

Lecture 12 – Exegesis of Acts 17:22-31

“Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.” Acts 17:23b

Key Terms

Athens, Areopagus, Stoics, Epicureans, connection and difference

Objectives

- *Describe the city of Athens in Paul’s time.
- *Explain the teachings of the Stoics and the Epicureans.
- *Formulate what characterizes Paul’s approach.

Exegesis of Acts 17:22-31

Questions from Class

1. Acts 15:20 Why did the council include warnings concerning sexual immorality, idolatry, and ceremonially unclean food?
 - A. The key is to facilitate Gentile fellowship with Jews (see Lev. 17 and 18)
 - B. There is a purification consequence to receiving God’s grace.
 - C. Sexual conduct is part of the whole of purification.
 - D. Purification is not a means of salvation but a fruit of salvation.
2. Is Peter’s speech in Acts 15 another example of his finally understanding something he had been taught earlier, similar to his understanding of fellowship with believing Gentiles (Acts 2), or is he simply explaining the lessons he learned earlier?
 - A. He is drawing on the lesson he learned earlier, namely Acts 2 and 11. But in Acts 15 there is a focused clarity.

II. Acts 17:22-31

- A. A short and highly telling speech
- B. Athens: The city of the thinkers
- C. Marketplace: Social center; lively situation
- D. Verse 18: “What is this babbler trying to say?”
Babbler, literally ‘_____’: somebody who is haphazard in putting thoughts together
- E. Areopagus
 1. Mars Hill, space for 200-300 people
 2. Congress of lawyers trained in philosophy who debate and make decisions on some issues of Athenian life
- F. High culture of philosophy in Athens had already deteriorated at the time of Paul, where formality was at times more important than content.
- G. Stoics
 1. _____, the philosopher
 2. Worldview: _____, _____
 3. Identified sin as _____
 4. Two ways to deal with these basic drives:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
- H. Epicureans
 1. Worldview: _____, _____
 2. Identified sin as _____
 3. Solution: _____
 4. Harmony

- I. Notice the points of contact between the Gospel and Stoic philosophy
- J. We are also influenced by Stoic and Epicurean philosophy, and try to solve the problem of sin on our own. It is a modern problem!
- K. Postmodern society is worse than Stoic/Epicurean society. No more reflection on absolute truths; people say: 'That's just how I am.'
- L. How does Paul bring the Gospel to these people?
 - 1. Paul addresses three groups of people: Stoics, Epicureans and representatives of popular, polytheistic beliefs
 - 2. Stone dedicated to unknown god(s)
 - 3. Three parts characterize Paul's address to those people:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - 4. Paul deals with basic flaws of Stoic philosophy.
 - 5. Paul _____ some basic truths.
- M. Paul's speech displays points of connection and points of difference.
- N. The speech challenges the Stoics and Epicureans in a fundamental way.
 - 1. Man is created for the worship of the true and living God.
 - 2. Jesus is the Judge of everybody.
 - 3. Resurrection of the body

Discussion of midterm follows this point