

(Acts 17:16-34)

In Acts 17, we read about the Apostle Paul's missionary journey to Athens, the intellectual and philosophical hub of the ancient Greek world. This was not just any city it was the birthplace of many of the world's greatest thinkers and philosophers, including Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, Pythagoras, Xenophon, and Ptolemy. These were men of deep thought, rigorous reasoning, and passionate inquiry.

The Athenians were not easily swayed by myths or hearsay. They were seekers of truth, always eager to understand the deeper meaning of things. The Bible says:

"Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new." Acts 17:21, ESV

It is in this context that Paul arrives and begins observing the city, noting its religious landscape. Amidst his explorations, he comes across a remarkable altar an altar inscribed with the words: "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD." (Acts 17:23)

This deeply impacted Paul.

The Greek Dilemma: Seeking but Not Finding

Unlike other pagan cultures, the Greeks were not content with blind worship. They were thinkers. Their inscription, "To the Unknown God," was not mere superstition it was the humble admission that amidst all their idols, philosophies, and scientific pursuits, there remained a supreme being beyond their comprehension.

They had come to a conclusion many modern thinkers also reach: that there must be a transcendent cause behind the order of the universe one not made by human hands, nor confined to temples or religious rituals.

Paul seizes this moment to speak truth into their spiritual curiosity.

Paul's Message on Mars Hill

"Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you." Acts 17:22-23, ESV

Paul boldly declared that this “Unknown God” was none other than the Creator of the heavens and the earth:

“The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man.” Acts 17:24, ESV

He goes further to say this God is not served by human hands, nor is He distant or detached:

“...He is actually not far from each one of us, for ‘In Him we live and move and have our being’... For we are indeed His offspring.” Acts 17:27-28, ESV

Paul then points them toward Jesus Christ, the only way to truly know this unknowable God:

"The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent." Acts 17:30, ESV

"...Because He has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom He has appointed; and of this He has given assurance to all by raising Him from the dead." Acts 17:31, ESV

Modern Echoes of Ancient Athens

Just like in Athens, our generation is filled with seekers, scientists, and skeptics. Many believe in a Supreme Power, but they call it by other names "Nature," "the Universe," or "Energy."

Famous physicist Albert Einstein once said:

"I believe in God, but not in a personal God who is concerned with the fates and actions of human beings... I believe in the God of Spinoza, who reveals Himself in the orderly harmony of what exists, not in a God who concerns Himself with the fates and actions of human beings."

Similarly, many Muslims believe in Allah as utterly transcendent not a father, not a man, not to be called “Father” or to have any relationship with human beings.

All these beliefs like the Athenian altar reflect a limited knowledge of the one true God. They recognize His greatness, but not His accessibility through Jesus Christ.

“They worship what they do not know...”
(cf. John 4:22)

Jesus: The Visible Image of the Invisible God

The mystery of the “Unknown God” was fully revealed in Jesus Christ.

“For in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.” Colossians 2:9, ESV

*“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.”*Colossians 1:15, ESV

*“Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.”*John 14:9, ESV

God made Himself knowable in Christ. Without Him, no one can understand or relate to God. Jesus is the “interface” through whom finite man can engage with an infinite God.

Let’s use a modern analogy.

Analogy: Jesus is the Screen of the Phone

Imagine your smartphone. The internal components (motherboard, processor, circuits) make it work, but you can’t communicate through it unless there’s a screen.

That screen translates the complex technology into simple icons, apps, and touch commands that you can interact with. Jesus is that interface.

Without Jesus, trying to reach God is like opening the phone and touching the chips and wires directly you won't make a call. Jesus bridges the infinite and the finite.

"No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6, ESV

Why Knowing God Matters

Worshipping a God you do not know has consequences.

- You miss out on relationship with your Creator.
- You remain under judgment, as Paul warned the Athenians.
- Your worship, though sincere, is not fruitful.
- You live in fear, confusion, and disconnection.

But through Jesus, everything changes:

"But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God." John 1:12, ESV

“Since then we have a great high priest... let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace...” Hebrews 4:14-16, ESV

Come to Christ Today

Are you still outside of Christ? Perhaps you're religious, spiritual, or just curious. Or maybe you're Muslim, atheist, or nominally Christian. Whatever your background the time is now.

“Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.” Hebrews 3:15, ESV

Repent, believe in the Gospel, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38). Then you will no longer worship an unknown God, but will walk in fellowship with the living God.

The Known God Through Christ

*“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,
but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son,
whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He
created the world.”*

Hebrews 1:1-2, ESV

Jesus is the final Word. He is the full revelation of the God whom the world is still searching for.

Don't live your life worshiping what you do not know.

*“...For eternal life is this: to know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”*John 17:3, ESV

Maranatha

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