



**Paul on Mars (Hill)
Confounding AI and Preaching the Word No Matter Where We Are
Acts 17:16-34**

Scripture quotations are taken from the following translations:

ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

**Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible® (NASB),
Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973,
1975, 1977, 1995, 2020 by The Lockman Foundation
Used by permission. www.Lockman.org**

Scripture quoted by permission. Quotations designated (NET) are from the NET Bible® copyright ©1996, 2019 by Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. <http://netbible.com> All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

The Good News Translation Bible (GNB) text used in this product is being used by permission. Copyright © American Bible Society, 1966, 1971, 1976, 1992

Scripture taken from the Holy Bible: International Standard Version® Release 2.0. (ISV) Copyright © 1996–2011 by the ISV Foundation. Used by permission of Davidson Press, LLC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED INTERNATIONALLY

Scripture quotations contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition Bible (NRSVue), Copyright © 2021, National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide

**Scripture taken from the New King James Version (NKJV).
Copyright 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.**

**Scripture taken from The Holy Bible: The Contemporary English Version (CEV).
©1995 by The American Bible Society, Thomas Nelson, Nashville TN.**

Scripture quotations marked (CSB) have been taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.

Taken from the Complete Jewish Bible (CJB) by David H. Stern. Copyright © 1998. All rights reserved. Used by permission of Messianic Jewish Publishers, 6120 Day Long Lane, Clarksville, MD 21029. www.messianicjewish.net

No, this is not a message encouraging you to become missionaries to Mars. If people go there, then yes, there will indeed be a need for God's word to also be taught there, but this has been an interesting week thanks to AI, which I do not use, but is now embedded in some of the computer tools I use. And no, there is no off switch in the software. I asked and the AI driven response said something about taking over the world and thanks for the question.



I use PowerPoint to help put together the message and when I typed in the title, I got some interesting ideas. One was Paul standing on Mars preaching to a group of Martians. I changed the title to Mars Hill Greece and got the Acropolis with numerous folks listening to Paul, and they were all wearing glasses. I have no idea what that is all about.

We are going to Mars today with Paul, Mars Hill in Athens, Greece which is near the Parthenon.

When we last were with Paul, he was in Athens, Greece, waiting on the rest of the team to catch up with him after being evacuated by the church in Berea to Athens. Paul being Paul, he has already discovered where the synagogue is and he has begun reasoning with those who are attending there, and he has also been going out to the agora not only to make and sell tents, but to see just how prevalent idolatry was in that culture, he is busy reasoning with folks there as he works as well.

Athens though is very different from the towns out east in Macedonia, where he has been, this is a supposed sophisticated educated audience into new ideas and lots of different gods. They even have a "god police."

Acts 17:16–21

"Now while Paul was waiting for them in Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he observed that the city was full of idols. So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be present. And some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers as well were conversing with him. Some were saying, 'What could this scavenger of tidbits want to say?' Others, 'He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,'—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, 'May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming? For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean.' (Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.)" (NASB 2020)

The first thing we see is, no violence. Interesting because there was violence in Thessalonica and at the time, it was larger than Athens. Satan changing tactics? Perhaps, but we will also see Paul working through cross cultural communication tactics as well. He is also possibly rethinking his approach a bit too.

Our culture today is moving so fast, we need to be ready to answer effectively with God's word and there are times that might mean a change in tactics and strategy. There are indeed times where "see the hill take the hill works," but there are also times where you need to spend time developing relationships and sharing Christ as you do so.

The Athens that Paul goes into is a city that is now part of Rome and in decline. Corinth has more power than Athens now, the population of Athens was moving to Corinth and some of the Temples, were beginning to show a little wear and tear.

The city was becoming dependent on aid from Rome.

However, Athens is still an intellectual center, and Paul fits right in. It may also be a reason why there was no overreaction as seen in the past with the message Paul is presenting since speech in Athens was rather free and there were lots of ideas floating around. Paul is proposing some things they have never heard before, so many of the philosophers were talking to him at length. "With Stoic and Epicurean philosophers, as well as the distinguished Areopagus, as his foil, Paul advances the intellectual respectability of the Christian message for members of Luke's audience for whom this would prove a matter of serious interest." (Keener 2014, 2570)



Paul would later talk about his approach to cross cultural communications. His goal, believers in Christ.

1 Corinthians 9:19–23

“For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.” (ESV)

Since, as followers of Jesus, we are already living in a culture that does not understand us, it does indeed assist us in reaching others for Christ if we are intentional about staying away from non-Biblical things that would set others against us. We too “have become all things to all people, that by all means” we might see some saved.

Just having a Biblical worldview is sufficient for most of the culture today to ostracize us.

There are some churches today, located in college towns, that take seriously the idea of an intellectual appeal to Christ. Paul shifted his message based on the audience. When he came into contact with those who were the alleged or actual intellectuals of the day, he had the resume to support moving into the same direction.

Acts 17:18

“And some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers as well were conversing with him. Some were saying, “What could this scavenger of tidbits want to say?” Others, “He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,”—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.” (NASB 2020)

Paul is in the marketplace plying his trade of tent making while talking about Jesus. He developed an interesting audience. They were from two diametrically opposed schools of thought, Epicureans and Stoics.

Epicureans were the libertines of the day. They were hedonistic and believed “that you go the limit, and in that way you could overcome the flesh. They thought that you should give the flesh all that it wants. If it wants liquor, drink all you can hold.” (McGee 1997, 588)

They would believe in letting go and indulging in everything. I believe they would fit right in in our culture today.

Then there were the Stoics. They believed the exact opposite, that the body should remain totally under control. Ultra conservative legalists were hanging out with liberal hedonists, and both were interested in what Paul was telling them.

One group thought Paul was a collector of ideas who would then make them sound like his own. He was called a σπερμολόγος (spermologos). This word’s meaning gives us their initial attitude.

The word is “a derogatory term for a speaker who communicates miscellaneous scraps of knowledge or information that he has collected from others, chatterbox, empty talker. (Friberg, Friberg and Miller 2000, 353)



Even then, there were derogatory terms you could assign to a Christian if you wanted to make yourself feel morally superior to them. This appears to be what this group would do to everyone. But some were actually listening.

There were those who said he is proclaiming some strange new god or gods. They want to hear more and to do that he would be taken by them to a place where a larger group could hear what Paul was saying to them. It would be like being invited to an interview with some radio personality today or asked to join a podcast. Some new twist for the audience to hear and be entertained with, or, even as today, someone who is beneath us and we can intellectually bully on our own turf. In this case, it is in front of the “god police,” the council at the Areopagus.

The faculty board wants to hear this new “god thing.” They meet about 50 yards or so from the Parthenon.

The meeting place is near the Temple to Ares. It is interesting though that in the Greek, we discover that those questioning Paul about another god had a general understanding of who they were actually worshipping as idol worshippers. It is in the term we see translated “proclaimer of strange deities” they use it to describe what it is Paul is teaching. *Ξένων δαιμονίων* (*xenon daimonion*), foreign demons. They did not use the Greek word for God, Theos, but instead used the word that we take to mean demons. We get xenophobia from *xenon* and we get demon from *daimonion*.

When Paul looked around the city, he saw idols everywhere. One of the ancients said that in Athens it was easier to find a god than a man, meaning that the city was filled with idols. Paul realized that idolatry was the fundamental problem with that society. (Boice 1997, 296)

What Paul saw is what we see in our culture today. Moral and spiritual bankruptcy. Religion everywhere, but none of it directed to the God of the universe. Churches all over the place, but Jesus is not at any of them. So called good works taking place but not in the name of Jesus, but in the name of making me feel good about myself.

Morality? Yes indeed, stoicism is alive and well today too. Rampant hedonism, yep, that too. Paul was not in awe at all of where he was. “He analyzed it rightly and responded to it as a Christian. We need Christians today who have proper respect for the achievements of our time, who do not despise what has been done in science and other intellectual pursuits, but who are not too awed by these achievements, are able to see the limits of our predominantly secular culture, and respond to it helpfully with the Word of God.” Just as Paul did. (Boice 1997, 296)

Acts 17:22–23

“So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I see 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.” (NASB 2020)

Paul is taken to the Areopagus. There is a Temple there at the time to Ares. The god of war for the Greeks was Ares, who was also known by his Roman name, Mars thus Mars Hill. This is where the council would regularly meet, the “god police” or intellectual gate keepers.

In Roman times it was charged mainly with religious and educational affairs. Sir William Ramsay believed that the Areopagus had power to appoint or invite lecturers at Athens and that for that reason Paul was brought before the council. (Vos 1975)

Paul is a visiting lecturer, more or less and he has been invited to address the Athenian court. Since Paul was talking about a religious matter, they would be the ones to hear this. It appears that is indeed part of



their job, to sample the traveling philosophers passing through town, especially if they want to add another god.

The stance that Paul takes in verse 22 is not that of someone on trial, but rather that of an invited orator preparing to address the group. Most likely on an elevated rock. Paul intends to change the minds of those who are listening to him. He is not on trial himself, but who he represents, Jesus Christ, is. So, Paul will indeed use some courtroom tactics.

“Paul also has the deliberative aim of changing his audience’s behavior. The means, however, that he uses to reach that aim is forensic—he presents arguments of defense and attack for his vision of God, humankind, salvation, resurrection, and judgment, drawing on both Hellenistic Jewish and Greek philosophical sources. It is not surprising that Paul must resort to forensic rhetoric, for, while he may not be on trial per se, the scene does suggest that he must present an argument for his teaching at a hearing before the officials of the Areopagus, officials charged with maintaining the religious order of Athenian society. (Witherington III 1998, 517-518)

Paul knows he is a foreigner here. This is not his turf so how does he address his audience. With respect. Welcome to cross cultural missions. Paul knows a lot of their culture already from study, but he doesn’t know everything.

Anyone who is involved in any form of cross-cultural communication, whether that be involvement in ministry in another part of this country or going overseas, you still must get the lay of the land. When I moved to Lubbock TX, after living in Southern California with 6 months of USAF Officer Training School in San Antonio prior to that, I hit culture shock like I had never before experienced.

Nothing was open on Sunday. At the time, Lubbock was a dry county so nothing alcoholic was sold in any of the grocery stores in town.

There was, at that time, no Calvary Chapel anywhere in the state of Texas, but in Lubbock, lots of Baptist Churches of all sorts as well as Catholic, Church of Christ and a few others as well. Over 50% of the town was in church on Sunday and a suit and a tie was the expected uniform of the day. Legalistic Churchianity was the rule of the day. And if you did not like Dallas Cowboy football, you were a heretic. I was not in San Antonio or Riverside CA anymore. I had arrived on another planet. Time to observe, learn, and assimilate as much as possible. And everyone was so friendly. I was rather lost.

I totally get what Paul would be going through upon arriving in Athens. Nothing would have prepared him for what he was seeing and now he is addressing the locals, so, he starts by finding common ground.

“He commends them, “I see how very religious you are in every way!” Of course, their religious expression was reprehensible to any traditional Jew, but Sha’ul saw that many of the Greeks sincerely sought truth. He acknowledges looking at their shrines and noticing an altar inscribed “To An Unknown God.” He makes a natural connection and declares, “The one whom you are already worshiping in ignorance—this is the one I proclaim to you.” He builds on his message by proclaiming the God who made the universe and everything in it. (Kasdan 2022, 131)

Paul knew that you don’t start off talking to people who worship other gods by attacking them or their belief directly. He is intent on telling them about who God is and to do so they need to be listening.

We live in a pluralistic society today, just like the one Paul is talking to there in Athens. He knew this because he saw all of the various idols that were all over the city. and it deeply grieved him as he was viewing this through the eyes of the Holy Spirit. Do we see our culture today through the eyes of the Holy Spirit? Do we allow the Lord to impact us as He impacted Paul looking on at the sights there in Athens.



I am asked, at times, why no revival? Simple, most of us in the church today do not view our world, our pluralistic lost culture through the eyes of the Holy Spirit. We do not see all of those who are lost and without Christ. We need soft hearts and a fresh outpouring of His Holy Spirit. I pray that the Lord keep our eyes open and hearts soft.

Because of the soft heart of Paul, and the pain and horror he was suffering from seeing all the lost, he reasoned and dialogued with others while building tents. And now he is to address the formal “head shed” or faculty council of this group of so-called intellectuals.

They are trying to determine whether to admit him or not, that is not Paul’s intent. He intends to share the gospel as best he can.

Paul begins his message by making use of the local landmarks as he specifically references their religious tendencies and trying to cover all bases by even having an altar “To An Unknown God.”

Pluralistic cultures are religious cultures. Some deeply so. And for the most part, lost. There is only one way to be saved, one only. That is offensive to the idea of the multiple paths to God that a pluralistic culture pushes.

John 14:6

“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me.” (NASB 2020)

Paul takes the concept of the Unknown God and adds context as to who He is. He is the creator of the universe and yes, we need to remind folks of that as well today. So much for the Epicurean idea of chance or the Stoic view of God is in everything, or pantheism.

Acts 17:24–27

“The God who made the world and everything that is in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made by 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 feel around for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;” (NASB 2020)

Not only is God the creator, God, is also the sustainer of life. We depend on Him, not the other way around which they would hold to.

Paul has stated God is the creator and sustainer of everything. We need Him, He does not need us, and He is the true ruler of all of the nations. He chooses to love us because that is His nature, but God has no need of anyone or anything.

The manner of worship many there in Athens would be familiar with takes a God and they feed and care for this God as if God was a pet. They wanted a God they could control and, as John Stott called it, a domesticated God. Most people today want a God in their image, one who grades on the curve and winks at sin. Who changes with the times. But that is not reality, that is a lie from the pit of hell.

If you are creating a God in your image, you want that God to be dependent upon you. “Here is a masterly stroke by Paul. He tells them, “God doesn’t need anything from you. You built an altar to Him; you bring offerings to feed Him”—they wanted this unknown God to know that they were thinking of Him. Now Paul says, “God doesn’t need anything from you! God is on the giving end. He gives you life. He



gives you your breath. He has given you the sun, the moon, and the stars. He has given you all things.”” (McGee 1997, 590)

Any attempt to tame or domesticate God, to reduce him to the level of a household pet dependent on us for food and shelter, is again a ridiculous reversal of roles. We depend on God; he does not depend on us. (Stott 1994, 285)

As the true ruler of all nations, God is now in the process of bringing back all the nations of the world to Himself in a reversal of the events of Genesis 11 at Babel. Dr. Michael Heiser continues this thought.

“Verse 26 clearly alludes to the Babel event described in Deuteronomy 32:8–9, where the nations were divided up among/allotted to the sons of God (and vice versa in Deut 4:19–20)...this punishment/disinheritance was never intended to be permanent. Deuteronomy 32:9 has Yahweh calling Abraham to raise up Israel as his own “portion,” and Genesis 12:3 tells us that when he did, Yahweh made a covenant with Abraham. This covenant was with the intention that through Abraham the nations would be blessed. Paul obviously sees his own missionary task, which extends from what happened at Pentecost, as a continuation of this. The nations were supposed to “seek God” (Acts 17:27), something of course they rarely did.” (Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Discovering the Supernatural World of the Bible* 2025, 150)

Something else Paul states here as well, he sees Adam as the beginning of the human race.

Acts 17:26–27

“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 feel around for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;**” (NASB 2020)

It is God’s desire that His creation, mankind be saved, that they would intentionally seek after Him. But the nations turned away from God, and we see Genesis 11 as one result.

Here in Acts 17:27, Paul makes it sound like blind people groping around trying to find and touch God. “Paul declared: he is not far from each one of us. The reason God can be found is because He is nearby; he is [indeed] not far from us. And because He is close to us, He can actually be found if we reach out and try to touch Him. Of course, this can only be done by faith.” (Fruchtenbaum 1983, 32)

Acts 17:28–31

“for **in Him we live and move and exist**, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His descendants.’ Therefore, since we are the descendants of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by human skill and thought. So having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now proclaiming to mankind that all people everywhere are to repent, because He has set a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all people by raising Him from the dead.”” (NASB 2020)

It is in God that we find out how to live. “God is near, and he asks only that people reach out for him as he cares for them. Paul is offering that possibility to his listeners. They have always experienced God through his creation, and now it is time that they be reconciled and experience him personally.” (Osborne 2019, 321)

To help prove his point, Paul turns towards two quotations from Greek philosophers.



The most common suggestion is that Paul's first line ("in him we live and move and have our being") probably derives from the sixth-century B.C.E. Cretan poet Epimenides; the second line is often compared to a similar line in Cleanthes but usually attributed to Aratus, who said much the same thing but in a version closer to the wording here (and more widely quoted, including by a Jewish apologist). (Keener 2014, 2657)

One of the ideas that Paul is attacking, and was a problem then and still is today, is thinking that God is like us. He is God, He is nothing like us at all.

His character and ability cannot be limited to what we may imagine and accomplish as human beings. But this verse reminds us that the image theology of Genesis 1:26–27 allows us to say what God is not. 'Since we are the thinking and feeling persons that we are, we ought not to suppose that the divine being ... is made of metal, even precious metal, or of wood.' If we are personal beings, able to relate to one another with love and trust, God our creator cannot be anything less. How can the impersonal give birth to the personal? It is absurd and totally dishonouring to God to represent him in any form conceived and constructed by human beings (cf. Ex. 20:4–6)...Paul's argument is a challenge to all forms of religion which seek to make a god to suit the needs of the worshippers. (Peterson 2009, 500-501)

The bottom line that Paul is telling those listening, the God he is talking about, the one who rules heaven and earth, has begun the great reversal and proclaiming to all men globally the need to repent.

Acts 17:30–31

"So having overlooked the times of ignorance, **God is now proclaiming to mankind that all people everywhere are to repent, because He has set a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all people by raising Him from the dead.**" (NASB 2020)

One of the things Paul is there announcing is that the time of ignorance has passed. The ignorance of saying God is like man or associated with human made items is, because of Jesus Christ, past. It is because of that fact the call for repentance has gone out. That is an interesting word, repent or repentance.

The word translated as repent here in Acts 17:30 is μετανοεῖν (metanoein) coming from the base word metanoa. It means to "change one's mind...feel remorse, repent, be converted." (Arndt, et al. 2000, 640)

Why is this word used by Paul. It is because all of us are born with the same characteristic we have inherited from our parents, sin. We are all SIN positive, all of us. When we come to Jesus, we are agreeing with His assessment of our condition, that we are sinners, and we change our mind, we repent, about how we have been living.

Why? Because we understand that Jesus Christ died on the cross to take my penalty for sin. He paid for it Himself by dying on the cross.

Mark 1:14–15

"Later on, after John was arrested, Jesus went into Galilee, where he preached God's Good News. "The time promised by God has come at last!" he announced. **"The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!"** (NLT)

We call the message of what Jesus has done for us on the cross the Good News, the Gospel. Paul explained what it was.

1 Corinthians 15:1–5



“Let me now remind you, dear brothers and sisters, of **the Good News I preached to you before**. You welcomed it then, and you still stand firm in it. It is this Good News that saves you if you continue to believe the message I told you—unless, of course, you believed something that was never true in the first place. I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. **Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said.** He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve.” (NLT)

Romans 10:9–13

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”” (NLT)

For me, I heard the Good News several times, but I just did not want to believe it. I thought I would never do those things I wanted to do if I came to Christ.

I was lied to by Satan, big time. What convinced me was simple, I did not want to go to hell. As a result, I changed my mind about my sin and agreed with God that I was a sinner and no longer wanted to be one and I asked the Lord to forgive me of the sin. I then told Him I believed He died on the cross for me and that He rose from the dead for me and asked Him to be the Lord of my life. At that point, I was saved. The Holy Spirit immediately entered me and then the real work began. I learned there was a lot of sin to get rid of, a lot. But when you change your mind, when you repent, you are expressing a desire to no longer sin and only He can help us deal with our sin.

This is the decision that Paul is driving for.

Well, that may be good for you Ken, but I ‘m not that bad. How can you say I am a sinner. You probably aren’t that bad, but the standard is perfection, so I am speaking with 100% confidence when I say, we are all sinners, but if you are in Christ, you have been saved by grace and God now sees Christ’s sinless perfection when He looks at us. But if you want to go on your own, no problem, here is the standard. Total and complete sinless perfection from birth to death. Only Jesus Christ has ever achieved that. So, how are we doing now?

Ephesians 2:8

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,” (ESV)

Acts 17:31

“because He has set a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all people by raising Him from the dead.”” (NASB 2020)

Paul is upfront about the need to repent...judgment is coming. Paul has clearly articulated that we were created to seek God and have a genuine relationship with Him as their creator. But sin came into the world and because of that, true knowledge has been kept from us as we are blinded by our sin nature. The result, we will be judged by Him with righteousness, i.e. the Great White Throne for those who have not repented.

But, thanks to the Good News, the Gospel he is proclaiming God will do this through a man He has appointed whom He raised from the dead. “In view of Paul’s exposure of the Athenian failure to find God and know him, this is an extraordinary claim. What kind of man could be appointed to judge the world with



justice? Who could be capable of fulfilling such a role? Paul does not provide an answer here, but provokes his audience to inquire further about this and other important issues (cf. v. 32).” (Peterson 2009, 503)

This statement of the resurrection was a direct challenge to the beliefs of most of those listening to Paul. They did not believe in this agreeing with Sophocles and others.

But never by weeping nor by prayer will you resurrect your father from the pool of Hades which receives all men. (Sophocles 1894, 137-139)

Acts 17:32–34

“Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to scoff, but others said, “We shall hear from you again concerning this.” So Paul went out from among them. But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.” (NASB 2020)

The reaction of many who were there is no different than the reaction we see globally today when the claims of Christ are presented. Scoffing and sneering. The word Luke uses here is ἐχλεύαζον (echleuazon). And puts this verb into the imperfect active.

The verb tense where the writer portrays an action in process or a state of being that is occurring in the past with no assessment of the action's completion. (Heiser and Setterholm, Glossary of Morpho-Syntactic Database Terminology 2013)

The word means “to make fun of someone by joking or jesting—‘to scoff, to jeer, to joke at.’” (Louw and Nida 1996, 434)

Then as now, the enemy has a firm grip on many and they scoff and don't seem to ever stop doing so. Not all there reacted this way, but many did. Not all today react this way, but many do and their scoffing and slander seem to be empowered by the Eveready Bunny at times. The Greek grammar used by Luke infers that.

As we share Christ with a lost world, remember, it is the Holy Spirit's job to break down those walls, not ours. We simply tell our story and leave it up to Him. Paul knew that.

There were some who actually wanted to invite him back and hear more.

By the way, this is a summary from Dr. Luke who heard it from Paul. It is a summary and not everything that Paul said. Did Paul get interrupted?

Most likely since there were so many who would not agree with the idea of the resurrection.

However, unlike some commentators who say Paul failed, he did not fail. He presented the gospel, allowing the Holy Spirit the bandwidth to do His thing in their hearts. Some want to hear more, most likely Stoics, and they will seek him out in the agora. He is not stopped from preaching or teaching. And some believed. The Athenian church was born as there are those who believed. Luke has just provided us a laboratory on apologetics.

Acts 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.” (NASB 2020)



One of those saved was Dionysius the Areopagite. Yes, a member of the "god police" believed. "As a member of the town's highest aristocratic court, Dionysius "the Areopagite" was undoubtedly a municipal decurion, one of the highest-status converts so far mentioned (excepting Sergius Paulus, 13:12)." (Keener 2014, 2678)

We are also told of a woman who was saved, Damaris. We are not told who she is but she became a member of the new church in Athens.

It was impossible in Athenian society for a woman of respectable position and family to have any opportunity of hearing Paul; and the name Damaris (probably a vulgarism for damalis, heifer) suggests a foreign woman, perhaps one of the class of educated Hetairai, who might very well be in his audience. (Ramsay 1907, 252)

Paul did as we do when we share Christ, he left it up to the Spirit for results. Only two names, but both leaders.

About Dionysius, Eusebius "records, moreover, that Dionysius the Areopagite, who was converted to the faith by the apostle Paul, according to the statement in the Acts of the Apostles, first obtained the episcopate of the church at Athens." (Eusebius of Caesaria 1890, 200-201) He became the first pastor of Athens. God knew what He was doing. Paul did not fail.

Dr. Luke does not provide us any other tidbits of information about Paul's time there in Athens. We know he was there waiting for everyone to catch up to him and while doing so, he was busy making tents and sharing Jesus in the agora.

The message that he provided though was clear and the initiation still is extended to all who listen even today. Repent, believe and be saved from the judgment which is indeed coming.

ABC's of Salvation

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.

Let's pray

Works Cited

- Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. 2000. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Boice, James Montgomery. 1997. *Acts: An Expository Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- Eusebius of Caesaria. 1890. *The Church History of Eusebius*. Vol. 1, in *Eusebius: Church History, Life of Constantine the Great, and Oration in Praise of Constantine, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by



- Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, translated by Arthur Cushman McGiffert. New York, NY: Christian Literature Company.
- Friberg, Timothy, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller. 2000. *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament, Baker's Greek Testament Library*. Grand Rapids, MI: Bits & Bytes, Inc.
- Fruchtenbaum, Arnold G. 1983. *The Messianic Bible Study Collection*. Vol. 171. Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries.
- Heiser, Michael S., and Vincent M. Setterholm. 2013. *Glossary of Morpho-Syntactic Database Terminology*. Lexham Press.
- Heiser, Michael S. 2025. *The Unseen Realm: Discovering the Supernatural World of the Bible*. Expanded Edition. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.
- Kasdan, Barney. 2022. *Acts of the Emissaries: The Early History of the Yeshua Movement, A Messianic Commentary*. Clarksville, MD: Lederer Books: An Imprint of Messianic Jewish Publishers.
- Keener, Craig S. 2014. *Acts: An Exegetical COmmentary: 15:1-23:35*. Vol. 3. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Louw, Johannes P., and Eugene Albert Nida. 1996. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*. New York, NY: United Bible Societies.
- McGee, J. Vernon. 1997. *Thru the Bible Commentary*. Electronic Edition. Vol. 4. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.
- Osborne, Grant R. 2019. *Acts: Verse by Verse, Osborne New Testament Commentaries*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.
- Peterson, David G. 2009. *THE Acts of the Apostles, The Pillar New Testament Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Ramsay, William Mitchell. 1907. *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.
- Sophocles. 1894. *The Electra of Sophocles, Edited with Introduction and Notes*. Edited by Sir Richard Jebb. Medford, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Stott, John R. W. 1994. *The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church & the World, The Bible Speaks Today*. Leicester: InterVarsity Press.
- Vos, Howard F. 1975. "Areopagus." In *The Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia*, edited by Charles F. Pfeiffer and John Rea. Chicago, IL: Moody Press.
- Witherington III, Ben. 1998. *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.