



Acts Chapter 17 Paul At Athens

As we move into Acts chapter 17 we're going to begin to see the Apostle Paul begin to move into one of the most Pagan places on the earth at that time. As we've said before in this study... when the Romans would take over a town, village, city, or nation... it would allow that town, village, city, or nation to keep worshipping it's gods as it pleased... As long as there were no riots in the streets, and the worship was peaceful, and that religion did not intrude on Cesar as King over the land... it was accepted.... and so it was that the Roman empire was rampant with all kinds of different Gods.

Athens was so full of pagan gods at the time that Peterronius, one of the ancient historians, said that it was easier to find a god in Athens.. than it was to find a man, and some biblical scholars calculate approximately thirty thousand different gods were being worshiped at that time.

Athens was about 400 years past the golden age of Greece, but it was still the center of art, beauty, culture, and knowledge, and even though the city had lost all political importance, it was predominately a Pagan culture that Paul had wondered into alone.

So before we get to far ahead of ourselves... lets read Acts chapter 17 so that we can get a clear picture of how the story actually unfolds:

Act 17:1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

*Act 17:2 And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on **three Sabbath days** he reasoned with them from the Scriptures,*

Act 17:3 explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ."

*Act 17:4 And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did **a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women.***

*Act 17:5 But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and **attacked the house of Jason**, seeking to bring them out to the crowd.*

Act 17:6 And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers

before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also,

Act 17:7 and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus."

Act 17:8 And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things.

Act 17:9 And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

Act 17:10 The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue.

Act 17:11 Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

Act 17:12 Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.

Act 17:13 But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was proclaimed by Paul at Berea also, they came there too, agitating and stirring up the crowds.

Act 17:14 Then the brothers immediately sent Paul off on his way to the sea, but Silas and Timothy remained there.

Act 17:15 Those who conducted Paul brought him as far as Athens, and after receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they departed.

Act 17:16 Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols.

Act 17:17 So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.

Act 17:18 Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, "What does this babbler wish to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.

Act 17:19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?"

Act 17:20 For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean."

Act 17:21 Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

Act 17:22 So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious.

Act 17:23 For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.

Act 17:24 The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man,

Act 17:25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

Act 17:26 And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place,

Act 17:27 that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us,

Act 17:28 for "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring."

Act 17:29 Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.

Act 17:30 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent,

Act 17:31 because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

Act 17:32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this."

Act 17:33 So Paul went out from their midst.

Act 17:34 But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

So when Paul gets to Thesolonica... he goes into the synagogue that he finds there as he usually does and he reasons with them for three Sabbath days... that's three weeks that Paul stays with them and try's to explain to them who their Messiah was, and of course he uses the scriptures to prove to them who their Messiah was.

And to get a better idea of what Paul was telling them we can go to the book of Thessalonians to see what that gathering was like and what was going on there, but for times sake we'll continue to move forward here in Acts chapter 17... you can read the book of Thessalonians later to get a better picture. What we want to understand here is that there was a following in Thesolonica, and that's important to notice.

And so we see that a great many of the devout Greeks along with quite a few of the women that there there believed and began to follow Paul... that is once again... until the Jews became angry and gathered together what Luke calls "some wicked men of the rabble".

Now I think it's pretty easy to understand what Luke is talking about here when he says that these angry Jews gathered some of the wicked men of the rabble to rise up against Paul.

Here in the United states we have plenty of these “wicked men of the rabble”... these are usually young uneducated, naive men who are easily lead to do wicked things because they are.. young and uneducated, and naive.

We've seen these kinds of young men every time there's a riot somewhere even here in the Untied States. These young rabble rousers who love to destroy businesses and set things on fire, and turn over police cars and so on and so fourth.. and it's not hard to get them to rise up and reek havoc over almost anything....because most of the the time they've got nothing else better to do... and so it was in Paul's time as well.

And so these angry Jews get these young “Rabble Rousers” to do their dirty work for them just like many of today's politicians get these kinds of young uneducated men to do their dirty work for them.. and they get them to riot in the streets for a cause that most of the time doesn't even really exist... and we almost always find out in the end... that it's just a political move to divide people and to keep them away from the truth. And so it was in Paul's time.

Jason was the host... of Paul and Silas.. and I just want to make a point here before we move on... Jason was most likely a kinsmen or relative of Paul... and I say that because Paul alludes to that very fact in Romans chapter 16 verse 21.... and so when they couldn't find Paul and Silas they drug Jason and some of the brothers out of the house and took them before the authorities.

Act 17:6 And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also,

Act 17:7 and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus."

And I want us to pay particular attention to verse 6 where these angry Jews proclaim that “these men who have turned the world upside down have come here also”.

You see this movement called “The Way” was a big deal all over the territory... and the Gospel message was spreading like wildfire so it's pretty clear in this passage that they had already heard the Gospel message at least in part even before Paul had gotten there.

And so once again... what do they do?... they lie... just like they always do in every city... they continuously try to stick to this false narrative that the Apostles are proclaiming another King other than Caesar when Yahshua himself already explained to Pilot that this was not his kingdom... his kingdom was in Heaven... so the idea that Yahshua Jesus was going to come to

earth and replace Cesar was actually the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Yes Yahshua Jesus is our King, but it's even written in the Word of God that we are to obey the laws of men as long as they don't over-write the laws of our Father in Heaven... and even Yahshua himself made this clear to Pilot, and even Pilot found no reason to find him guilty of treason.

Joh 18:33 So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"

Joh 18:34 Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?"

Joh 18:35 Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?"

Joh 18:36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world."

Joh 18:37 Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."

Joh 18:38 Pilate said to him, "What is truth?" After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, "I find no guilt in him."

So clearly even Pilate saw no danger of Yahshua Jesus taking the place of Caesar as king... and yet this lie is the lie that the non believing Jews used time and time again to once again get the Apostles in trouble and to get the authorities to hand them over to the Romans to be persecuted.

THE UNBELIEVING JEWS:

Now with that being said... we've spoken a lot about Judaism, and it's Halakah and it's "Talmud" and it's many different man made, man created, man fabricated laws that our Messiah was so angry with them about in the 23rd chapter of Matthew...

And again... I want us to see, know, and understand who these non believing Jews are and what our Father says about them... so lets take a quick look at Jeremiah chapter 3 verse 8.

Jer 3:8 She saw that for all the adulteries of that faithless one, Israel, I had sent her away with a decree of divorce. Yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but she too went and played the whore.

Jer 3:9 Because she took her whoredom lightly, she polluted the land, committing adultery with stone and tree.

Jer 3:10 Yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to me with her whole heart,

but in pretense, declares the LORD."

Clearly... we can see here in Jeremiah that it was prophesied by our Father that Judah would not return to him with her whole heart but rather only in pretense would they return... still not believing in the Messiah that he had sent them... according to scripture...and we can see this in other places in scripture as well, and I'll show you that as we move forward.

So we know that Judah according to our Father in Heaven was seen as "treacherous" and she was also seen as a "whore" who was no better than the Northern Kingdom that God had divorced and dispersed into the four corners of the earth... and Judah is also seen by our Father as not returning to him with her whole heart even when she did return.

To many Christians run to Judaism when they find out that Christ-Mas, and "Good Friday" and "Easter" and "Valentines Day" and all this nonsense is nothing more than lies that men who come out of these denominational charters of modern day Christendom have taught them.

But we need to understand that our Father is not going to restore the House of Israel because they deserve it... he's not going to restore the House of Israel because of their obedience or because of their faith, or because they're teaching and preaching the truth.. because they're not... at least not most of them.... and so you might ask... well then why is God going to restore the House of Israel?

God is going to bring back and restore the House of Israel not because Israel or Judah deserves it... or because they have done anything to earn it...but rather our Father is going to restore them in order to vindicate his holy name.

Eze 36:22 "Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came.

Eze 36:23 And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.

Eze 36:24 I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land.

Eze 36:25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.

Eze 36:26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

Eze 36:27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

Eze 36:28 You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Eze 36:29 And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. And I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you.

Eze 36:30 I will make the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field abundant, that you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations.

Eze 36:31 Then you will remember your evil ways, and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves for your iniquities and your abominations.

Eze 36:32 It is not for your sake that I will act, declares the Lord GOD; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel.

Eze 36:33 "Thus says the Lord GOD: On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be rebuilt.

Eze 36:34 And the land that was desolate shall be tilled, instead of being the desolation that it was in the sight of all who passed by.

And there's much more to know and understand here but I wanted to bring this up in order for us to know, see, and understand that running to the Jews and Judaism is not in our best interest.

Once again the scripture never tells us to run to the Jews for his truth... our Messiah tells us to call no man "Father" on this earth, and that no man should be called "Rabbi" in Matthew chapter 23 8 through 10... and our Messiah says very clearly that he and his Ruach Hakdodesh... his "Holy Spirit" will lead us to all truth and remind us of what he has told us... not a Jew.

And so this needs to be understood with in the body... because we can save our brothers and sisters a lot of time, heart ache, and trouble... if we'll just show them these scriptures so that they will know the proper way to follow the Messiah... and unfortunately it's not through following after the Jews.

Now the Jews have Gods Oracles and his calendar and his appointments yes... but the problem is.. that they're still trying to keep the law as though it were based on works instead of as it were based on faith... just like Paul tells us in Romans Chapter 9 verses 31 and 32... and you might want to write those down if you don't already understand the difference between keeping our Fathers commandments by faith.. rather than keeping them by works.. and we've got a lot of different teachings on this very topic at our website at HolyImpactMinistries.com.

TESTING EVERYTHING!:

And so we see in verse 9 that Jason gives them some money to post bail if you will... and to get out of the trouble that they were in, and these non believing Jews let them go... it's amazing how the love of money can get the wicked to changer their minds isn't it?

And so the brothers secretly send Paul and Silas to Berea where they were met with open arms... because we know that these Berean's knew their scriptures well, and they tested

everything by the scriptures that they knew and found Paul's Gospel message to be true.

Act 17:11 Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

Act 17:12 Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.

Now...once again and you hear me say this all the time... the reason that the Berean's knew what Paul was telling them was the truth... was because they took these things to the scriptures and they verified what Paul was saying through the scriptures.

And for those of you who are unaware of the fact that our Messiah Jesus can be found in the "Old Testament" you need to read... the "Old Testament"... and we have some teachings on that as well at our website at HolyImpactMinistries.com.

So they were not going to follow Paul just because Paul said so.. in other words... none of Gods people should be following any man with out verifying what that man says through the fire of prayer, and through the written scriptures.

We want to be... like the Berean's... come with all eagerness, yes... BUT!!! Search the scriptures daily to see whether these things be true or not... so in other words the things that you hear... you need to check them out for yourselves don't just believe anything I tell ya...

This is where Luke warns you about Scott Velain... if you will... meaning that you should not follow any one person... not Apollo, Paul, Peter Tom, Joe, Mike, Bob or Bill or anyone else.. your yardstick your authority, your foundation is the Word itself and the Ruach Hakodesh...the Holy Spirit of God that teaches us all things according (once again) to the scriptures.

So Jason and the brothers are pretty good at staying one step ahead of these non believing Jews... but of course the Devil himself was hot on the heels of Paul and Silas, and we see that when the non believing Jews in Thesonolica heard that Paul and Silas had spread the Gospel message in Berea they just had to chase after them, and once again stir up all kinds of trouble and commotion that they could... so Paul and Silas are then swept away by the brothers towards the sea... but this time Paul goes on ahead by himself... and Silas and Timothy stay behind.

At this point in time we see Paul alone in Athens where he's convicted in his heart by all of the idols that he sees all over the place... and of course just like we said last week... Paul was not going to just sit around and wait for the others to join him... Paul strikes out on his own and begins to preach and teach the Gospel message to those who would listen.

Now I want us to notice in verse 17 that Paul once again finds a Jewish Synagogue there in Athens... Paul always goes to the Jews first... and I want us to notice that. No matter where he is he always looks for a Jewish Synagogue if he can find one.. and he goes there first... why?

Because Paul knows that these people... these Jews... for better or for worse... are his people. They know the scriptures... they have the law... they have the prophecies that talk about Yahshua Hamashiach...Jesus Christ, and Paul always seems to be able to gather some of them to the truth.

No matter how many of the Jews disagreed with him... he always manages to come away with some of them, and even though Paul was known as the Apostle to the Gentiles... he knew that if there were any Jews in the area at all... that this would be a good place for him to start because at least they knew who the one true God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob was.

And another thing that I want us to notice... and this will be crucial in understanding the writings of the Apostle Paul in other books of the Bible as well.... notice how differently Paul speaks to the Gentiles... than he does to the Jews.

Paul always uses scripture when reasoning with the Jews... but the Gentiles... Paul rarely uses scripture... because they don't know the scriptures... so Paul has to use human reasoning instead of the scriptures... this is very important to notice as we move forward.

So once again in Athens which was a predominately Pagan territory... we're told in verse 17 that Paul starts his ministry there at a Synagogue and in the marketplace.

Now in verse 18 we're introduced to the “Epicurean and Stoic philosophers”, and we learn that these “Epicurean and Stoic philosophers” are now hearing the Gospel message for the first time and their not sure what to make of this resurrection that Paul's preaching about.

So lets talk first about these “Epicureans”... the Epicureans were philosophers and in their own great wisdom they did not believe in an after life. So it was difficult to say the least for this group to accept the resurrection of a Jewish Messiah that was raised from the dead.

The Epicureans were atheists... who believed that because this life was all you had...you needed to make the most out it. They felt that pleasure was the highest virtue, and that pain was the opposite. Their motto (which still persists to this day by the way) was "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die."

And this belief system is still alive and well today among many people in our time, but we no longer call them “Epicureans” ... we simply call them atheists.

The Stoics on the other hand, were followers of the philosopher Zeno, and they were pantheists. Which means that they believed that everything is God, and that God does not exist as a separate entity... but he's in the rocks and the trees and the water, and every material thing.

Their motto, in modern terms, was "Grin and bear it." They urged moderation: in other words.. don't get over-emotional about tragedy or happiness. It is what it is.

And once again I want us to notice how these pagan Philosophers have effected our world today. Much of what we as a people believe stems from the writings of these great paganistic philosophers.. and even today.. many so called men of God are well educated in philosophy and the very writings of these kinds of men just like Paul was...

And it's important to remember.. that even Paul with all of his philosophical understanding and all of his great wisdom that he acquired from these men.... Paul could not recognize his own Messiah with all of that wisdom.... until his Messiah knocked him off of his horse and struck him blind in the middle of the street on this way to Damascus.

We need to always remember that it is written in 1st Corinthians chapter 3 verses 19 and 20:
1Co 3:19 For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness,"

1Co 3:20 and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."

And so Luke gives us an Idea of how these two groups distorted the Gospel message in verses 19 through 21:

Act 17:19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?"

Act 17:20 For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean."

Act 17:21 Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

Notice that Luke tells us that these men were not interested in the Gospel Message... but rather they were only interested in telling or hearing something new.

I can not tell you how many letters I get each week from people who are interested in nothing more than "telling or hearing something new". I get letters about the "Lunar Sabbath" and I get letters about how "All the Israelite's are of one color or another" and I get letters of all kinds of false teachings from people who are not truly interested in hearing the truth of what the scriptures says... all they're interested in is "telling or hearing something new".. something new that they were told by some man who claims to be a man of God.

And the first thing that I ask them is... does this man of God of yours keep the commandments of God or does he keep the commandments of men... because my scriptures tell me that if these men are not keeping the commandments of God... then they are liars... and the truth is not in them.

One of the best ways to spot a wolf in sheep's clothing to watch and see if he's keeping our Fathers commanded 7th day Sabbath or if he's keeping the Catholic created 1st day of the week Sabbath not found anywhere in his Bible...not commanded by anyone in his Bible. This should be our first clue.. as to whether or not these so called men of God are truly men who worship God and Gods wisdom... or are they men who worship men and the wisdom of men.

SEED PICKERS:

So these Epicureans treated Paul with contempt calling him a “babblers” in verse 18. The word “Babbler” means “Seed Picker”... so what the Epicureans were alluding to... was that Paul was like a little bird going around trying to pick a few believers out from around the marketplace to try and get a few people to follow him so that he could look like he had a following.

They just thought that Paul had heard a few words from a few philosophers and was trying to be impressive... so they dismissed him out of hand with out really listening to what he had to say... and they certainly had no scriptures to test Paul by because once again they were not Jews.

The Stoic's on the other hand were interested in what Paul had to say but not because they truly wanted to know the truth... they thought Paul was talking about two new Gods that they had never heard about before... the God Jesus... and the god Resurrection.

Now some of us may think that's funny... that they would think of “resurrection” as being a god. But back in those days they had alters to all kinds of themes... they had built alters to things like “shame” and alters to “reason” and alters to “virtue” and so on and so fourth.. so it would not be unusual for them to have an alter to “resurrection”, and this was just the way they thought, and the way the believed.

So that's just a little FYI...once again concerning just how many little “g” gods there were in Athens at that time. That just gives us a little perspective on how they could have so many of these little “g” gods.

PAUL BEFORE THE AREPAGAS:

Moving forward we see Paul being brought before the Areopagus. The word “Areopagus” means “Mars Hill”... and there's a place in Athens where they say at the top of this hill is where

Paul preached at Mars Hill to the Athenian philosophers, but many scholars believe that this is just a myth because Areopagus was also the name given to a court of judges who had the final authority in the city of Athens at this time... they were kind of like the pagan version of the Pharisees or the Saducees or the Sanhedrin... and we can see that Paul was brought before this Areopagas... or this court... as he tries to explain the meaning of the Gospel to them in verse 22.

Another reason that we know that the “Areopagus” was a court of men, and not just a place.. is because we're told in verse 34... that Paul finally did persuade Dionysius who was an “Areopagate” that the Gospel message was true.

And so at that point Paul begins to ever so skillfully preach the Gospel message to them... but listen to how he does it...notice he doesn't attack them for worshiping idols or other gods because they don't understand what they're doing yet.. and once again... Paul does not use scripture to win them over like the does with the Jews... so here's how he proceeds:

Act 17:22 So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious.

Act 17:23 For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.

Act 17:24 The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man,

Act 17:25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

Act 17:26 And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place,

Act 17:27 that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us,

Act 17:28 for "'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, "'For we are indeed his offspring.'

Notice how Paul handles these people... he doesn't come at them with flaming accusations, or in a menacing, angry way... he presents them with a complement for wanting to worship the one true God. And he says “I perceive in every way that you are very religious”, and this kind of breaks the ice as he begins to talk about their alter to the “Unknown god”.

Now I want us to stop and to think about his for just a moment.. There were about 30,000 gods in Athens, and yet they were looking for more. How clearly does this help us understand the agony of humanity, the cry for a God that they know exists, but they just can't seem to find.

So Paul tries to explain to them that God is not made... God made all things but nothing made God. God is not in need of anything from man, and man is Gods creation that he created in his...

image. All that God wants is the hearts of his children... and of course this is why we talk so much about the circumcision of the heart... it is the heart that our Father wants, and it's our hearts that our Father cherishes more than any refined gold, or object that we can ever build with our human hands or give to him.

But I want us to understand that we today are not so far away from the Idol worshiping pagans of Athens. Men today are still doing the same thing that the pagans were doing by worshiping idols and statues, and they even worshiped their own philosophy and what was known as their own higher learning. Make no mistake about it my friends... philosophy is, and always has been, a religion.

We today are not free from idolatry. Many people will proclaim that they are a good person and that they help little old ladies across the street, and give to this charity or that charity regularly...never understanding that they are still relying on their own works to get them into Heaven.

Their own works have become their own stumbling blocks and idols. Doing what they themselves think is good rather than doing what God says is good. Keeping their own traditions, rituals, and myths rather than keeping Gods commandments, Sabbaths, and Appointments.

People will say "I just know in my heart that it's right Pastor... but what does the bible say about the human heart?... the scriptures tell us that the human heart is deceitfully wicked... who can know it?"

What is the greatest commandment? To love the Lord your God with all of your heart mind and strength. If God is supposed to come first in your life... and if the love of God is to be what leads us to spend most of our time and our effort doing his will... and if he is the most important person in your life... then it should not be hard for us to understand what the gods of today's modern man are. They would be things that lead us to do the exact opposite!

Money is a god to some. Their careers, and their cars, and their reputations are gods to some. Football, basketball, and baseball are gods to some. Some people make their own children their gods. You yourself... can even be your own god.

Our own Messiah told us very clearly:

Mat 10:37 Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

Mat 10:38 And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

Mat 10:39 Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Let me ask you this... how many Americans today worship America and their patriotism,

pledging allegiance to their flag rather than the God who gave them that flag? Who's their god... really? You know it used to be "God and Country" back when I was a boy... but now it just seems to be all about "Country" and "Patriotism".

I want us to think on these things...and I want us to realize exactly what the true definition of "Idolatry" is! The definition of idolatry, according to Webster, is "the worship of idols or excessive devotion to, or reverence for some person or thing." An idol is anything that replaces the one, true God.

If all of your time, and your effort, and your attention is going towards someone or something else... then that someone, or something could be seen by God to be your idol, and if we're spending all of our time and effort and giving this person or this thing all of our attention.. then this person or this thing could be said to be... our god.

How much time have we spent with our Father and his son today? How many words have we spoken to him? Have we spoken to him at all with in the last 24 hours? Have we told him how much we love him... in the last 24 hours? Do we spend any time just praising him... or do we spend all of our time with him.. asking for things?

If we were standing in a court of law today... could we be convicted... of idolatry.. according to the very definition... of idolatry?

Do we love our brothers and our sisters... have we told them so? And just as importantly... have we shown them so? I say these things not to condemn... but rather to awaken and refresh the heart... to bring us back to the love of God... and way from the idolatry of this world.

What have we done in the last 24 hours of our lives... and could a court of law and a jury of our own peers convict us.... of loving God, and being Christians? Think on these things.

I would dare say... that the very idea that you are hear now.. listening to the Word of God and studying the Word of God here with me now... may be enough to convict us. And this... is what you call.... preaching to the choir.... and yet... somehow I know... that even we... can do better.

Lets let Paul finish up where we left off at verse 29:

Act 17:29 Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.

Kind of makes you want to take that picture of that long haired Frenchmen that we call "Jesus" off of our walls doesn't it?

Act 17:30 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people

everywhere to repent,

Act 17:31 because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

Act 17:32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this."

Act 17:33 So Paul went out from their midst.

Act 17:34 But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

Don't be surprised if you run into a few Epicureans, or Stoic's this week... the god of this world has blinded the minds of many who have made themselves friends of this world, and we already know that according to James the brother of our Messiah... those who make themselves friends of this world... make themselves enemies of God the Father.

Pray for them... be kind to them... and remember that we are to be as wise as serpents and as kind as doves... but above all things... always remember just as Paul always did... to contend for the faith!