

March 6, 2016

Beyond the Walls – Acts 17

Acts 17:1-34

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Vol. 6 Num. 10

Using This Study

❶ EXAMINE His Word

What does God SAY? Open your time with prayer. The words God uses to communicate matters, so go back and pay close attention to the details that are emphasized or repeated in the passage.

❷ EXPLORE His Word

What does God MEAN? Asking questions of the text helps surface how the details relate to the message God wants to communicate.

❸ EMBRACE His Word

Why does it MATTER to me? Embrace God by responding to what you discover in His word in faith and obedience.

24 THE GOD WHO MADE THE WORLD AND EVERYTHING IN IT, WHO IS LORD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH, DOES NOT LIVE IN TEMPLES MADE BY HUMAN HANDS, 25 NOR IS HE SERVED BY HUMAN HANDS, AS IF HE NEEDED ANYTHING, BECAUSE HE HIMSELF GIVES LIFE AND BREATH AND EVERYTHING TO EVERYONE. ACTS 17:24-25

In Acts 17, we see Paul continuing his quest to share the gospel with all people across the world. Despite the setbacks that he faces from the Jews in Thessalonica, he continues to share the gospel. When he arrives in Athens, he is confronted with a new culture, and a new dynamic when it comes to sharing the gospel. The philosophers in Athens did not know that there was only one true God, creator of all things. Paul resourcefully uses the culture around him to engage the philosophers, and share not only the truth that there is one God, creator of all things, but also that He has sent Jesus to be the sacrifice for our rebellion.



Read Acts 17:1-34 (NET)

¹ After they traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. ² Paul went to the Jews in the synagogue, as he customarily did, and on three Sabbath days he addressed them from the scriptures, ³ explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and to rise from the dead, saying, "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ." ⁴ Some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large group of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women.

⁵ But the Jews became jealous, and gathering together some worthless men from the rabble in the marketplace, they formed a mob and set the city in an uproar. They attacked Jason's house, trying to find Paul and Silas to bring them out to the assembly. ⁶ When they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city officials, screaming, "These people who have stirred up trouble throughout the world have come here too, ⁷ and Jason has welcomed them as guests! They are all acting against Caesar's decrees, saying there is another king named Jesus!" ⁸ They caused confusion among the crowd and the city officials who heard these things. ⁹ After the city officials had received bail from Jason and the others, they released them.

¹⁰ The brothers sent Paul and Silas off to Berea at once, during the night. When they arrived, they went to the Jewish synagogue. ¹¹ These Jews were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they eagerly received the message, examining the scriptures carefully every day to see if these things were so.

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

¹³ But when the Jews from Thessalonica heard that Paul had also proclaimed the word of God in Berea, they came there too, inciting and disturbing the crowds. ¹⁴ Then the brothers sent Paul away to the coast at once, but Silas and Timothy remained in Berea. ¹⁵ Those who accompanied Paul escorted him as far as Athens, and after receiving an order for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they left.

¹⁶ While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, his spirit was greatly upset because he saw the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he was addressing the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles in the synagogue, and in the marketplace every day those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ Also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him, and some were asking, "What does this foolish babbler want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods." (They said this because he was proclaiming the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.) ¹⁹ So they took Paul and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are proclaiming? ²⁰ For you are bringing some surprising things to our ears, so we want to know what they mean." ²¹ (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there used to spend their time in nothing else than telling or listening to something new.)

²² So Paul stood before the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I see that you are very religious in all respects. ²³ For as I went around and observed closely your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: 'To an unknown god.' Therefore what you worship without knowing it, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it, who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by human hands, ²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives life and breath and everything to everyone. ²⁶ From one man he made every nation of the human race to inhabit the entire earth, determining their set times and the fixed limits of the places where they would live, ²⁷ so that they would search for God and perhaps grope around for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

²⁸ For in him we live and move about and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.' ²⁹ So since we are God's offspring, we should not think the deity is like gold or silver or stone, an image made by human skill and imagination.

³⁰ Therefore, although God has overlooked such times of ignorance, he now commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he

has set a day on which he is going to judge the world in righteousness, by a man whom he designated, having provided proof to everyone by raising him from the dead.”

³² Now when they heard about the resurrection from the dead, some began to scoff, but others said, “We will hear you again about this.” ³³ So

Paul left the Areopagus. ³⁴ But some people joined him and believed. Among them were Dionysius, who was a member of the Areopagus, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

EXAMINE His Word (Observation) (For personal preparation)

What does God SAY? Prayerfully note significant details and terms emphasized in the foregoing passages.

1. Who is involved in the text? Author, audience, main characters.
2. Where and when is this taking place? Geography and timeline.
3. What actions are carried out or commanded? Look for the verbs.
4. Is there anything repeated?
5. What is emphasized?
6. Is there anything in these passages that is related to other areas of scripture?

7. Are there things to be noted that are alike or unlike such as similes and metaphors?

② **EXPLORE His Word (Interpretation)** (For Community Group discussion)

What does God MEAN?

8. In verses 2 and 3, it says that Paul explained from the scriptures that Christ had to suffer, die and rise again. What parts of the Old Testament could Paul have used to explain this?

9. Why do you think the Jews in Thessalonica became jealous of Paul? Why were they not excited about the Christ that has come?

10. Why were the philosophers in verses 18 and 19 interested in what Paul had to say?

11. Why was Jason persecuted in verse 6?

12. In verse 23, why do you think Paul talks about the idol to the unknown god?

③ EMBRACE His Word (Application) (For Community Group discussion)

Why does this MATTER to me?

13. Do you think it is easier to share about Jesus with people that are in another religion or people that don't have a religion? Why? Give some of your reasons.

14. In Athens, Paul uses the culture to get the attention of the people by mentioning the unknown god. How can we use our culture today to bring up conversations about God? Are there things in our culture we should not use?

15. In Athens Paul starts with the truth that there is one God, creator of all things. Is it important today that we start with this truth when sharing the gospel?

Summarize your thoughts on the passage

Write about what God wants you to KNOW, to FEEL, and to DO...

SERMON NOTES