

Getting To Know The Unknown God

Acts 17:22-31

Acts 17:22-31 - So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. 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. 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; 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; 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, 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; for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.' 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. Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, 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."

Introduction:

- A. It is interesting that the more things change, the more they remain the same. Some 2000 years ago, the apostle Paul was waiting for his companions in Athens when he discovered an altar the people had erected which read, "to the unknown god." Because of this and their invitation to speak at the Areopagus, he had the opportunity to tell them of the true God.
- B. The text tells us that Athens was wholly given to idolatry (vs. 16), had a synagogue of the Jews (vs. 17) and that many in the city were eager to hear anything that they considered different or "new" (vs. 21).
- C. As Paul spoke on Mars Hill that day, he declared three fundamental facts about the God of Heaven..

I. The Power Of God Is So Great

- A. His power created "the world and all things in it" - Acts 17:24
 - 1. His creation includes man - Acts 17:26
 - 2. Man did not evolve
- B. His creation declares His power universally - Rom. 1:20; Psa. 19:1-3

Romans 1:20 - For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

Psalms 19:1-3 - The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; Their voice is not heard.

- C. His power controls and sustains His creation - Acts 17:25, 28

Acts 17:25 - 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;

Acts 17:28 - for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.'

1. The elements are subject to Him - Matt. 5:45; 8:27; 2 Pet 3:6

Matthew 5:45 - so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Matthew 8:27 - The men were amazed, and said, "What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"

2 Peter 3:5-6 - For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God...the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water.

2. The universe is kept in store by His power - 2 Pet 3:7

2 Peter 3:7 - But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

D. His power is self-sustaining - Acts 17:25

1. We need Him
2. Not the other way around

II. *The Presence Of God Is Unlimited*

A. He is not limited by space (vs. 24); Cf. 1 Kings 8:27; 2 Chron. 2:6

1 Kings 8:27 - "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built!

2 Chronicles 2:6 - "But who is able to build a house for Him, for the heavens and the highest heavens cannot contain Him? So who am I, that I should build a house for Him, except to burn incense before Him?"

1. His presence is not confined to any locality - Isa. 66:1-2; Acts 7:48-49

Isaiah 66:1-2 - Thus says the LORD, "Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest? For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being," declares the LORD. "But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.

Acts 7:48-49 - "However, the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands; as the prophet says: 49 'HEAVEN IS MY THRONE, AND EARTH IS THE FOOTSTOOL OF MY FEET; WHAT KIND OF HOUSE WILL YOU BUILD FOR ME?' says the Lord, 'OR WHAT PLACE IS THERE FOR MY REPOSE?'"

2. His presence cannot be escaped by us - Psa. 139:1-10; Jonah 1:34

Psalms 139:1-10 - O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, And are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, O LORD, You know it all. You have enclosed me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is too high, I cannot attain to it. Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me.

Jonah 1:17 - And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah, and Jonah was in the stomach of

the fish three days and three nights.

a. We can escape Him in a sense of fellowship and approval -2 Jno. 9-11; Cf. Eph. 2:13, 17; Jas. 4:8

2 John 1:13 - The children of your chosen sister greet you.

Ephesians 2:13 - But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Ephesians 2:17 - AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR;

James 4:8 - Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

b. No evil hidden from Him

B. He is not limited by time - Isa. 57:15; Psa. 90:2; 2 Pet 3:8

Isaiah 57:15 - For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, "I dwell on a high and holy place, And also with the contrite and lowly of spirit In order to revive the spirit of the lowly And to revive the heart of the contrite.

Psalms 90:2 - Before the mountains were born Or You gave birth to the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

2 Peter 3:8 - But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.

III. *The Plan Of God Is For All Mankind*

A. He has a present plan for all men - Acts 17:30

Acts 17:30 - "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent,

1. All nations to have repentance and remission preached - Lk 24:47; Acts 2:38

Luke 24:47 - and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

Acts 2:38 - Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

2. All men are accepted on the basis - Acts 10:34-35

Acts 10:34-35 - Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him.

3. All men are accepted (reconciled to Him) in one body - Eph. 2:16; Acts 2:47

Ephesians 2:16 - and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

Acts 2:47 - praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

B. He has a future plan for all men - the judgment - Acts 17:31

Acts 17:31 - 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."

Conclusion:

- A. How much do you really respect God's power - enough to place complete confidence in Him?
- B. How much do you really respect God's presence; enough to never feel alone? Enough to deter "secret" sin?
- C. How much do you really respect God's plan - enough to humbly obey it?