

## BACKGROUND

- Someone I dearly love - a close family member
- Had a discussion around the dinner table - she believes there is **A** god
  - *Feels that they're all the same god*
  - We just put a different spin based on interpretation of the various "scriptures"
- I noted in this modern society - and ancient as we will see - **religious pluralism exists**
- **Perfect communion with Almighty God** ~ Day 6 4004 BC
  - Man created
  - Garden of Eden
- **Paganism** - very soon followed after the Fall of Man
- Innumerable forms of "devil-worship"
  - Lead to the Flood in Gen.6
  - Still alive and well in modern forms:
    - ◆ Wicca [witchcraft]
    - ◆ Satanism
- **Judaism** ~ 1491 BC
  - Moses and the Law of God.
  - Foundation of Christianity but still waiting for the Messiah
- **Hinduism** ~ 700 BC - *We are ALL gods*
- **Buddhism** ~ 560 BC
  - You yourself must make the effort
  - Can align with any other religion!
- **Biblical Christianity** ~ 50 AD - **Apostolic era**
  - Roman Catholicism - *the one TRUE church?*
  - Eastern Orthodoxy - Greek & Russian - just like the RCs except no Pope.
  - Reformed - 500 yrs ago this year (Luther)! [really a major return to the Biblical truths]
- **Islam** ~ 600 AD
  - Allah is one
  - Christ was just a prophet

## IN OUR MODERN DAYS

- **New Age** - 1960s - MIXED BAG from everywhere!!
  - **Babylonian rituals** to elevate humans to godlike status
    - ◆ Nature worship (pantheism / Gaia / Mother-Earth, Sister Sun, Brother Moon)
    - ◆ Occult practices
    - ◆ Reincarnation
  - **Taoism** - everything constantly changing ( Yin & Yang)
    - ◆ NO ABSOLUTES
    - ◆ all is relative to you ONLY, Including morals and ethics
  - **Gnosticism** = you have knowledge from within [EXACTLY like serpent promised Eve]
    - ◆ **Gen 3:4** *Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*
    - ◆ No need for Christ's atoning death!
  - **New age** includes these and other modern phenomena.
    - ◆ UFOs, Extra-terrestrial Intelligence

- ◆ Telekinesis, etc
- **Abundance of divergent cults from ALL of these religions**
  - **Freemasonry** - an off-shoot of Judaism (1771) - allegedly based on Solomon's Temple
    - ◆ Bible is NOT the unique Word of God [also use Q'uran & Vedas]
    - ◆ The God they follow can be anyone they personally worship:
      - Our Lord
      - Allah
    - ◆ Jesus is NOT recognised as our God and Saviour!
      - Jesus' name is removed or avoided when the Bible is referred
  - **Christian Science & Jehovah's Witness** - Christianity
  - **Baha'I** - Islam
  - **Hare Krishna** - Hinduism (1965)
- **Philosophy (Knowledge and "worldly wisdom")**
  - **Secular Humanism**
    - ◆ Early 1900s
    - ◆ Universe has always existed
    - ◆ God does not exist
    - ◆ Chief goal = development of human personality
    - ◆ Morality comes from human experience
    - ◆ Man is basically good
    - ◆ Man's goodness can safely use technology to avoid harmful and destructive changes
  - **Evolutionism**
    - ◆ Evolution unsupervised by a deity
    - ◆ No purpose or meaning to life
    - ◆ Nothing special or sacred about humanity
    - ◆ Survival of the fittest prevents morals based on a religious code
    - ◆ Evolution man came after millions of years [ie. Repeated deaths]
      - Therefore Bible [ie. GOD] is a lie from Gen.1:1
    - ◆ **This is why I evangelise with CMI on the Sunshine Coast.**
  - **Postmodernism**
    - ◆ None of us think independently
      - Minds are shaped by upbringing and society/culture
    - ◆ I can't judge another's opinions or ideas
      - Their reality is different from mine
    - ◆ Each person constructs their own reality in their own mind.
    - ◆ None of us can "prove" anything, whether we use:
      - Science
      - History
      - Logic
      - Any other set of facts

Are any of these modern philosophies familiar to you?

Look at the media and the internet?

The over-whelming onslaught of Satan's arrows in many disguises!

ANYWAY .... to our passage

- Paul had left Berea
- now in Athens waiting for Silas and Timothy

Athens at this time was an eclectic mix of

- Greco-Roman philosophies
- Multiple religions - Greek and Roman Gods

### V.17 Judaism

V.18 in the markets

- **Epicureans**
  - Today = devoted to sensual enjoyment, especially that derived from fine food and drink.  
✓ *Epicurus* [341-270 BC] = happy life by **self-sufficient life surrounded by friends.**
- **Stoics**
  - self-control and fortitude as a means of overcoming destructive emotions

These 2 views are opposite to each other ...

### Cf. Star Trek

\* **Dr Leonard McCoy (Bones) ~ Epicurean:**

- after Spock laughed and cried under an alien influence, explains:

***The release of emotions, Mr. Spock, is what keeps us healthy - emotionally healthy, that is.***  
"Plato's Stepchildren"

\* **Mr Spock (a Vulcan) ~ Stoic:**

- after being accused of being green-blooded heartless person, so he can take command:

***I realize that command does have its fascination, even under circumstances such as these, but I neither enjoy the idea of command nor am I frightened of it. It simply exists, and I will do whatever logically needs to be done.***

"The Galileo Seven"

- They were confused and wanted clarification about Paul's message of Jesus and His resurrection ... **TOOK PAUL TO THE AEROPAGUS** - *The High Court of Athens*

V.20 - Paul was saying **certain strange things**

- they never heard them before
- they actually asked him to explain **this new doctrine.**

- have you ever had someone want you to explain the gospel to them?
- have you even prepared for that question to be put to you?

V.21 - The people and visitors of Athens were famous for intellectual and philosophical novelties.

- they had a curiosity for strange new things.
- **spent their time on nothing else.**

## 1. Who is this Unknown God?

V.24-29

### **V.24 “God, who made the world [kosmos] and everything in it**

- **CREATOR** from nothing [ex nihilo]
  - World = Gk. Adornment or ornament: *cosmetic*
- Some (Aristotle’s) believed the universe always existed
- Others (Epicureans) thought the universe coalesced from its atoms into what we see to day from all the atoms ~ evolution
- **WCF 4:1**

He is *Lord of heaven* [air/space] *and earth* [terrestrial land],

- **SOVEREIGN RULER OVER CREATION**
- He made all things He alone is worthy to rule over it
- **WCF 4 & 5**

**does not dwell in temples made with hands.**

- Not constrained or limited by temples
- Used tabernacles in past as a point of contact FOR MAN’S BENEFIT !
- **WCF 2**

### **V.25 Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything,**

- **SUPREMACY**
- Almighty God himself said to the apostate Israelites
  - Ps. 50:21 **You thought that I was just like you**
  - Isaiah 55:8 **“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord.**
- **WCF 2:2e**
- **This church was faced with this heresy nearly two decades ago (1999):**
  - One of the **FALSEHOODS** from this very pulpit was:
    - ◆ **God wanted real love. He was lonely, sitting way back there in eternity past, before He began creation.**
  - Brothers and sisters, we should be grateful - not ALL lies are so bold and obvious.
  - Praise the Lord we now have a faithful pastor and elders!
  - May He be pleased to bless us with more.
- The Lord is self-sufficient
- Not needing ANYTHING from His creation.
- In fact ALL creation is sustained by Him ....

**since He gives to all [men] life, breath, and all things.**

- **GRACIOUS**
- **Common grace** (here mentioned)
  - To all men, God provides:
  - *for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.* [Matt. 4:45]
- **WCF. 2:1t & 5**

**V.26 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth**

- Not only created the world and everything in it
- Created man as a SPECIAL creation.
  - Adam Gen. 2 - God created Adam & Eve from his rib
  - Noah Gen. 9 - God's covenant with Noah
  - Tower of Babel - Gen. 11
- **WCF 4:2**

**He has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,**

- The **FOREKNOWLEDGE** of God following his **Predestination**
- Known as **God's Eternal Decree WCF 3**
- I won't go into the doctrine of **Election and Predestination** today.
- Not out of fear of dissension
- Simply not enough time to give this topic the service it requires.

**27 so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him,**

Is. 55:6, 7 *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

Mt 7:7,8 *Jesus said Ask, and it shall be given you; **seek, and ye shall find**; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; **and he that seeketh findeth**; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*

**NOTE: the need to grope for Him until we find Him!**

- This means much more than looking for Him
- The Greek implies feeling intently - imagine a blind man
  - Not just finding the person, but feeling the person's face
  - How much can they read about that person!

**though He is not far from each one of us; OMNIPRESENCE Ps.139**

**28 for in Him we live and move and have our being, [COMMON GRACE]**

**as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'**

- Paul contextualises this concept
- Finds common ground in their philosophy and culture:
- Aratus was a noted poet
  - from the same area as Paul (Cilicia)
  - Quotes an introduction to his book *Phenomena*
- Famous major poems about Jupiter (the supreme Roman god)
- Verifies Paul's credentials as a learned academic, making him acceptable to speak to them.
  - Just talk to the people you personally deal with in life.
  - If you're a mechanic, talk to mechanics
  - If you clean the house and go shopping, relate to other folk shopping
- Provides a point of reference or concept they will ALL be able to understand
  - Talk in a language your people will know
- Familiar and comfortable to them, so more ready to relax and accept

**29 Therefore, since we are the offspring of God,**

- Alluding to being made in God's Image, and sustained by Him.
- I think again about the common grace and providence of our Loving God:

Cf. Mt 7:11 *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?*

**we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone,**

The Athenians (and indeed modern man) make up totems to worship which is wrong for several reasons:

- Its a ludicrous insult that the God Paul just described could be **honoured with a base element:**
- Where do gold, silver and stones come from?
  - Created by God
  - Underground - beneath the feet of men!!!!

**something shaped by art and man's devising.**

- A feature created by man
- Equates to man creating "God" (cf. The Golden Calf at Sinai - Gen. 32)
- This is emphasised by the moral law given to Moses (Ex.20):

**[1<sup>st</sup> Commandment]** *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*(v.3)

**[2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment]** *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.*  
(v4-6)

- **That is how serious God considers these sins!**

## Homework

**SC47** What is forbidden in the 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment?

**SC51** What is forbidden in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment?

- A final feature of the Athenians and modern society worshipped (**put before God at any time**)
- **Philosophy:**
  - the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence,
  - especially when considered as an academic discipline.
  - Particularly when it acts as a guiding principle for behaviour.
- These Athenianians LOVED to study new ideas and concepts.
- Tell me this is any different from modern thinking man?
- **When we put ANYTHING ahead of God, it becomes and idol !**

## 2. The Gospel

V.30-31

### 30 *Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked,*

- God was tolerant and patient with the evil ways of mankind
  - In his sovereignty, still showed them common grace.

### *but now commands all men everywhere to repent,*

- The time of God is NOW
- All men everywhere must repent
  
- USED in context 60 times in the NT, including ...
  
- **John the Baptist:** Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand! [Mt.3:2]
  
- **Jesus' ministry:** Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. [Mt.4:17]
- I [Jesus] am **not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.** [Mt.9:13]
- Luke 13 - about the Galileans fate under Pilate:
  - except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. (v.3 & 5)
- There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over **one sinner that repenteth.** [Luk 15:10]
- Just before he ascended into heaven:
  - And that **repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.** [Luk 24:47]
  
- **Apostles' letters and sermons ~ including this passage!**
  
- The book of **Revelation** has 10 mentions of repentance
  - **Mostly what happens because people didn't repent !**

- **So what does it mean to repent?**
- In the OT the concept of repentance = *to be sorry, change one's mind OR turn back [u-turn]*
- *Metanoien* = means the same in NT
  
- Literally means turning from my old sinful ways and throwing myself on the MERCY of Christ!
- It is God's gift
- Man's responsibility

- Everyone is quick to point out God is love and we should tolerate all people!
- Well that is only half the story - and **a half truth is a lie.**
- For instance, say I want to be a disciple of Christ [which is what the church consists].
- We have Jesus here teaching me to **REPENT**
- That means no matter WHAT SINS I harbour:
  - transgressions = active willful disobedience
  - Iniquity = premeditated sins continued WITHOUT repentance
- Most of these political and social activists want to join the church BUT
- Don't understand they need to change their lifestyle:
  - **I must turn from sin - that's the part non-Christians don't accept.**
  - **Surrender back to God !**

***But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. [1 Peter 1:15-17]***

**BTW they are no more a sinner than I am !!** We are still to be loving and caring for their souls! But like all of us are constantly struggling with sin, striving in Christ to be more holy.

The only difference between them and me, is I'm only a sinner - saved by grace!

Which continues nicely into the next verse ...

***31 because He [God the Father] has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained [Jesus Christ].***

- The wicked are consigned to the **place of punishment** called "hell".
- Some deny that hell is a place and regard it merely as a condition,
- Bible uses location grammar terms all along:
  - a) a "furnace of fire", Matt. 13:42,
  - b) a "lake of fire", Rev. 20:14-15,
  - c) of a "prison", 1Pet. 3:19
- In this place they will be totally deprived of the divine favour,
- Will experience an endless disturbance of life,
- will suffer positive pains in body and soul, and
- will be subject to pangs of conscience, anguish, and despair,
- Matt. 8:12-13; Mark 9:47-48; Luke 16:23, 28; Rev. 14:10; 21:8.
- There will be degrees in their punishment, Matt.11:22, 24; Luke 12:47-48; 20:47.
- evident that their punishment will be eternal.
- Some deny this, because the words 'eternal' and 'everlasting'
  - may simply denote a long period of time.
- not the usual meaning of the words,
- no reason to think that they have that meaning when applied to the future punishment of the wicked.
- ALSO other terms are used, which point to endless punishment, Mark 9:43, 48; Luke 16:26.

**If that literally doesn't put the fear of Almighty God into your soul**

***He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”***

- The Lord Jesus,
- by His perfect obedience, and sacrifice of Himself,
- which He through the eternal Spirit, once offered up unto God,
- has fully satisfied the justice of His Father;
  
- and purchased, not only **reconciliation**,
- but an **everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven**,
- for those whom the Father has given unto Him

**WCF 8:5**

**So the elements of the Gospel:**

- ***Repentance to life***
- ***Saving Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ's*** work [incl. The Resurrection]
  
- Both of these are enabled by grace from God

### 3. The Different Responses

V.32-34

- Just quickly, we see 3 different types of response:

**32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead:**

1. *some mocked*

2. *others said, "We will hear you again on this matter."*

- Genuine curiosity and interest
- No commitment as they are still seeking answers
- Skepticism may be a healthy thing - in fact ENCOURAGED.

**33 So Paul departed from among them.**

**3. Others moved by the Gospel under the movement of the Holy Spirit**

**34 However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.**

- Clave = *kollaoh* = glue, stick, join fast together, cement metals and materials!
- Here in this sense it means **becoming apart of Paul's company**
  - **Taking his side**
- Believed = *pisteuo* = literally means *to have confidence or place trust in*
- **Signifies reliance on the Gospel, not just understanding it!**

They embraced the Gospel!

## Summary

- Loved ones
- **It is my hope and prayer that in this year 2017**
  - We might embrace the Gospel of Jesus Christ for ourselves as individuals
  - If we have anything impeding our relationship with the Lord:
    - Let us do a U-turn from our stumbling blocks
    - Let us run back to the feet of Christ to wash us anew
    - Ask the Lord for a closer walk with Him
  - Then and ONLY then, can we grow as a body of believers **and**
  - edify each other to carry out the SAME great commission:
    - **Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations,**
    - **baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,**
    - **teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you;**
    - **and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.**

God be with you all.

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