



Trial of the Gods

Acts 17:16-34 | Ryan Pfeiffer | August 16, 2026

INTRO. Acts 17 w/ Paul from Thess—> Berea—> now escorted to Athens...

Silas/ Timothy remain in Berea while Paul waits for them to rejoin him.

(PPT) As Paul enters Athens, picture the scene... Magnificent temples, 100's of statues to the gods, smoke rising from the altars, animals led to sacrifice, worshippers in procession, philosophers debating...

This is the city of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle...the intellectual capital of World

READ Acts 17:16-21. THE UNKNOWN GOD.

Paul is struck by the sheer volume of idols/ statues... Petronius quipped... It

is easier to find a god than a man in Athens. (Petronius, 1st Century AD).

Our world today is just as crowded w/ religions, podcast gurus & competing visions of the good life.

With so many things to believe, how do we know what is true?

What is truly unique about Jesus?

FOCUS. Paul is going to walk us through WHO God is... WHAT God is doing... and What God WANTS from us.

READ. Acts 17:22-28. WHO IS GOD?

(PPT) The Areopagus is the highest court in Athens... for serious cases...

In 5thC BC Socrates was killed for promoting "new gods" — Paul's on thin ice!

Notice Paul doesn't begin w/ Scriptures... he observes what they believe

- Paul looks for the echo of truth in their beliefs... and leads to whole truth.
- He uses the Unknown God to lead them toward the truth about Jesus.

In verses 24-27 he paints the picture of God as The Nearby Creator who Sustains everything through his Sovereign power.

1. God is Creator v24 Identity
2. God is Sustainer v25 Fulfillment
3. God is Sovereign v26 Control
4. God is Near v27 Love

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It's our restless searching for these things that reveals our longing for God

Augustine- You have made us for yourselves, our heart is restless until it rests in you.

READ Acts 17:29-31. WHAT IS GOD DOING?

First God is calling everyone everywhere to REPENT... Repentance is turning from our personal salvation plans we trust & turning toward the God who rescues.

The Stoics- I can save myself by mastering myself.

The Epicureans- I can save myself by protecting my peace.

The gospel invites to surrender ourselves to Jesus who alone can save us.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

To trust Jesus means believing three things:

- We need rescuing — sin has broken our relationship with God and one another.
- Jesus has rescued us — through his death and resurrection. (Act of sacrificial love)
- Jesus is King — and he is coming to make all things new.

Second God is preparing the world for judgment.

Vs 31 For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed.

1. It means that God is going to remove the evil from our world...
2. He is going set things right...
3. No more eating cake and gaining weight! (I'm joking)
4. Seriously... no more injustice...

Revelations 21:4 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

This is eternal life... it's not just a forever thing... its a qualitative thing...

We need to repent or we will be judged with the evil in this world.

READ Acts 17:32-34. WHAT DOES GOD WANT FROM US?

Some sneered... Some became curious and wanted to know more...

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God wants us to turn toward him with curiosity which leads to faith.

What are you doing with your curiosity?

- Consider Alpha!

- Read John's account of Jesus... discuss with a friend. (We have Bibles!)

Some of us... like Dionysius & Damaris... are ready to believe and follow...

I want to share with you 3 simple steps to begin this journey:

1) Believing begins by acknowledging God loves you and is pursuing you.

Jeremiah 31:3 "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness."

2) Believing grows by giving your life to Jesus.

Romans 10:9 If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

I invite you now to PRAY with me now... can declare with our mouth...

3) Come up to the front I have a special gift for you.