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Tell Me The Truth

ACTS 17:16-34

Introduction

1. As most, if not all of you know, our services have been broadcast now for a number of years:
 - a. It started with Dean Bush in 1969 on our local radio station, WPHC, and ran until 1999.
 - b. Dean Duke has continued to carry it on that same station, now known as WQMV.
2. In 2009 we began the video recording of our services and now have live streaming.
3. All of this is an effort to communicate God's Word beyond the walls of building.
4. In the days of the apostle Paul such technology was not available.
5. He and those with him had to travel from city to city.
6. Our reading this morning was taken from the account of Paul's time spent in the city of Athens, Greece.
7. Paul had been forced to leave the city of Berea and sail to Athens where he was waiting for Silas and Timothy to join him.
8. Athens was the cultural capital of the world — its buildings and monuments were unrivaled by any other city in the ancient world.
9. However, as Luke tells us here in verse 16, "the city full of idols."
10. The ancient Roman writer Petronius said that it was easier to find a god than a man in Athens.
11. There were images of Apollo, Jupiter, Venus, Mercury, Baccus, Neptune and Diana — the whole Greek pantheon.

12. All of this caused Paul's spirit to be "provoked within him" — "*His whole soul was revolted at the sight of a city given over to idolatry*" (Jerusalem Bible).
13. As a result, Paul began "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." (Acts 17:17, NASB95)
14. Some of the philosophers began arguing with him while others accused him of being an idle babbler.
15. Still others, because Paul was preaching Jesus and the resurrection, said he was a "proclaimer of strange deities" (v. 18).
16. Finally, they took him to the Areopagus, a hill adjacent to the Acropolis where the supreme court of ancient Athens used to meet.
17. There he began to tell them about the "unknown God," the one they worshiped in ignorance.
18. In his sermon, I want us to see three truths which Paul communicated that day.
 - a. The truth about God
 - b. The truth about ourselves.
 - c. The truth about our destiny.

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I. The Truth About God

A. HE DOES NOT LIVE IN TEMPLES MADE WITH HANDS

"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;" (Acts 17:24, NASB95)

1. God is the personal creator of everything that exists (Genesis 1:1; Jeremiah 10:12)

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1, NASB95)

“It is He who made the earth by His power, who established the world by His wisdom; and by His understanding He has stretched out the heavens.”
(Jeremiah 10:12, NASB95)

2. We are not the chance combination of atoms as the Epicureans in Athens believed (cf. Colossians 1:16).

“For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.” (Colossians 1:16, NASB95)

3. Not only did God create the world and everything in it, He personally supervises it — “He is Lord of heaven and earth.”
 - a. He is not remote and disinterested, but takes a personal interest in all that He has made.
 - b. Our lives are not determined by fate, but by a God who oversees all His creation.
4. Our God “does not dwell in temples made with hands” (v. 24).

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- a. He cannot be limited or localized.
- b. In King Solomon’s dedication prayer for the newly built temple in Jerusalem, he prayed, “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!” (1 Kings 8:27).
- c. Through His prophet Isaiah, God said, “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?” (Isaiah 66:1, NASB95)

5. Any attempt to confine God to manmade buildings or structures is absurd.

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B. HE DOESN'T NEED US TO SERVE HIM

“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 17:25, NASB95)

1. God does not need anything from us.
2. Over 1000 years before Paul spoke these words, a Levite named Asaph wrote these words which we find in Psalm 50 :

“I shall take no young bull out of your house
Nor male goats out of your folds.
“For every beast of the forest is Mine,
The cattle on a thousand hills.
“I know every bird of the mountains,
And everything that moves in the field is Mine.
“If I were hungry I would not tell you,
For the world is Mine, and all it contains.”

(Psalm 50:9–12, NASB95)

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3. It was Job who once asked, “In whose hand is the life of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind?” (Job 12:10).
4. It is God who gives us everything we need for life — the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat, the sunshine to warm our days.
5. It was James who wrote, “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow” (James 1:17).
6. It is ridiculous for us to think that the One who sustains our lives needs us to sustain Him.
7. The God who supplies our need does not need us to supply Him.

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C. HE CANNOT BE REPRESENTED BY ANY MAN-MADE IMAGE

“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.”
(*Acts 17:29*, NASB95)

1. All the people to whom Paul was speaking that day had to do was look around their city at the various statues and images which had been created by their artisans to represent their gods.
2. These images were lifeless and owed their very being to human imagination.
3. It was the true God, who, at Mount Sinai, had commanded the Israelites, “You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.” (*Exodus 20:4*, NASB95)

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4. Over 700 years earlier, the prophet Isaiah challenged God’s people again and again concerning their idolatry (cf. *Isaiah 40:18-20; 41:5-7, 29; 44:9-20*).

“To whom then will you liken God?
Or what likeness will you compare with Him?
As for the idol, a craftsman casts it,
A goldsmith plates it with gold,
And a silversmith fashions chains of silver.
He who is too impoverished for such an offering
Selects a tree that does not rot;
He seeks out for himself a skillful craftsman
To prepare an idol that will not totter.”

(*Isaiah 40:18-20*, NASB95)

5. You and I are personal beings who relate to one another with love and trust.

6. Since God is our creator, He cannot be anything else.
7. The impersonal cannot give birth to the personal.

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II. The Truth About Ourselves

A. WHERE DID WE COME FROM?

“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” (*Acts 17:26, NASB95*)

1. Regardless of our nationality or skin color, we are all the descendants of one man — Adam (*Genesis 2:20*).

“God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” (*Genesis 1:27, NASB95*)

“Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” (*Genesis 2:7, NASB95*)

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2. We are meant to rule over, care for and enjoy God’s creation.

“God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” Then God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you;” (*Genesis 1:28–29, NASB95*)

3. Not only did God create each of us, He has determined when kingdoms and nations will ascend to power, how long they will remain in power and when they will decline.

4. It was Daniel, who in the days of King Nebuchadnezzar said of God, “He removes kings and establishes kings” (*Daniel 2:21*).
5. We see that down through history with kingdoms and empires like those of the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and the Romans, even down to our present day.

Slide 10**B. WHY ARE WE HERE?**

“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.’ ” (*Acts 17:27-28, NASB95*)

1. God created us so that we should seek Him, feel our way toward Him and find Him.
3. He is available to all who seek Him.

“Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near.”
(*Isaiah 55:6, NASB95*)

4. Through His prophet Jeremiah, God asked, ““Am I a God who is near,” declares the Lord, “And not a God who is far off?”” (*Jeremiah 23:23*).
5. It is only natural for us to seek God since it is “in Him [that] we live and move and exist” (v. 28a).
6. He made us to have a relationship with Him because “we also are His children” (v. 28b).
7. It is the nature of children to want to have a relationship with their parents.
8. The question which each of us should stop and ask ourselves is “Do I actively seek God? Do I have a relationship with Him?”

Slide 11**III. The Truth About Our Destiny**

A. WHAT DOES GOD REQUIRE OF US?

“Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent . . .” (Acts 17:30, NASB95)

1. We can no longer claim ignorance.
2. We can no longer say, “But I didn’t know . . .
 - a. “that God exists.”
 - b. “that God created me to have a relationship with Him.”
 - c. “that my sins have created a barrier between us.”
3. We must repent.

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B. WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

“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.”” (Acts 17:31, NASB95)

1. God “has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness.”
2. No one is exempt from God’s call to repent.
3. Repentance means to turn from our present life of sin to God.
4. There are three things which Paul says about this judgment which we must not miss:
 - a. God has set the day
 - 1) It is the day when “God will judge the secrets of men” (Romans 1:16).
 - 2) Elsewhere it is called “the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Romans 2:5).
 - b. He has appointed the judge

- 1) Though Paul does not tell the Athenians who that judge is, we learn from other places that it is none other than God's own Son — Jesus Christ.
- 2) Peter told those gathered in the home of Cornelius that "this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead" (*Acts 10:42*).

c. God has furnished proof that this judgment will take place.

- 1) The proof is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.
- 2) The fact that the tomb is empty and that multiple witnesses saw Jesus alive over a period of forty days confirms this fact.

Conclusion

1. Some began to sneer when they heard Paul speak of "the resurrection of the dead" (v. 32).
2. Others wanted to hear more on the subject.
3. Still others like "Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris and others with them" believed.
4. Do you believe?
5. Are you ready to face Jesus in the judgment?
6. If not, will you turn today from your sin, confess that He is your Lord and Savior and be baptized for the forgiveness of those sins?