

2. In God's courtroom, Jesus will judge the world
  3. The call is to (9) \_\_\_\_\_
- C. Paul calls the philosophy, logic & arguments all ignorance
1. The call is to all men, everywhere
  2. THIS IS WHY WE DO MISSIONS TODAY
- D. Repentance is out of style today
1. The term is *metanoia* or "change one's mind"
  2. Repentance results in a change of behavior
    - a. By the appeal of God raising Him from the dead
  3. The term "raising" (the verb form of *Anastasis*) is interesting

In the papyri "the verb is frequent in inscriptions with the sense of 'erection' of a monu-ment... and for the verb... the 'setting up' of a statue... The narrative in Acts 17 prepares us for the total novelty of the meaning of the 'resurrection': It was a perfectly natural use of the word, but the idea itself was new." (Moulton and Milligan, p. 37-38).

- E. The resurrection is proof God's plan worked
1. Exegete the culture and make the connection
  2. But come back to the cross
- F. I'd like to propose a new scale: a (10) \_\_\_\_\_
1. Let's judge contextualization methods by the connection they make to the cross of Christ and His resurrection.
  2. I would call it **Contextualized Cross-Referencing**

## VI. Recognize Rejection and Response Acts 17:32-34

### A. Notice the Scripture

1. "Some began to 'sneer' " Wesley translates this "mocked"

"The idea of the immortality of the soul was perfectly fami-li-ar to the Greek mind, but their philosophies had no room for the resuscitation of dead bodies." (F.F. Bruce, p. 340.)

2. "Others said 'We shall hear you again...'"
3. "But some men joined him and believed"
4. The term means "(11) \_\_\_\_\_, unite";
5. Here it means "to become a follower or disciple (Baer, Arndt, Gingrich, p. 442c.)

"The derivative, *Kollaima*, as the technical term for a 'sheet' form of two layers of pa-pyrus fastened or glued together; for 'soldering' (*Kollaisis*) of pipes. "to glue togeth-er, join together, bind." (Kittel, Vol. III, p. 822.)

### B. What are we to make of the varying degrees of Rejection and Response?

1. In ministry there is usually some rejection to the Gospel
2. In closed countries it is often harsh
3. In open countries it is often in the form of ridicule
4. In ministry there is always some response to the Gospel
  - a. Sometimes the response is glorious
  - b. But sometimes the response SEEMS small
    - i. You have to be comfortable with both response & rejection
  - c. We might not think there was very much response here.
    - i. Some sneered
    - ii. Some said "I'll think about it"
    - iii. Some joined him
    - iv. A woman named Damaris
    - v. Some men, among whom was *Dionysius the Areopagite*

"It was a real honor to be a member of the Areopagus, which perhaps con-sisted of about 30 persons...Dionysius the Areopagite, who was a member of the august court of Are-opagus and had of necessity passed through the office of Archon or Chief Gover-nor of the city". (Carter and Earle, p. 363).

5. Not many joined him, not many responded that day who responded was Mind-Boggling
  6. Dionysius listens to this preacher just once & joins him
- C. This is what a missionary does Today, he stands before the common and the cultured, with the time-less message of the cross

Answers: 1- Waiting 2-Epicureans 3-Stoics 4-Examine 5-Place of Need 6-Contextualization 7-Creator 8-Existing One 9-Repentance and Salvation 10-Cross-Reference 11-Joined Closely Together

## First Family Church 7700 W. 143rd St, Overland Park, KS 66223 913-681-3341 www.fjc.org



**Dr. Robin Hadaway**  
 Missions Professor, Midwestern Baptist Seminary  
**Tuesday, November 24th, 2009**  
*"Missions Today"*  
**Bible Text: Acts 17:16-34 (NAS)**

**Question:** How do you communicate the Gospel cross-culturally in missions today?

"While not the capital of *Achaia*, a position held by Corinth, it was the cultural capital of the whole ancient world." (Charles W. Carter and Ralph Earle, *The Acts of the Apostles*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973. p. 252.). "The sculpture, litera-ture and ora-tory of Athens in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Centuries B.C. have never been sur-passed. In Phil-oso-phy too... being the native city of Socrates and Plato and the adopted home of Ari-stotle, Epicurus, and Zeno." (F.F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949. p. 331.)

### I. WITNESS WHILE YOU WAIT (Acts 17:16-18)

Introduction: (1) \_\_\_\_\_ is a major part of missions

- A. **The Impetus for witness** "*His spirit was provoked within him as he was beholding a city full of idols.*"
1. Paul was not angry with the people but at the idolatry. Paul was stirred in a positive way to do something about it.
- B. **The Method of Witnessing** . Acts 17:17 "*so he was reasoning with them...*"
1. Witnessing is sharing Christ, but is also reasoning with unbelievers
  2. Paul's method was witnessing in the synagogue & the marketplace.
- C. **The Object of the Witnessing were...**
1. Those closer to the Gospel, who were the Jews and God-fearers
  2. Those who were far away, who were two kinds of people.,
    - a. The (2) \_\_\_\_\_

EPICUREANS: "Followers of Epicurus...whose ethical system...presented pleasure as the chief end of life, the pleasure most having being a life of tranquility free from pain, disturbing passions, and superstitious fears. It conceived of the gods as material in essence,... having nothing to do with the life of man." (F.F. Bruce, p. 332.)

b. The (3) \_\_\_\_\_

STOICS: "...regarded Zeno as their founder and took their name from the place in Ath-ens where Zeno taught (Stoa Poikile). Their system aimed at living consistently or ac-cording to nature. The highest expression of nature was reason or de-sign..." (F.F. Bruce, p. 332.)

### 3. What did they call Paul? *An Idle Babler*

"...used originally of birds who "pick up seed" it came to be applied to Athenian slang as an adventurer who gains "hand to mouth" living in the market by picking up anything that falls from loads of mer-chandise which are being carried about. Hence it passed into the meaning of one gathering scraps of information & retailing them second hand with-out any real know-ledge of a meaning..." Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. VII, p. 536-547

4. Why did they disagree? They did not like Paul's strange deities
  - a. **Jesus and the Resurrection**
  - b. The resurrection is hard to comprehend.

### II. FOLLOW YOUR LEADS (Acts 17:19-21)

- A. "And they took him and brought him to the *Areopagus*"
1. Where is this place?

"Whether Paul appeared before the Court of the *Areopagus* in the *Agora* (market) or was led to the top of Mars Hill is a topic of perennial dispute. Ramsey argues at length that Paul spoke in the *Agora*... (but) Cadbury... warns: 'The possibili-ties must be left open that the council sometimes met on the hill of the *Areopagus* and not in the *Agora* even in later times, or that Paul spoke on the hill but not to an official group. (Carter and Earle, p. 257.)

Some say "Mars Hill" on the *Areopagus*, while others say in the market place (*Agora*). Wherever it met, it was important.

2. What did they do to Paul when they "**took him & brought him**"?
  - a. The term can be used two ways
  - b. **Negatively** it means "take hold of, catch, sometimes with violence" As in Lk. 16:19 in Philippi when Paul & Silas were seized, beaten & thrown into prison

"...the most venerable Athenian court...It's traditional power was curtailed as Ath-ens became more democratic but it re-

tained authority over homicide & moral questions generally. . . Under the Romans it increased its prestige. They had supreme authority in religious matters and seems also to have had the power at this time to appoint public lecturers and exercise some control of them in the in-terest of public order.” (F.F. Bruce, p. 333).

- c. **Positively**, the term can just mean “grasp” As when Jesus “took” Peter by the hand as he was sinking in the storm in Mt. 14:31
- d. This is my interpretation of what happened
  - i. The crowd said, “this is a new teaching & we want to hear more. They took him by the hand, saying “come with us to where we judge these matters.”
  - ii. I believe this was a voluntary appearance because they said, “may we know.” It seems to be a polite invitation rather than an official court summons

B. In Missions you have to follow your leads

### III. RESEARCH THE CULTURE (Acts 17:22-23a)

A. Let’s look at the bible verses

1. Paul’s introduction can mean either “religious” or “superstitious”
2. Paul scrutinized the culture
  - a. While passing through, he **observed** they were religious
  - b. Paul **examined** the objects of their worship
    - i. In the original language, the term “**examine**” is the intensive of **observe**.  
A. **Observe** is “to look,” (4) \_\_\_\_\_ means “to look long and hard.”
    - ii. This is what we call research today
  - c. It’s important for missionaries to research their cultures
    - i. Missionaries go to language school to study the lang-uage and the culture of their new countries. William Carey & Hudson Taylor did this in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.
3. What did Paul’s examination uncover?
  - a. Paul found an alter inscription “to an UNKNOWN GOD”

“...according to Diogenes Laertius, the Athenians during a pestilence sent for Epimeni-des the Cretan who advised them to sacrifice sheep at various spots to commemorate the occasion, Alters to unnamed gods were set up.” (F. F. Bruce, p. 336)

b. Paul may have had several purposes for this discovery

B. Paul was going about researching the culture

1. To possibly deflate and deflect charges against him

“Certainly if our thesis is correct that Paul’s address before the Areopagus was his defense against charges of advocating a new, unauthorized religion, then his choice of the inscription from the alter TO AN UNKNOWN GOD was indeed a master stroke. Their UNKNOWN GOD whose worship was fully authorized and thus made legal in Athens, Paul declared to be the subject of his preaching in Athens.” (Carter and Earle, p. 256)

2. The major reason was to find the (5) \_\_\_\_\_ in the culture
  - a. All over Athens there were gods, many gods.
  - b. Paul zeros in on their point of disquietude
3. This is researching your audience

### IV. MAKE THE CONNECTION EARLY (Acts 17:23b-29).

A. The Connection is Audience Centered (Acts 17:23b)

1. The term “worship” means “reverent, respectful, devout, pious.”
  - a. Plato said, “The essence of piety consists of being servants of the gods by being good.”
2. The word “ignorance” means “not to know, being mistaken, in error”
  - a. We get our word “Agnostic” from the Greed term *Agnoeo*.
  - b. Sometimes the word can mean “willful ignorance”
3. Notice the **THEREFORE**, for here Paul does what I call a **pivot**
  - a. Paul tells them, “You’ve been worshipping the UNKNOWN GOD on these alters, THEREFORE, let me show you the truth

B. The connection is what we call in missions, *Contextualization*.

1. (6) \_\_\_\_\_ is replacing or reinterpreting secular, pagan, false religious, and other non-Christian concepts with Christian truths.
  - a. Paul doesn’t say their UNKNOWN GOD is the same as our Lord God in a “one to one” equivalency. He uses their pagan concept of god as a “pivot,” a “jumping off place,” a “point of departure”
2. Contextualization “fills in the blanks”, “colors in” the concept of God

C. The Connection is Selective

1. **NEGATIVELY**, Paul tells the Athenians what God is NOT
  - a. The true God is not a “temple dweller” v. 24
  - b. The true God is not “served by man” v. 25

c. The true God is not “a piece of art” v. 29

“Paul tailors his message to the Athenians. He does not witness to them from the Old Testa-ment, as with the Jews in Pisidian Antioch in Acts 13, where he spoke of the Jews as the chos-en people (v. 17), of their sojourn in Egypt & the wilderness (v. 18), of the conquest of Joshua & the Judges (v. 18), of Samuel, David, & John the Baptist (v. 20 ff). Paul leaves all of that out. Why? Because Pisidian Antioch was a Jewish audience and the Areopagus was a Greek, pagan audience composed of Epicureans & Stoics, the cultural elite of his day.” Robin Hadaway

2. **POSITIVELY**, Paul describes what God IS

- a. **God IS the** (7) \_\_\_\_\_
- b. God is creator of the **world**. v. 24a
- c. God is the creator of **man**. v. 26.
  - i. Paul quotes Aratus, calling us God’s offspring (v. 28)
- d. God is the creator of **nations**
  - i. The word is “*ethnos*” which we translate nations
  - ii. *Ethnos* is the term in the Great Commis-sion of Mt. 28
- e. God is the creator of **boundaries**. v. 26b *having deter-min--ed their appointed times & the boundaries of their habitation*
  - i. *Boundaries signifies both temporal & spati-al boun-daries* (Kittel, Vol. V, p. 452.)
- f. God is the Creator of **Seekers** (Acts 17:27, *that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for him and find him*).
  - i. God is **seeker friendly**. He invented it
  - ii. To “seek” for what one possessed and lost”

“Also carried the force of a legal inquiry like an investigation in a court case” (Moulton, Mil-ligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek New Test-a-ment, Grand Rapids, W.B. Eerdmans Pub- Co, 1930, p. 273).

- g. God is “**proper friendly**” too
  - i. Grope means to “feel about for something”
  - ii. God has determined men would seek & grope
- h. **God IS the** (8) \_\_\_\_\_ (Acts 17:28 “for in Him we *live and move and exist* (some translations say, “have our being”).

“The language here is quoted from an address to Zeus by his son, Minos: ‘They fashion-ed a tomb for Thee, O holy and high – the Cretans, always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies! But Thou art not dead; Thou are risen and alive forever, for in Thee we live & move & have our being.’ (F.F. Bruce, p. 338)

- i. This phrase comes from a poem by *Epimenides* about Zeus by his son *Men-os*. This becomes a bridge for the Gospel.
- ii. What is the meaning of the phrase? “*Live, move and exist*”
  - A. “*exist*” is the verb “to be” in the present tense “are”.
  - B. “*Move*,” means to “set something in motion, to propel forward” (Kittel, vol. III, p. 718).

D. The Connection should be brief

1. The Contextualization should not become the message
  - a. Paul’s foray into philosophy is profound but judicious & brief
  - b. You may use part of a secular writing for connection purposes

“In his preaching at Athens, Paul makes use of the pantheistic sense of God common to the Greeks, and attempts on this basis to open up to them the way to a full belief in God... Hence this statement is to be regarded merely as an acknowledged starting-point for his missionary preaching, not as a full confession of his theological convictions...” (Kittel, Vol. III, p. 718-719.)

2. The connection bridge to the Gospel should not dis-tract or interfere
  - a. You may use Koranic verses, but do not tarry long in the Koran.
  - b. Secular methods are ok, but should not detract from the Gospel

### V. DRAW THE NET (Acts 17:30-31)

- A. Paul uses the connection bridge to come to the point of his message
  1. God has *overlooked* the *Times* of Ignorance. It can also be translated “distain or despise” (Baer, Arndt, Gingrich, *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1952, p. 849c).
- B. Paul uses legal terms in addressing the Court of the Areopagus
  1. The word means “to sift, judge, assess” Kittel, Vol. III, p. 922