

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for May 22, 2016

The Communication of the Gospel in Athens
Acts 17:22-34

Acts 15:36-18:23 recorded Paul's second missionary journey to Greece, and in Acts 17 Paul preached in Athens, the cultural capital of the Roman Empire.

Paul delivered his message in the midst of the Areopagus, which was both a location and a group of around 30 city administrators. This group would decide whether he would be able to continue to participate in the philosophical exchanges in the marketplace.

The reason this message by Paul differed greatly from his message in Acts 13:16-41 is because the audience was so different.

1. The God who was unknown (17:22-23)

Paul strategically used the inscription on an altar in Athens to a god not known as a means to speak to them about the true God whom they did not know.

Everyone knows of the Creator (Romans 1:18-20). Likewise, we all recognize our sinfulness (Romans 2:14-16).

2. The God who should be known (17:24-29)

Paul described God in ways that came directly from the Old Testament teaching about the attributes of God.

- a. God is the Creator (17:24; cf. Isaiah 42:5)
- b. God is Omnipresent (17:24; cf. 1 Kings 8:27)
- c. God is All-Sufficient (17:25; cf. Psalm 50:7-15)
- d. God is Sovereign (17:26; cf. Deuteronomy 32:8)
- e. God is Savior (17:27; Psalm 145:18; Isaiah 55:6)
- f. God is Father (17:28-29; Psalm 115:2-8)

Paul quoted poets such as Epimenides (c. 600 BC) and Aratus (c. 315-240 BC) in order to build upon their existing understanding of God. If God created man then He cannot be an

idol.

3. The God who will be known (17:30-31)

Paul called on the Athenians to repent based upon his teaching about the character of God. It is foolish to ask people to believe in God if they do not understand.

Telling the ruling Greeks that they were ignorant was a bold statement by Paul. God overlooked the time of ignorance in the sense that disobedience would be judged according to their limited knowledge (cf. Romans 3:25; Luke 12:48).

The reason we must repent is because of the coming judgment. The resurrection of Christ proved to everyone that God appointed Jesus as Judge (cf. Acts 10:40-42).

4. The God who became known (17:32-34)

The response of the Athenians was common: some responded by sneering, others by polite consideration (17:21), and others by belief.

When Paul arrived in Athens he was provoked by the idolatry (17:16), which led him to proclaim the resurrection of Christ in the market place and among the city leaders, resulting in people believing.

May we respond to the sinfulness of this world with the message of the good news of Jesus Christ so people may be delivered from death and have eternal life.