

# **Acts 17 - 2nd Missionary Journey: Thessalonica; Berea; Athens; Paul on Mar's Hill**

III. Outreach to the remote parts of the earth (Acts 13:1–28:31)

- (E) Thessalonica (17:1-9)
- (F) Berea (17:10-15)
- (G) Athens (17:16-34)
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    - (ii) Paul's sermon (17:21-31)
    - (iii) Mixed response (17:32-34)

## **Review: Paul's Second Missionary Journey**

Paul and Barnabas agree to revisit the Galatian churches, but they disagree about taking John Mark who had left them on the earlier mission. After an argument, Barnabas takes Mark to Cyprus. Paul takes Silas to Galatia. At Lystra Paul asks Timothy to join them (16:1-3). They revisit the towns, telling the believers the decisions of the Jerusalem Council about Gentile converts (16:4-5).

Paul tries to go to Bithynia, but is blocked by the Holy Spirit (16:6-7). At night, Paul has a vision: a Macedonian urges him to come help. At this point Luke joins them: they sail for Macedonia (16:8-10). Paul delivers a slave girl from an evil spirit. Her owners protest; the crowd attacks; they are flogged, imprisoned; freed by an earthquake. Jailer is converted (16:11-40). They travel to Thessalonica (17:1).



## Acts 17

(E) Thessalonica (17:1-9)

### The Second Missionary Journey (15:36–18:22)

1 Now when they had traveled through **Amphipolis** and **Apollonia**, they came to **Thessalonica**, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

1 Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

1 Paul and Silas traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia and came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue.

1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:

- Timothy and Luke stayed behind in Philippi (we know this because the pronouns change from "we" to "they")
- Timothy rejoins Paul and Silas in Berea (17:14)
- Paul and Silas used the famous Roman road (*Via Egnatia*) which crossed Macedonia, connecting the Adriatic Sea with the Black Sea (a Greek extension of the *Via Appia*)
- "...Amphipolis" - 33 miles southwest of Philippi, North coast of Aegean
- "...Apollonia" - 30 miles Southwest Amphipolis
- "...Thessalonica" - a strategic center and capital city of Macedonia; 37 miles west Apollonia, northwest extremity of Aegean

2 And according to Paul's custom, he visited them, and for **three Sabbaths reasoned** with them from the Scriptures,

2 And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,

2 As usual, Paul entered there and on three Sabbaths discussed the Scriptures with them.

2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,

- "...three Sabbaths" - Paul taught them for three weeks, but likely stayed longer in Thessalonica (Cf. 1 Thess 4:1; 2 Thess 2:5); it must have been forceful teaching (1 Thess 1:8)

— In Paul's two eschatological epistles (1 & 2 Thessalonians), he simply reminded them of what he had taught them during this visit!

- Paul supported himself there by tentmaking (1 Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:7-10), along with two monetary gifts sent to him from Philippi (Phil 4:15-16)

- Luke described Paul's method of evangelizing in Thessalonica as:

- "...reasoned" *dielexato*, Paul explained his method of evangelizing in Thessalonica as a logical, reasoned approach, giving evidence, proving (*paratithemenos*), and proclaiming (*katangello*)

— These terms imply that Paul dealt carefully with his hearers' questions and doubts

— He showed that the facts of gospel history confirmed what the Scriptures predicted

3 explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead, and *saying*, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ."

3 explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and *saying*, "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ."

3 He explained and showed them that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead: "This very Jesus whom I proclaim to you is the Messiah."

3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

- Paul's Jewish hearers needed convincing that the Scriptures taught that the Messiah would suffer death and rise from the grave (Cf. 3:18; 13:30,34; Luke 24:13-27; 1 Cor 15:1-4)

— Paul used the OT to prove that Jesus was the Messiah

4 And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a significant number of the **leading women**.

4 And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women.

4 Some of them were persuaded and began to be associated with Paul and Silas, especially a large crowd of devout Greeks and the wives of many prominent men.

4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

- Paul's reasoning persuaded some in the synagogue services (Cf. 26:28; 28:23)
- They seem to have been mainly Gentiles (Cf. 1 Thess 1:9), many of whom were "God-fearers" (Cf. 10:4; 13:43; 16:14), but some of them were Jews
- "...leading women" - could have been upper-class society, or may have been wives of the city's leading men
- In either case, the gospel had an impact on the leadership level of society in Thessalonica

5 But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the marketplace, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and they attacked the house of Jason and were seeking to bring them out to the people.

5 But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people.

5 But the Jewish leaders became jealous, and they took some contemptible characters who used to hang out in the public square, formed a mob, and started a riot in the city. They attacked Jason's home and searched it for Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the people.

5 But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

- The "Jews" again treated Paul harshly, as they had in Galatia (13:45,50; 14:2,19), because they were again "jealous" of the popularity and effectiveness of his message
- All the persecution that follows Paul is caused by the Jews (note Luke's emphasis)
- Jason was evidently Paul's host in Thessalonica, as Lydia had been in Philippi
- He, along with Aristarchus (Col 4:10) and Secundus (20:4), appear to be among these new believers

6 When they did not find them, they *began* dragging Jason and some brothers before **the city authorities**, shouting, "**These men who have upset the world** have come here also;

6 When they did not find them, they *began* dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have upset the world have come here also;

6 When they didn't find them, they dragged Jason and some other brothers before the city officials and shouted, "These fellows who have turned the world upside down have come here, too,

6 And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;

- "...the city authorities" - politarchs, a title used only in Macedonia to describe city officials; only usage in Scripture
- Since this term was unknown elsewhere, critics of Luke (and biblical inerrancy) once dismissed the use of this word as a mark of ignorance
- There have now been 16 epigraphical examples in modern Salonica (one in the British Museum) on a stone that once formed part of an archway
- "...These men who have upset the world" - the greatest compliment ever paid to Christianity
- When true Christianity goes into action, it causes a revolution in both the life of the individual and in the life of society

7 and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus."

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7 and Jason has welcomed them as his guests. All of them oppose the emperor's decrees by saying that there is another king—Jesus!"

7 Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.

- The Jewish antagonists charged the missionaries with revolutionary teaching...that "another king—Jesus" would rule and reign (Cf. 1 Thess 3:13; 5:1-11; 2 Thess 1:5-10; 2:14)

8 They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things.

8 They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things.

8 The crowd and the city officials were upset when they heard this,

8 And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.

- Under the emperors, it was declared high treason to violate the majesty of the state.

9 And when they had **received a pledge** from Jason and the others, they released them.

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9 but after they had gotten a bond from Jason and the others, they let them go.

9 And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.

- "...received a pledge" - since the city officials could not find Paul and Silas to bring them to trial, they made Jason and his friends pay a bond to guarantee that Paul would not cause further trouble and leave town

— If trouble continued and Paul remained in town, Jason would lose his money

- Paul desired to stay, but did indeed leave town, and later wrote that Satan hindered his return (1 Thess 2:17-18)
- Timothy, whom Paul left at Philippi, was sent to them (1 Thess 3:5-7), and the Christians in Thessalonica carried on, for which Paul was thankful (1 Thess 1:7-10; 2:14-16)

(F) Berea (17:10-15)

**10** The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

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**10** That night the brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the Jewish synagogue.

**10** And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.

- For the second time, Paul fled a city under cover of "night" (Cf. 9:25; Matt 10:23); he and Silas left the *Via Egnatia*, at Thessalonica, and took the eastern coastal road toward Athens.
- They headed for Berea (modern Verria), a small out-of-the-way town in the foothills of the Olympic Mountains, about 45 miles west-southwest of Thessalonica
- Despite continued antagonism from the Jews, Paul and Silas launched their ministry here by again first visiting the synagogue

**11** Now these people were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they **received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily** to see whether these things were so.

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**11** These people were more receptive than those in Thessalonica. They were very willing to receive the message, and every day they carefully examined the Scriptures to see if those things were so.

**11** These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

- Unlike other locations, the Bereans did not react out of jealousy (Cf. v5), but listened carefully to what Paul preached and compared it to the teachings of their Hebrew Scriptures. They received Paul's message of the Gospel with humble sincerity instead of prejudice and hostility.

- Anyone who listens to new religious truth would do well to follow their example and compare the new truth with Scripture, as these Jews did
- Many of these skeptics believed because Paul's teaching was consistent with the OT
- Over and over, God instructs us to test things against prior revelation (Deut 13:1-5; Is 8:20; 1 Cor 14:29; Gal 1:8-9; 1 Thess 5:20-21; 1 John 4:1; Rev 2:2)
- "...received the word with great eagerness" - it's just as important to receive the Word with openness of mind as it is to search the Scriptures. A two-fold plan for Bible study.
- The ultimate barrier to truth is the presumption that you already have it
- "...examining the Scriptures daily" - Paul taught them doctrine, the Bereans listened, then they went (daily) back to the OT to see if what Paul was teaching them was contradictory to prior revelation (Cf. Deut 13:1-5; 1 Cor 14:29; Gal 1:8-9; 1 Thess 5:21; 1 John 4:1)
- Comparison of what Paul taught them to the OT Scriptures was how they determined the veracity/truthfulness of what Paul taught them
- If Paul had contradicted what God said in the OT, the Bereans would've disregarded his teachings. In fact, Luke commends the Bereans for doing this, stating that they were more noble than the Thessalonians.
- The Thessalonians were persuaded (by argument); the Bereans believed—spiritually apprehended, yet searched (like stalking game) (Cf. John 5:39)
- Without Scripture, we are lost in a sea of relativism...We do not read of any other city wherein he was given so fair a hearing, wherein people were so honest in seeking to know whether the Word was really in accordance with the Scripture or not

12 Therefore, many of them believed, along with a significant number of prominent Greek women and men.

12 Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men.

12 Many of them believed, including a large number of prominent Greek women and men.

12 Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

- Here there were "many" Jewish converts, rather than the usual "few" that resulted from Paul's preaching to Jews elsewhere

— Many Gentiles also believed (including Sopater, 20:4), along with a number of prominent women (Cf. v4)

13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there as well, agitating and stirring up the crowds.

13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there as well, agitating and stirring up the crowds.

13 But when the Jewish leaders in Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul also in Berea, they went there to upset and incite the crowds.

13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.

- After hearing of Paul's presence and preaching in Berea, the Thessalonian Jews followed him there, and used the same tactics they had used in Thessalonica (agitating the crowds) to force Paul to leave

— There was no hostility in Berea until hostile Thessalonian Jews arrived seeking vengeance after failing to capture Paul and Silas in their own city

— They charged the missionaries with stirring up trouble (v6), but it was them who were disturbing the peace

14 Then immediately the brothers sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there.

14 Then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there.

14 Then the brothers immediately sent Paul away to the coast, but Silas and Timothy stayed there.

14 And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still.

- Paul decided to go to Athens alone and leave Silas in Berea to help this new church, and send Timothy back to help the Thessalonian church

— Athens was 195 miles south-southwest of Berea

— Both Silas and Timothy rejoined Paul in Athens later, after leaving Berea (Cf. 1 Thess 3:1)

### **The Ministry in Achaia (17:16–18:17)**

15 Now those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they left.

15 Now those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they left.

15 The men who escorted Paul took him all the way to Athens and, after receiving instructions to have Silas and Timothy join him as soon as possible, they left.

15 And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed.

- The gospel expansion now moves into the pagan darkness that enveloped the province of Achaia (southern Greece)
  - New believers from Berea accompanied Paul to Athens, then returned home
  - Paul is likely weary at this point...fanatical opponents had forced him out of three consecutive cities just as the gospel was taking hold. The new believers he left behind obviously weighed heavy on this heart

(G) Athens (17:16-34)

(a) Paul reasoning in the synagogue (17:16-17)

**16** Now while Paul was waiting for them in Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he observed that the city was full of idols.

**16** Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols.

**16** While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, his spirit was deeply disturbed to see the city full of idols.

**16** Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

- Paul's spirit was stricken as he viewed the repulsive idolatry; he was in disbelief that the intellectual capital of the world at the time was producing such vulgar idolatry

At the time of Paul's visit to Athens, Corinth was the commercial and political center under the Roman Caesars. Athens belonged to province of Achaia, whose capital was Corinth. Athens was still the university center, heir to the great philosophers—the city of Pericles and Demosthenes; of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Sophocles and Euripides—men who established patterns of thought that have affected human learning for centuries. This was 400 years after the golden age of Greece, but still a center for art, beauty, culture, and knowledge.



Paul was left alone (Luke left in Thessalonica; Silas and Timothy left in Berea). He sent for Silas and Timothy (heading for Corinth). When Timothy arrives, he is immediately sent back to Thessalonica (1 Thess 3:1-2).

17 So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing **Gentiles**, and in the **marketplace** every day with those who happened to be present.

17 So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing **Gentiles**, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present.

17 So he began holding discussions in the synagogue with the Jews and other worshipers, as well as every day in the public square with anyone who happened to be there.

17 Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.

- Even in the heart of Greece, Paul's first stop was the Jewish synagogue

— He daily ministered to the Jews and God-fearing Greeks in the synagogue, but also discussed the gospel with any who wanted to do so in the "market"

— "...marketplace" - *agora*, street preaching; in the Greek Empire, public discourse and debate was encouraged and many cities had designated places set aside for this purpose

— The *agora* was the center of civic life in Athens, where philosophers gathered to discuss and debate their views

— Paul's preaching in the market brought him to the attention of the Areopagus, a council of Athenian officials named for the place they met (the Romans called it Mars Hill)

— These officials were intrigued by Paul's preaching of the gospel and a few of them became believers

- (b) Paul's speech on Mars Hill (17:18-34)
  - (i) Paul brought to Mars Hill (17:18-20)

18 And some of the **Epicurean** and **Stoic** philosophers as well were conversing with him. Some were saying, "What could this **scavenger of tidbits** want to say?" Others, "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.

18 And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, "What would this idle babbler wish to say?" Others, "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.

18 Some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also debated with him. Some asked, "What is this blabbermouth trying to say?" while others said, "He seems to be preaching about foreign gods." This was because Paul was telling the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.

18 Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.

- "...Epicurean" - disciples of Epicurus (341-270 BC), who believed that pleasure was the greatest good and the most worthy pursuit of man. They define pleasure in the sense of tranquility and freedom from pain, disquieting passions, and fears, especially the fear of death.
- These were atheistic materialists; the universe is the product of chance; they denied God's existence and life after death
- More sober disciples interpreted in a refined sense; they were not hedonistic but existentialists, living for the experience of the moment
- Epicurus taught that the gods took no interest in human affairs. Thus organized religion was bad, and the gods would not punish evildoers in the afterlife.
- "...Stoic" - Stoics followed the teaching of Zeno the Cypriot (340-265 BC)
- The term comes from *stoa*, a particular portico where he taught when he lived in Athens
- His followers placed great importance on living in harmony with nature. They stressed individual self-sufficiency and rationalism, and they had a reputation for being quite arrogant.
- Stoics were pantheists, who believed that God is in everything, and everything is God. They were also fatalistic. This teaching is also common today.
- "...scavenger of tidbits" - *spermologos*, refers to someone who picked up the words of others as a bird picks up seeds
- The term implies that Paul had put together a philosophy of life simply by picking up various ideas from various sources

— Others accused him of proclaiming "strange gods"; they likely misunderstood his references to Jesus' resurrection

19 And they took him and brought him to the **Areopagus**, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming?"

19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming?"

19 Then they took him, brought him before the Areopagus, and asked, "May we know what this new teaching of yours is?"

19 And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?

- "...Areopagus" - Areios Pagos, Court of Ares, the Greek god of war

— This term was used in two different ways by the Greeks in Luke's day:

(1) To the Hill of Ares (i.e. Mars Hill), on which the Council of the Areopagus conducted its business in ancient times

(2) It also referred to the group of about 30 citizens, known as the Council of Areopagus, who met in the Royal Portico of the Agora

— The question here is: Does the Areopagus refer to the people (2) or the place (1)?

20 For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean."

20 For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean."

20 It sounds rather strange to our ears, and we would like to know what it means."

20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.

- The Council of the Areopagus had authority over religion, morals, and education in Athens. Its members wanted to know what Paul was advocating.

— The enemies of Socrates poisoned him for teaching strange ideas in Athens, so Paul was in some danger

#### (ii) Paul's sermon (17:21-31)

21 (Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.)

21 (Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.)

21 Now all the Athenians and the foreigners living there used to spend their time doing nothing else other than listening to the latest ideas or repeating them.

21 (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)

- Luke provided this background to help the reader understand Athenian culture at the time, namely how attractive new ideas or thoughts were to Athenians at the time

— The whole atmosphere in Athens was very much like a university, the public pastime was to exchange ideas and traffic in new thoughts

22 So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I see that you are very religious in all respects.

22 So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects.

22 So Paul stood up in front of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I see that you are very religious in every way.

22 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

- Paul was stating the fact that they were firm in their reverence for their gods

— Paul begins where the people are...he did not denounce them, did not attack their idolatry; you are "extremely devout," "very god-fearing" (Cf. 1 Cor 9:22)

Paul's speech is a model for sharing the gospel today. His pattern gets directly to the hearts of those immersed in cultures that exalt religious experiences or intellectualism while denying the reality of a personal creator God, the Biblical Jesus, and the horrible consequences of sin.

23 For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore, what you worship in **ignorance**, this I proclaim to you.

23 For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.

23 For as I was walking around and looking closely at the objects you worship, I even found an altar with this written on it: 'To an unknown god.' So I am telling you about the unknown object you worship.

23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

- An altar to the Unknown god: how this voices the agony of humanity!

- "...ignorance" - "not knowing Him"

- Paul begins with their confessed ignorance about at least one "god" and proceeded to explain what Yahweh had revealed about Himself (Cf. John 4:10; 7:37)

— He starts the conversation by finding common ground

24 The God who made the world and everything that is in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made by hands;

24 The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands;

24 The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth. He doesn't live in shrines made by human hands,

24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

- This "true God" made all things; He is transcendent over all (Cf. 7:48-50)

- God does not live in temples made with hands. Paul probably pointed to the Parthenon, home of Athene, the goddess for whom the city was named

— He is the Giver, without needs Himself—neither buildings for worship, nor priest to minister with human hands

25 nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things;

25 nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things;

25 and he isn't served by people as if he needed anything. He himself gives everyone life, breath, and everything else.

25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

- This "God" also sustains all of creation, and does not need people to sustain Him

— In other words, He is imminent as well as transcendent; He participates in human existence

Paul's point, as in Rom 2:14-16, is that God has revealed some knowledge of Himself and His will to all men, but that this has been clarified and illuminated by His special revelation through the Scriptures and now finally in the Gospel.

26 and He made from **one man** every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, **havingdetermined** *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,

26 and He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,

26 From one man he made every nation of humanity to live all over the earth, fixing the seasons of the year and the national boundaries within which they live,

26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

- "...one *man*" - one source (Adam), one species (human beings)
- The Athenians prided themselves on being racially superior, but Paul told them that they, like all other people, descended from one source. This fact excludes the possibility of superiority of any race and completely undermines the notion of racism.
- "...having determined" - God also determines the "times" of nations—their seasons, when they rise and fall, and their boundaries
- God is sovereign over the political and military affairs of nations; this contradicted Greek thought that they determined their own destiny
- This opposes both Stoical fate and Epicurean chance, ascribing to periods and localities His sovereign will and prearrangements (Cf. Dan 2:21)

27 that they would seek God, if perhaps they might **feel around** for Him and find *Him*, though He is not far from each one of us;

27 that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;

27 so that they might look for God, somehow reach for him, and find him. Of course, he is never far from any one of us.

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:

- God's purpose for regulating times and boundaries was so that people would realize His sovereignty and seek Him (Cf. Rom 1; John 6:44; 12:32)
- "...feel around" - *psēlaphaō*, reach for, feel for, grasp; only NT occurrence; God is searchable (Jer 29:13-14; Heb 11:6)
- God is not far from human contact

28 for in Him we **live and move and exist**, as even some of your own poets have said, '**For we also are His descendants!**'

28 for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.'

28 For we live, move, and exist because of him, as some of your own poets have said: '... Since we are his children, too.'

28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

- Paul quoted lines from two Greek writers who expressed ideas that were consistent with divine revelation:
- "...live and move and exist" - quoted from Epimenides, 606 BC (also quoted in Titus 1:12)

- "...For we also are His descendants" - quoted from Aratus (315-240 BC), a Cilician poet, and Cleanthes (331-233 BC), a celebrated Stoic who taught at Athens
- Paul's purpose in citing these two quotations was to get his audience to continue to agree with him about the truth

29 Therefore, since we are the descendants of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by human skill and thought.

29 Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man.

29 So if we are God's children, we shouldn't think that the divine being is like gold, silver, or stone, or is an image carved by humans using their own imagination and skill.

29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

- Paul's conclusion was that idolatry, therefore, is illogical: if God created people, then God cannot be an image, an idol, or made of gold, silver or stone

— Paul is claiming that God's divine nature is essentially spiritual rather than material

30 So having overlooked the **times of ignorance**, God is now proclaiming to mankind that **all people everywhere** are to **repent**,

30 Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that *all people* everywhere should repent,

30 Though God has overlooked those times of ignorance, he now commands everyone everywhere to repent,

30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:

- "...times of ignorance" - before Christ came, God did not view people as being as guilty as He does now, since Christ has come

— People before were guilty of failing to respond to former revelation, but now they are more guilty, in view of the greater revelation that Jesus Christ brought at His incarnation (Cf. Heb 1:1-2)

— God "winked at" ("overlooked," ISV) the "times of ignorance" (when people had only limited revelation, Cf. 3:17; 14:16; Rom 3:25; 2 Peter 3:9) in a relative sense only. He could do that because Jesus' death didn't just pay for future sin, but for all past sin all the way back to Adam & Eve. This is how Abraham could be "credited" with righteousness 2000 years before Christ's death (Gen 15:6).

- "...all people everywhere" - universal character of Christianity; aimed at everyone

- "...repent" - when used in a justification context, "repentance" is always understood to be a synonym for "faith" (Cf. 2 Peter 3:9)

[Rom 3:25]

Before the Incarnation, people died as unbelievers and were lost, but now there is more light. Consequently people's guilt is greater this side of the Incarnation. Obviously many people have not heard the gospel, and are as ignorant of the greater revelation of God that Jesus Christ brought, as were people who lived before the Incarnation. Nevertheless they live in a time when God has revealed more of Himself than previously. Therefore God demands that "all people everywhere should repent."

31 because He has set a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all people by raising Him from the dead."

31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

31 because he has set a day when he is going to judge the world with justice through a man whom he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead."

31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

- True knowledge of God encourages repentance because it contains information about coming judgment
- The proof of Jesus' qualifications to judge humanity was His resurrection
- The resurrection vindicated His claims about Himself (i.e. His claim to be the Judge of all mankind, John 5:22,25-29)

### **Paul's Speech**

- The Greatness of God: He is Creator (v24)
- The Goodness of God: He is Provider (v25)
- The Government of God: He is Ruler (v26-29)
- The Grace of God: He is Savior (v30-34)

### **Three Key Points**

- (1) Inescapable day: God has fixed as the time when He will judge the world
- (2) Unchallengeable judge
- (3) Irrefutable fact: The resurrection

(iii) Mixed response (17:32-34)

**32** Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some *began* to scoff, but others said, "We shall hear from you again concerning this."

**32** Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some *began* to sneer, but others said, "We shall hear you again concerning this."

**32** When they heard about a resurrection of the dead, some began joking about it, while others said, "We will hear you again about this."

**32** And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.

- Most Greeks rejected the possibility of physical resurrection

— Most believed that it was most desirable beyond the grave, when the soul would be free of the body

— Mocking is always the defense of pride

**33** So Paul went out from among them.

**33** So Paul went out of their midst.

**33** And so Paul left the meeting.

**33** So Paul departed from among them.

- Paul had no patience with intellectual flippancy and moral dishonesty

**34** But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were **Dionysius** the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris, and **others** with them.

**34** But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

**34** Some men joined him and became believers. With them were Dionysius, who was a member of the Areopagus, a woman named Damaris, and some others along with them.

**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.

- "...Dionysius" - a member of the Council of Areogagus that had examined Paul

— Tradition and non-Biblical sources state he presided over the flock at Athens

— "...others" - Paul later wrote that the household of Stephanas was the firstfruits of Achaia (1 Cor 16:15), so he and his household may have been included in this group

— In the next century, the Church at Athens gave us Publius, Quadratus, Aristides, Athenagoras, and other bishops, martyrs

— In the 4th Century, it gave us Basil and Gregory

The church that Paul founded in Greece was the lineal predecessor of the Greek Orthodox Church, which has now become sunken in apathy, liturgy, ritual, and dead orthodoxy, and is

now persecuting the fresh, alive evangelical church in those areas.