

Athens Versus Paul

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I. Introduction.

A. Text: Acts 17.

B. Paul visits Athens where there are still remnants of the many philosophies of the world.

II. The gospel needs to be presented in any culture and in any age.

A. Paul was provoked in spirit when he saw Athens given over to idolatry—every idol revealed a great capacity for God but also a sabotaging of God.

B. Paul first spoke to the Jewish religious leaders.

C. Paul faced Epicureans and Stoics who were atheist existentialists and pantheist fatalists, respectively.

1. The Stoics were interested but only because they thought Paul was preaching two new deities, Jesus and resurrection.

2. There were religious oddballs, thoughtless idolaters, atheistic existentialists, and self-sufficient fatalists.

3. To all of them Paul presented the delivering Word of Jesus.

III. Paul began by speaking to the Athenians where they were.

A. Paul found an altar to an unknown god which Paul paid tribute to, by acknowledging that this signifies the cry of humanity for the divine.

B. He unfolds the truth that idolatry had denied and the truth of man that was the logical consequence of it.

IV. God is the maker and not the made, and He is the one that gives to humanity and draws them.

A. One can easily worship family, self, country, etc. These are false gods that people worship, which make demands on us.

B. The real God is one who gives and who needs nothing from humanity.

C. God allows disaster so that man will be dependent upon Him.

V. In God, man lives and has being.

A. Man has dignity because he is God's offspring.

B. If we are made with a capacity for God, then it is not only insulting to God to make an idol of Him but it is also degrading to man.

VI. Man has a responsibility.

A. The times of ignorance are related to the individual—the time in our lives where we as God’s offspring were trying to satisfy ourselves with things less than God.

B. Man is responsible to change his mind and lay hold of what God has provided in Jesus Christ.

1. There is an inescapable day coming of judgment.

2. There is an unchallengeable God who is a man. He has lived with us and felt everything we feel.

3. God has made this irrefutable by the resurrection of the dead—this is where Christianity rests.

VII. The reaction of Athens.

A. They ridiculed. Christianity ridiculed is a sign of defeat.

B. Others detached themselves.

C. Some believed. Among intellectuals there are earnest people trying to find the answer to life.

D. At Athens, a body of Christ was formed to shape men and set them loose from darkness.

Application questions:

1. What is man’s responsibility in the gospel message?

2. What things should Christians expect in response to the gospel message? Explain.

3. How did Paul speak to the Athenians where they were? What does this suggest about our sharing of the gospel?
