

The True and Living God (Part 2)

Acts 17: 22-34

In our previous study we discovered that Paul had faced considerable opposition in Thessalonica and Berea prior to his arrival in Athens. Upon arriving he soon realized the need was great there as well. The people of Athens were religious, but their religious practice was influenced by culture and philosophy. They had erected an altar to the UNKOWN GOD. At Mars Hill, Paul immediately begins to proclaim the true and living God.

Many today are familiar with religion, and may even be familiar with the Bible, but familiarity doesn't guarantee salvation or a right relationship with the Lord. Some may know about God, but they do not know Christ personally. As we continue to examine the exhortations of Paul, I pray this passage will help clarify any questions you may have and introduce you to the living Lord. I want to continue looking at the [aspects](#) of Paul's encounter at Athens while we consider: [The True and Living God](#). In our last study we considered:

I. The Dilemma in Athens (22-23)

A. Their Confusion (22)

B. Their Compromise (23)

C. Their Complacency (23)

II. The Declaration in Athens (24-31)

A. The Power of God (24a)

B. The Presence of God (24b)

C. The Perception of God (25a, 29)

D. The Provision of God (25b, 28)

E. The Preeminence of God (26)

F. The Pursuit of God (27) – [That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us.](#) Those in Athens were content to worship a deity they did not know; nor did they believe they could know. Paul reveals it is absolutely possible to experience and know the true and living God. They viewed Him as some mystic being that was totally separated from humanity. While it is true, God inhabits the heavens, He is also present on

the earth through His Holy Spirit. Creation itself declares the wonder and power of God. Christ came to earth in the form of a man. He lived and died for the sin of the world. While God is greater than we can comprehend, it is possible to know God and enter a relationship with Him.

- Christ came as the sacrifice for our sin. He died on the cross and was buried. However, He didn't stay dead. He rose again triumphant over sin, death, and hell. He ascended back to the Father where He is seated making intercession for us. Upon salvation we are indwelt with the Holy Spirit. We have access to the throne of grace through Christ our Lord. The Spirit intercedes on our behalf as we pray. Though we cannot see the Lord, He is very near to us!

G. The Patience of God (30a) – *And the times of this ignorance God winked at.* Keep in mind Paul is speaking to those who worship gods they do not know. He reveals the patient grace of God toward them. This in no way reveals God's approval of idol worship, but it does reveal His tender grace and mercy. It has the idea of "*looking the other way; to bear with.*" God was not unaware of their false worship, but He chose to extend a period of grace toward them. In His grace, He sent Paul to reveal truth to them.

- Each of us ought to rejoice for the patient grace of God. None of us sought to serve or worship Him within ourselves. In fact, there were likely times in most of our lives when we were rebellious and refused His offer of grace. He was not obligated to touch our hearts again, drawing us toward Himself, but I am glad He did. I am thankful for the grace of God that is extended to undeserving sinners!

H. The Precept of God (30b) – *And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.* God is gracious and patient in His dealings with men, but He will never condone or approve of sin. Paul declares that since they have heard the truth, being exposed to the grace of God, it is time to repent of their sin and seek the Lord. It is time for them to turn from idol worship and seek salvation in the Lord. This included all men, everywhere, regardless of their education, social standing, or economic status. All were guilty of sin and needed to repent.

- This precept has not changed today. We live in the day of grace. The Lord is tenderly working in the lives of individuals. He reveals their sin and need for salvation. All are born in sin, separated and condemned before God. God demands that we repent of our sin and come to Christ by faith. We cannot expect to continue a life of sin and enjoy the favor and acceptance of God. We must meet His righteous demands. *2 Cor.7:10 – For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.*

I. The Punishment of God (31a) – *Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained;* Paul reveals the urgency in repentance and turning to God. The period of grace will not last forever. The Lord has appointed a day when judgment will come to those who have denied Christ as their Savior and Lord. In fact, Christ Himself will judge the world and those who denied Him.

- Grace is extended today. Salvation is available for those who repent of sin and come to the Lord by faith. However, grace will not always be available. For those who die in their sin, judgment waits at the resurrection of the dead. Those who denied Christ in this life will stand before the Great White Throne in judgment, spoken of in [Revelation 20:11-15](#). There will be no pardon and no reprieve. The lost will be judged and cast into the like of fire for all eternity. When grace is denied, judgment is all that remains. [Heb.9:27](#) – *And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*

J. The Promise of God (31b) – *whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.* Paul reveals that Christ will stand in the latter day to judge the earth, but he also reveals a great promise. Christ was raised from the dead. The grave could not hold Him. He came forth victorious. Because He lives, those who are born again in Him, saved by His grace, will also be resurrected from the dead and enjoy eternal life. [Rom.8:11](#) – *But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.*

- Those in Athens worshiped an idol made of men. It had no power to assist in their lives and no power in death. Christ lives today! He is active and working in our lives. He has given us the promise of eternal life in Him. He has gone away to prepare a place for the redeemed and He will come again and receive those unto Himself. I rejoice in the promise of eternal life!

III. The Decisions in Athens (32-34) – As Paul concluded his message, each of those present responded in one way or another. They each made a decision concerning the truth they heard. These responses remain today. In fact, each of us will respond in one of these ways. Notice:

A. The Rejection (32a) – *And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked.* Some refused the message of Paul, mocking his words. They joked and scoffed at Paul. These refused to embrace the true and living God, choosing rather to continue their worship of idols.

- Many continue to reject the message of the Gospel. They scoff and laugh at the thought of a Savior who died in our place, securing our redemption. They choose to live their lives according

to their personal wants and desires instead of submitting to the will of God. This is a dangerous decision. All will stand before God and give account of their lives. Apart from Christ, they will remain accountable for sin and face the righteous judgment of God.

B. The Reservation (32b) – *And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.* While some mocked, others were not totally convinced, but desired to hear Paul again concerning the Gospel. They decided not to trust the Lord that day, putting it off until a later time.

- We don't know if these ever repented and were saved or not. They heard truth, but decided not to act upon it. While they did not reject it outright, their indecision resulted in rejection. They were not promised another opportunity.
- Many continue that way today. They have considered the Gospel, and may even plan to be saved at some point, just not right now. This is a dangerous place to be. There is no guarantee of tomorrow. Once you have heard the truth, you are responsible, and there will be no excuse. If the Lord has dealt with your heart in salvation, I urge you to come to Him while He is speaking! [2 Cor.6:2 – \(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.\)](#)

C. The Reception (34) – *Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.* While it appears the majority refused the Gospel at that time, some received the message of Paul and were saved. They chose to repent of their sin and receive Christ by faith.

- This trend continues today, but hope remains. The majority will reject the Gospel and refuse salvation, but their refusal doesn't have to hinder your obedience. You may be the only one who will respond today, but Jesus is willing to save you if you will come to Him. Your salvation doesn't rest upon what others do, but what Christ has done and your response to His call.

Conclusion: This passage has clearly revealed the truth of Jesus. He came as the sacrifice for our sin. He gave His life a ransom so we could be forgiven and reconciled to God. He rose from the dead, securing eternal life for all who believe on Him by faith.

You have heard the truth. How will you respond? Will you reject the Gospel? Are you reluctant to receive it? Both responses are a denial of salvation. If Christ is dealing with you in salvation, why not come and receive His gracious offer? Come as He leads!