into a culture of Athens that we are going to see looks a whole lot like our own culture. As we listen to Paul at Mars Hill, I want us to listen to it two different ways. One as a believer, as a Christian thinking of how we can we go into our culture and proclaim the gospel by looking around at the way our culture does life. But also, I want us to hear this text as an Athenian. As an American, perhaps Paul might be actually talking to us. Maybe we have some objects of worship that we are not

using as gifts but we are coming to as gods. Let's explore this text together. In Acts Chapter 17, we are going to see Paul at Athens and he is going to stand at Mars Hill. Let's read the first verse together, verse 16.

Scripture

"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."

Paul is in Athens because he was chased out of Thessalonica and Berea. They don't like Paul. They are chasing him so he goes on to Athens where he is waiting for Silas and Timothy. I think this was the Lord's provision that Paul ends up in Athens. So here he is, waiting. What does he do when he waits in this culture, waiting on his friends to get there so they can continue on their missionary journey? We are going to see that Paul sees something, and it causes him to feel something. And we are going to conclude is if we are going to start to reach out to our culture, our neighbors, our friends, we have to actually care. That is what Paul is going to do. His first thing is he is going to care about the people to which he looks and sees.

Now, Athens is a leading city. It had become a Roman province at this time, but the Athenians would have prided themselves because they are a free people. They love freedom. They are one of the only free people. So they are a city that is all about freedom. They are all about education. They have art, culture, and music. They are a city that everyone else hears about. They are a city that you want to visit. They are an affluent place and Paul finds himself there. As Paul is waiting in Athens, verse 16 says, "...his spirit was provoked within him." So in the midst of Athens, Paul feels something. Within his spirit, he is provoked. That word is only used twice in the New Testament. It is not a very common word so some translators have trouble translating, but I think 'provoked' is a really good translation. He was angered, but not in the sense of him hating these people. No, he was angered in the sense that he is troubled, he is urged, he is provoked.

So what provokes Paul? What troubles Paul? Well, Luke tells us, "...as he saw that the city was full of idols." Paul is waiting in this city on his friends, and he just looks around. He is observing. He is watching people go in and out of temples. He is watching people commit idolatry. He is watching people worship all these different things, and in seeing the way this culture lives, it provokes him. It irks him. He is provoked to do something. He is provoked to action. Athens is a city that is filled with idols. Some historians would say there were more idols in Athens than there were human beings. I mean, this is a city literally filled, submerged, soaked. They have idols everywhere. The people — this was their life. They went to temples and they worshipped idols. That is how they got their value, their significance. That is how they showed their love. That is how they worship.

Paul Cares

So Paul sees this and as he sees their idol worship, he cares. He is provoked. But it is not enough just to care. Paul actually does something about it. We see Paul living in a culture filled with image-bearers of God who are worshipping things, worshipping images made into gods. That is really strange. Paul sees that and he is broken by it. He is provoked by it. So when we look around at our culture, when we see people doing things that are against the gospel, and we see people doing things that we know they were not created to do, we cannot just get mad, call them fools, and leave them alone. Paul saw and then he felt, he was provoked, and it leads him to action. It is going to lead him to engage the culture he finds himself in.

So first Paul cares, and secondly Paul engages. Let's see how he engages. It says this in Verse 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." Paul sees, he feels, he cares, he is provoked. But he does not just say... *These crazy Athenians – I am out of here!* No. It leads him to engage. He goes into the synagogue and he starts to engage the Jews there with the gospel. It also says he went into the marketplace and that is what we are going to deal with today, when he goes into the marketplace.

So here is Paul...he is going to Walmart! And he is thinking...*Hey, if these people are buying stuff, I think what they probably really want is Jesus.* That was Paul's thought. I am going to go in the marketplace where people are just normally hanging out, doing business, buying, selling. I am going into the coffee shop and I am assuming everyone here drinking coffee really wants living water. I don't know what Paul would say in the marketplace. Maybe he was like hey, do you like that loaf of bread — did you know Jesus is the bread of life? I don't know what he did. He probably had some better tactics than that. But he is going into marketplace and into the public square (the marketplace of ideas which would have been very popular in Athens), and he is having conversations with people. Why? Because he cares enough to engage. And for us as Christians, we have to care enough to engage. We cannot just look and think...*I am glad I am not like them! I am glad I don't think like that. I am glad I know the truth.* Paul didn't say 'I am glad I was raised by a Jewish mom and dad and I know the truth.' No, he was provoked so he engaged. He engaged in the marketplace. He wants to tell them about Jesus. He is talking to anybody he can about the gospel.

Paul Engages

Paul runs into some philosophers and we are going to see what happens with them. Verse 18 says this, "Some of the Epicureans and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him." He has found the place where everybody comes to, so it is almost like we now find him at Starbucks. Everybody has got their coffee, they all have these grand ideas, they are all talking philosophy, and they are all pointing out different things. And we see these Epicureans and Stoic philosophers.

- **The Epicureans**

So, what are these two different groups of people? Epicureans believed that there were gods but they were distant and had nothing to do with everyday life. In fact, they believed there was no afterlife. So really, all that mattered is right now. The only real meaning in life is pleasure and avoiding pain. Whatever makes you feel good, whatever makes you happy, whatever desire you have in your body, just go do it because there are no

gods that are close enough to tell you not to. Life is only right now so just go live it up. That was the Epicureans. Be happy. These were the YOLO people — You Only Live Once, just go get it, do whatever you want and no one judge you. You are your own person.

- **The Stoics**

The Stoics, you can guess, were a little more stoic. They were the ones who believed there was a god who was somewhat closer, but they would believe more in pantheism where you have this world soul. There is a god, but he is also the universe and the universe is also god, so it was sort of spiritual in that sense. They believed in fate — that everything is determined by fate and if you want to change your fate, then you had better be virtuous, do the right thing, pursue the right life. So they would be really conscious about not doing whatever you want, but fulfilling your duty and being a good person. They were those from Socrates and Aristotle. They had the good life and they knew what you were supposed to do to be a good family man, to do your duties, even if it hurt. Pain was actually a good thing because pain made you into a better person of character. These were people practicing the Mindfulness App on their phone so they could have the right headspace to make sure they did not miss anything. They were doing lots of yoga and karma to make sure they were right with the universe and everything was okay. They were the ones that were very worried about if they were doing the right thing, if they were being the right type of a person.

Those groups had two completely different ways of life. You can even see in our culture, we have these two groups. One is like do whatever you want. Life is a party. The other is make sure you get it right. Make sure you are on the right side of things because you need to be virtuous, you need to have the right outcome, and you need to have a dutiful life. We can see that mirror even in our own culture. We have people who say let's live it up, or let's do the right thing.

Paul is interacting with both of these schools of thought. He is at the coffee shop having some debate and conversation. Let's see how they perceive Paul. It says in verse 18, "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.” So Paul is bringing the gospel into this culture. He is talking about Jesus and he is talking about the resurrection, and part of the group is wondering what this guy is talking about — *Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah! Jesus...resurrection...What are you even saying? I am not even hearing you. He is like a babbler. He is like a chicken just pecking around. I don’t even know what he is saying. This guy is nuts! Who is this babbler?* — So what they are assuming, what they are hearing, is that when Paul is talking about Jesus and the resurrection, he is talking about two different gods...that there is this god, Jesus, and there is this god, resurrection, and somehow they die together and rise together. That was really, really strange to them.

But there are others who are like — *I don’t know. He seems pretty smart. What he is saying seems pretty logical, it kind of identifies with our lives and how we feel. Let’s keep talking. Let’s hear him again.* So, some are like he is crazy and others want to let him have a mic and give him some space. They want to hear what he has to say. It is going to lead us to Paul at Mars Hill.

Look with me in verses 19—20. It says this, “And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus...” That is Mars Hill. If you see the background of the words, that is the rock, which is Mars Hill. That is the place where they would have gathered and talked about a lot of new stuff, as we are going to see in this text. “...saying, ‘May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean.’” In other words, he was saying some stuff and they weren’t getting at all. So they wanted to have a conversation because they wanted to understand him. That is what the Stoics and the Epicureans were saying to him.

But Luke is going to insert something about their culture, and it is going to be important for us to notice. Look what Luke says in Verse 21, “Now all of the Athenians and foreigners who live there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.” That is an insight that Luke wants us to know. In case we don’t know the Athenians, in case we don’t know exactly why they invited him to speak at Mars Hill, he is telling

us. It is not that they want to hear the Truth; it is that they want to hear another truth, because this is a culture that loved truths, with an "s," plural. They love truths. They celebrate truths. Everybody has got a truth. There is new truth. There is always truth coming out. But what they are not going to enjoy is the Truth. They loved hearing new things. They loved talking about new things. If you have a new idea, they will hear you out, but if you have an old idea that you are saying is true, that is a different story.

This sounds familiar. It sounds like the culture that we would find ourselves in. We live in a culture that loves truths, with an "s" - little "t" with an "s." It is cool to have truths. It is great to be on a journey. It is great to be discovering. It is great to be doing the work. It is great to be enlightening yourself. It is great to have another perspective. It is great to always be thinking, learning, growing, and pursuing the truth. That is a great thing. Pursue the truth. Chase down the truth. But once you find the truth and you say you actually know what the Truth is, our culture says that is intolerant. You are a bigot, and now we all hate you because you have arrived on the Truth.

So we have a culture that loves truths. In fact, everybody has a truth. You have your truth. I have my truth. They have their truth. We have our truth. Everybody has got a truth and they are all true all the time, so let's just keep talking about new things and great things. But what our culture does not love is when you say you were pursuing the truth and you found it. That is where there is going to be resistance. When you say you have actually found the Truth and His name is Jesus and let me tell you about Him. All of a sudden, the cool discovery is not so cool.

We find the same thing in Athens. They love truths, but they did not love the Truth. And we live in a culture that we have to acknowledge loves truths, but does not love the Truth. So if we are going to be the people that proclaim the Truth, we are going to have a little bit of resistance so we have to know how to navigate that. We are going to learn from Paul. How does he go into a culture that loves new things, that loves journeying through things, that loves conversations, that wants to have a lot of talks, but when he actually teaches and tells them, they are not going to love it

so much — how does he engage that type of a culture? We are going to see as he goes to Mars Hill.

Let's look in verses 22–23. Here is what it says, "So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you." Notice where Paul starts. He starts with observing the culture. He sees something in the culture that he can bring to their attention. So his first line is I perceive that you are very religious. This is kind of him tipping his hat to these people. How does he know they are religious? Because they have objects of worship. They have places they go and things they do to worship. And they would have been like yes, we are. We are the most religious. Look at all of our temples. Look at all of our worship. We are the most religious people on the planet. They would have lined their streets with temples and had all sorts of worship to prove they are a very religious people. They are not atheists. They love all the gods and they worship all the gods. Their whole lives are filled with religion and worship.

So what exactly is worship? Why does Paul call what they do worship? Worship is trying to get ultimate value from something, ultimate satisfaction, ultimate happiness. To find who you are, your very identity, from something, that is an act of worship. Of course, we are supposed to only get those things from God. Ultimate value, identity, worth — those are only things God can give us, but if we are not connected to God we will turn to things to find ultimate identity and value. We will go to objects to find what only God can give.

Paul says I have watched, you guys are very religious, you have all these objects of worship, but it doesn't work. It is not working for you, and I can prove it. So how does he show the brokenness of their own worship? He points out the temple that says "to the unknown god." He is acknowledging they are very religious with all these objects of worship. He says in your minds, you think if you can appease all the gods, life would go good — you will have peace and prosperity and you will be happy. If you just appease the gods, if you just worship in the right way, then you will have

the ultimate things you really want. Paul says but you admit, even by your own temples, that you don't know if you have actually crossed off all the gods yet. You don't know if it has worked because you have a god here that you say... *We are not really sure if we have got them all, so just in case that god shows up and is really mad, we can say oh, yeah, we will scratch the name out – this is your temple! We just did not want to tell anybody your name yet because we want it to be a surprise. So surprise, here is your temple!* It does not work. Their own cultural rhythm and liturgy of worshipping all the gods to be happy does not work because they don't know all the gods and they are admitting it so they have to give homage to a god they don't quite know.

Paul says let's take that god. I want to talk about him because I actually know the god you don't know. And I am going to tell you about Him and He is going to become the only God you need to know because all these other gods are bogus and He is the one true God. Paul looks at the brokenness of their own liturgies, the brokenness of their own worship, the brokenness of their own cultural patterns to say you are doing things to get things but it actually does not work and you actually admit it yourselves.

I wonder what Paul would say to us. If Paul came to American culture, what would he say? I don't know, but perhaps he would say, 'I know that right after Thanksgiving you have this thing called Black Friday. I notice on Black Friday you show up really early before the sun comes up, and you get in line. And not just in America, but all over the world the people will get in line to what? To go into a building to buy something that in buying this thing you have had your eye on, you acknowledge that if you get this thing, you will be happy or the person you are giving it to will be happy.' At great sacrifice and through a great offering, we will go in and we will get things that we really don't need but we want because in wanting them, we know they are going to make us ultimately happy.

But Paul might say you yourselves know it doesn't actually work because you take those things you bought last year and you put them in the trash bin to make room for the new things you bought this year. So even in your own acknowledgement, the things you get to make you happy are not

making you ultimately happy, because within a few weeks, it is old and you need something new.

Perhaps Paul would look at our culture to say there are, at times, that we can walk into a shopping mall and it not be a shopping mall. There are times that we can walk into a shopping mall and we can treat it as a temple, a place not just to get a gift but a place to buy a god. We are not just getting a gift as a good gift given to us from God to enjoy in a small way, we are buying a gift for an ultimate reason to make us ultimately happy because we have thirst and we have hungers that we cannot satisfy. So we keep running after things to quench our thirst and to fill our appetites, but then Paul might say it does not actually work because you are still hungry and you are still thirsty, and you have to toss them out to go get something else to fill your hunger and to fill your thirst.

Paul went into their culture and said I know what you are doing and I know what you are searching, but you are actually searching for something that you don't quite know about. So we have to be people that look at our culture and say what our culture seeks after, what we sometimes seek after, not a gift - that is an appropriate way to go to the mall, to buy a gift - but sometimes we go into the mall not for a gift; we go for a god. It is appropriate to go into a stadium to cheer for a team, but sometimes we go into a stadium and we don't cheer for a team; we cheer for our gods. It is appropriate to go to a restaurant to buy food, but sometimes we go into a restaurant not because you are hungry, but because you are sad and you just need a little joy. Perhaps that is not a snack. Perhaps that is a sacrifice, a moment of worship.

See, we can distort things that are good and we can often turn it into gods. And here, Paul is saying there is something good. Worship is good, but you have made it into something that is not good. You have this temple that says "to the unknown god." I want to tell you the thing you are actually longing for, it cannot be found in any of those temples. It actually cannot be found in any temple because it is God who made all things.

Paul Proclaims

Notice what Paul does. He says this, "I proclaim to you." So notice the order. Paul has cared. Paul has engaged. Now Paul is proclaiming who God is to this people. Verse 24 says this, "The God who made the world and everything in it..." Paul starts with you are broken because of your worship. You are longing for something but you have not found it yet. I am going to tell you what you are looking for. You are looking for God. And by the way, he created all things, all things in heaven and on earth. He sort of went right against the Stoics who believe the world is also god. No...God created the world. He is Creator.

Notice that when Paul begins to explain the gospel to the Athenians he does not start in the same place he starts in the synagogue. In the synagogue, he reasons from the Scriptures that Christ is the Messiah and that He needs to die and rise from the dead. To the Athenians, they have no idea that there is a Messiah and they have no idea they need death and resurrection. So where does Paul start with these Athenians? He starts with creation. To the Jews, who have a biblical world view, he starts with the Bible. To the Athenians, who have no biblical world view at all, he starts with creation and he is going to work from creation down to Christ. That is helpful for us because when we are dealing with our neighbor or our friend, perhaps a neighbor or friend who has no idea anything about Christianity, we might have a different starting place, namely creation. When we are reasoning with a guy or girl who grew up in church and knows the Bible, we will start with the Scriptures.

Paul says God is the creator, and then he says, "...being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything." So Paul's first point is that God is creator. His second point is that God is not needy. A.W. Tozer would say needy is not a word we can use for the creator. Needy is a creature word. We are needy. We need food, water, sleep, air. God needs none of those things. God is not needy. Guess what? God does not need you. He does not need your service. He does not need your gift. He is fine. Instead, you need God. That is a big difference. God does not need you. You need Him.

That is what Paul is trying to tell these Athenians. You have these little gods in temples, you have to bring them food and water, and you have to wash them because they are getting dusty. Those are not gods. You don't take care of a god. A god takes care of you. The God does not live in temples made by hands as though He needed you. He did not need your help. He is the giver of all things. He gives you life and breath. See, God does not need your gifts. God is the giver of gifts and you need a gift from Him, namely salvation. God does not need us. We desperately need God.

Paul is going to go on to say that not only is God creator, not only is God not needy, but God made the world so that humans would seek after Him in hopes to find Him. He says in verses 26–28, "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, 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, 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.'" So God is creator. God is not needy. You need God. And God made the world in a way that you would search after Him. The Epicureans believe god is distance, not in any way personal, and Paul is saying no, God is not only ruler but He is also Father and even your own poets have said such. This was a place that loved their history and culture and arts, and he said just listen to the poets. Just listen to the singers. What are they saying? They say things like 'in him we live and move and have our being.' Who is that him? It is God. They are saying things like 'for we indeed are his offspring.' Who is that? It is God. You are indeed God's offspring. Paul goes into their culture and he uses their own culture to say that even your own poets say true things about the gospel.

Perhaps in our culture he would say do you know that Lady Gaga? She says some really true things. She actually says, "God makes no mistakes." Now the song is a little iffy, but the lyric is true. So even your own poet says right there that God makes no mistakes. But do you know John Mayer? He would say, "And what about this feeling that I'm never good enough? Will it wash out with the water, or is it always in the blood?" God makes no mistakes, but even John Mayer says there is a problem. There is

a deep issue. Where do you go? Go to your own rapper. Go to Kanye. What does he say? "To whom the sun sets free, indeed, he saved a wretch like me." Even your own poets, even your own rappers, even your own stars are saying true things about the God I am claiming you don't know that you need to know. Even your own culture is crying out true things. You just don't have the full story. You don't have all that you need to know. Yes, you are an offspring of God, but you also need to know that there is a problem. You have not been so good as an offspring. You have actually walked away and joined hands with another. You need to repent.

So Paul is engaging culture. He is using culture to try to show within their own culture how they need to see and understand the gospel. What does Paul say next? Notice he has just quoted one of their 'rappers,' and then he says in verse 29, "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 of imagination of man." Paul's point is, because you know all of this, because you should seek after God, you should not make gods! If God is creator, if God is not needy and you should seek God, the natural conclusion is you should not make gods. That is really strange. You should not make a 42-foot statue of Athena out of gold and say please protect our city. You just made her and put her up! She is not going to do much for you. He is trying to point out to the Athenians that they have all these gods who are their protectors but they *made* them, and they are dusting them! They are not going to come through. He is saying you shouldn't make a God; instead, you should worship the God who made you. He is trying to point out that they need God, not the gods of their imagination.

Verses 30–31 say, "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent, 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." So Paul has said you are very religious — you are worshipping all sorts of things, but it is broken. You admit you have not got it figured out because there is an altar to an unknown god. The real God actually created everything you see including you, and He is not needy. You need Him and you should seek after Him. You should be chasing after Him and

you should not create a little god to serve as a god. You should worship the God who made you. So because you know all that now, the time of ignorance is over, "The times of ignorance God overlooked." I think what he is saying is God has left them to do whatever they want, and they have built a whole civilization out of idolatry. He says but now, God has sent a man, and I am standing on a rock and I am proclaiming to you the Truth. In a land filled with truths, there are truths all around, there are all sorts of broken worship, and Paul stands up and says ignorant time is over. Here is the Truth. You need to repent. You need to repent of this idolatry. You need to repent of worshipping these gods who are not gods because I am not here to tell you another truth; I am here to tell you the Truth.

And what is the Truth? There is a judgement coming. God has commanded you to repent because there is a judgement day coming. He has fixed a day when He is going to judge the world according to righteousness, and guess what. None of the Athenians is righteous. They are unrighteous. And God is going to judge them based on the one person who is righteous, namely His son, Jesus Christ. And all the Athenians are going to fall short. And the same is true with us. There is a day coming where we will be judged according to righteousness, and that is bad news because none of us is righteous. We have all fallen short of the glory of God. We have all sinned in all sorts of different ways. And we will be judged according to the one who is righteous. But the good news is that that one who is righteous died in our place for our sins so that when we believe in the gospel, His righteousness will be imputed to us and we will stand in the judgement and go through on the other side as someone beloved by God. He is trying to say ignorance is over. It is no longer a time to be given to idolatry. Instead, you need to come to the one true living God. He is pleading with these Athenians.

How do we know there is a judgement? Because God has proved it by raising a man from the dead. Who is that man? That man is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is proclaiming Jesus at Mars Hill to these Athenians. He is over all these other gods. None of those is real. He is the one true living God. Now, some commentators will point out that in this address Paul does not mention Jesus. He says by a man whom God raised from the dead. So why

does Paul not bring up Jesus in his address to the Athenians at Mars Hill? I think N. T. Wright is correct when he would say that this is probably a summary version of Paul's message and not the full thing. Why do we think that? Because in a few chapters, Paul is going to be so long-winded that a little girl is going to fall out of the window. Paul is not a man of short words. He liked to talk a lot and long about Jesus. So, odds are if he is talking that long at bible study, when he gets a moment to stand before all of Athens on Mars Hill, he does not just do a two minute speech and then go sit down. No, he is reasoning and he is preaching, so what Luke is giving us here are the summary points.

What are the summary points? Everyone is a worshipper but they are all worshipping the wrong thing, and Paul proclaimed the one they needed to worship. God created everything. He made you to feel your way towards Him, though you just won't because you love yourself more than Him. Instead of seeking God, you make gods and you worship them. And those gods can look in all different ways in all different cultures. What you need to do is repent. You need to realize that unknown god is actually Jesus Christ. And that hunger and thirst that you feel? That thing that you are seeking for is ultimately Christ. Christ is the only one who can satisfy your thirst and your hunger when you come to Him. Ultimately, you need Christ.

See, Paul could go into a culture and see they were all are longing for something because you could see it. You could just look around. It is a little bit harder to see in our culture, right? We can walk in not just to buy, and not just to cheer, and not just to eat, but we can actually do some of those things as an act of worship to be fulfilled. We are hungry. We are thirsty. We want to be happy. We want satisfaction. We are lonely. We are stressed. We are depressed. We just want that thing that will fix it, so we run to all of these various temples and various idols and various places to fill something that only God can. See, we are very religious; we are very spiritual. But Paul would say we often run to the wrong thing. What we need to run to is the Lord Jesus Christ because we all long for something. In a culture that is filled with truths, we need to hear the Truth and proclaim the Truth because not only do we long for something and that something is the Lord, we live in a culture that longs for something and

that something is the Lord. We can't just look and see, and say you fools. We have to look and see, and it has to provoke us. We have to care, but not just care, we have to engage. We have to engage our culture with the good news of Jesus.