

HE COMMANDS ALL PEOPLE EVERYWHERE TO REPENT

1) V 21 of Acts 17:

- a) *All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.*
 - i) Had Paul come to Athens when there was an election looming?

2) V 16 tells us the problem is idolatry.

- a) The human condition: people that worship and serve the creation rather than the creator (Romans 1:25). Could be the physical world. Could be worshipping and serving others. Could be worshipping and serving yourself.
- b) The heart of idolatry is ignoring God.

3) Acts 17 is about how God responds to our ignoring him. V 30:

- a) *In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.*
 - i) The 'past' is the era before Jesus' death and resurrection.
 - ii) The 'now' is the era that has come about since he died, was raised to life, and now rules as the risen, ascended Lord.

4) According to v 16, Paul is distressed by idolatry. According to v 30, God is offended by idolatry.

- a) Everyone will be called to account. Everyone is called to repent. To turn from ignorance to acceptance. From worshipping the creation to worshipping the creator.

5) What is your response to the world you inhabit today? Your first reaction?

- a) Write people off? Point the finger with your moral compass?
- b) Retreat. For fear of offending with the call to repent?
- c) Protect yourself from exposure to idolatry?

6) Acts 17 calls us to have confidence in the resurrection.

- a) Sharing the gospel doesn't begin with our ability, but with God's initiative:
 - i) He has acted in raising Christ from the dead. And appointing him as Lord. V 31:

(1) For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."

7) What does confidence in the resurrection of Christ look like?

- a) Luke the writer shows how Paul the evangelist approaches preaching about Jesus in the resurrection
 - i) Vv 16-21 addresses a world that ignores God: the connect with *culture*
 - ii) Vv 22-28 addresses a world that God does not ignore: the connect with *the creator*

God commands all people everywhere to repent because of the risen Lord Jesus' coming judgment.

- iii) Vv 29-34 is the application Paul explains: Stop ignoring God: the connect with *our convictions*

IGNORING GOD (vv 16-21)

1) Paul the Apostle. Paul the opportunist. (v 16)

- a) Paul is in Athens because of his preaching the gospel. After Jews in Thessalonica come to oppose his preaching in Berea (16:13-14) he is sent to Athens.
- b) Paul's confidence lies not in his ability, but in the resurrection of Jesus
 - i) Humanly speaking, many of his missions seem like failures!
 - ii) Ends up in prison. Beaten. Arrested. Ejected. Some ability!

2) Who was ignoring God? (v 17-18a)

- a) Jews and God-fearing Greeks in the synagogue: the religious
- b) Others in the market-place: the religious and the irreligious
 - i) Included the Philosophers: the **Epicureans** and the **Stoics**
 - (1) **Epicureans:**
 - (a) world of chance; random concourse of atoms; no survival beyond death; no judgment
 - (b) Live a life of pleasure detached from pain, passion and fear: 'live between the atoms'
 - (c) **'New atheists' sound like the 'Old Epicureans'**
 - (2) **Stoics:**
 - (a) 'Philosophers of the Porch'
 - (b) God is the world's soul; the world is subject to fate
 - (c) Pursue your duty; live in harmony with nature and reason whatever the cost; develop self-sufficiency
- c) Paul comes speaking about confidence in Jesus and his resurrection
 - i) Life is not random; self-sufficiency is not the goal
 - ii) Through his death and resurrection, Jesus is Lord

3) What were they saying? (vv 18-21b)

- a) "Sure that makes perfect sense!" V 18:
 - i) ***"What is this babbler trying to say?" "He seems to be advocating foreign gods."***
 - ii) V 19: what is this ***'new teaching'***?
 - iii) V 20: ***"you are bringing some strange ideas to our ears"?***

GOD DOES NOT IGNORE US (vv 22-28)

1) Paul says even though we ignore God, God does not ignore us!

God commands all people everywhere to repent because of the risen Lord Jesus' coming judgment.

- b) V 22. the Athenians are very religious
 - i) An observation, not a commendation
 - c) V 23: the Athenians are very ignorant
 - i) At least they acknowledge their own ignorance
 - ii) **Most people deny their own ignorance!**
 - (1) "Doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you're sincere"
 - (2) "If it's true for you it's true"
 - iii) **Many develop their ignorance: Hugh Mackay's recent work 'Beyond Belief': "Jesus never told anyone what to believe in. He only told us how to treat each other."**
 - (1) **Mackay needs to return to the bible. I must say his title 'Beyond Belief' sums up my reaction to his book.**
- 4) **What is God like? Paul's next step in his message about Jesus and the resurrection.**
- a) V 24: God is **creator**
 - i) Does not dwell in temples
 - ii) Not served by humanity as if he needs anything
 - b) V 25: God is **sustainer**
 - i) Gives life and breath to everything = common grace
 - c) V 26: he is the **ruler of the universe**
 - i) Allots our years and the places we live
 - d) V 28: he is the **'father'** of us all.
 - i) Paul quotes 'secular sources'
 - (1) 'In him we move and have our being': Epimenedes: 6th century Cretan poet
 - (2) ' We are indeed his offspring': Aratus: 3rd century Stoic poet
 - ii) We have dignity and purpose from being made in God's image (Gen 1:26-27)
 - e) **We were made to seek him out. Can't come to him on our terms!**

STOP IGNORING GOD (vv 29-34)

1) What has God done? (vv 30-31)

- f) No longer *overlooks* ignorance
 - i) Commands repentance: **God will judge ALL**
 - ii) Fixed a day for judgment in righteousness: **God will judge with JUSTICE**
 - iii) Assures us by appointing the resurrected Jesus as judge: **God WILL judge**

2) What do we do? (vv 32-34)

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a) The original hearers?

- i) Believe = repent
- ii) Hear more = seek
- iii) Mock = reject

b) The original readers?

- i) Luke's apologetic for the history and spread of the gospel: Acts 1:8
 - (1) Paul's mission to the Gentiles fulfils God's promises
 - (a) Epistles to the churches
 - (2) The Roman world was not a threat to the hope of the gospel because of the Jesus and the resurrection
 - (3) Understand the variable response: always a work of grace!

c) Us?

- i) **An apologetic: God keeps his promises. Acts 1:8.**
 - (1) **The power of the gospel to save: Romans 1:16-17.**
- ii) **A method: culture – creator – conviction: Jesus and the resurrection**
 - (1) **John Chapman and his friend.**
- iii) **Understand the variable response cf. the parable of the sower**
 - (1) **Always a work of grace: unconverted family & friends!**
- iv) **The 21st century world is not a threat to the hope of the gospel because of Jesus and the resurrection!**
- v) **Be confident in that which counts on the last day**
- vi) **Be an opportunist: Paul 'while waiting'**
- vii) **Be a consistent witness to the hope of Jesus' resurrection in your own life**
 - (1) **A conviction, not just a methodology**
 - (a) **'stay alive' through the grace of the resurrected Christ**
- i) **Pray. Meet. Set an example of what you already know and am persuaded**
- viii) **Idolatry has life & death implications.**
 - (1) **The captain who knew about emergency procedures, yet still listened!**

For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.