

“A Stranger in Athens”

Series: “Real Christianity: How It Changed the World.”, Part 8 of 13

Sunday, August 2, 2026, at 9:00 & 11:00 AM

Text: Acts 17:15-34

Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, “What does this babbler wish to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities”—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?” - Acts 17:16–19 (ESV)

Point I: Paul knew when to bite his tongue.

...“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. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us,” - Acts 17:22b–27 (ESV)

Point II: Paul found common ground with people who saw the world differently.

“The Stoics think that the gods are not to be worshiped with sacrifices and gifts, as though they needed anything...” - Cicero, De Natura Deorum

“The gods must of necessity enjoy an immortal life in perfect peace, far removed and withdrawn from our affairs; for free from every pain and danger, strong in their own resources, needing nothing from us, they are not won by gifts nor moved by anger.” - Lucretius

The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything... - Acts 17:24–25a (ESV)

for ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are indeed his offspring.’ Being then God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, 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 17:28–31 (ESV)

Point III: Paul showed where people’s beliefs fell short and how Jesus makes better sense of the world.

Point IV: Paul knew when to drip the Gospel, and when to pour it on.