

Acts 17:16-34 - Part 1

EMC Wednesday Night Bible Study - 7-5-17

Context

IV. The Apostle to the Gentiles (12:25-21:17)

- A. The first missionary journey (12:25-14:28)
- B. The Council of Jerusalem (15:1-16:5)
- C. Mission in Macedonia (16:6-17:15)**
- D. Paul in Athens (17:16-34)
- E. Corinth and Ephesus (18:1-19:41)
- F. More about Ephesus (20:1-21:17)

Alone in Athens

Athens

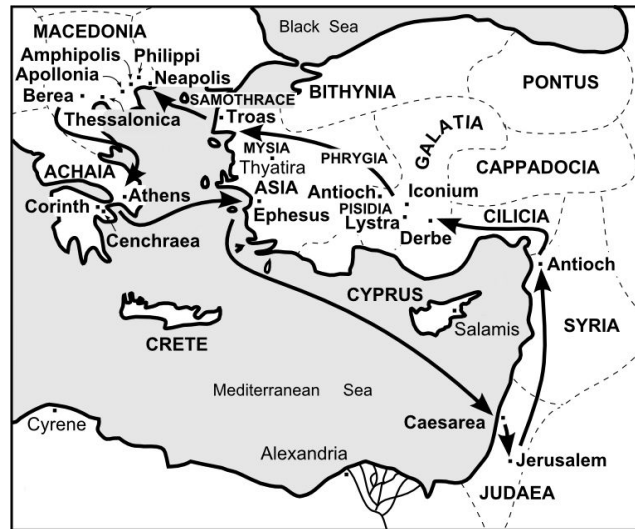
- Foremost Greek city-state since 5th C. BC
- Rich philosophical tradition, literature, art
- The empire's intellectual metropolis

Paul arrived by sea from the north

- His goal = to return to Macedonia (16:10)

Luke's 4 parts of Paul's reaction: What he...

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



What Paul Saw

V. 16 - "Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols." (or "given over to idols")

He could have strolled through Athens as a _____

- The buildings and monuments were unparalleled in the ancient world
- Acropolis (Gk. "upper city") - a citadel, built upon an area of elevated ground.
 - In Athens = the location of a vast composition of architecture and culture dedicated to the national glory and to the worship of idols
 - Home of the Parthenon - temple dedicated to the goddess Athena

He could have strolled through Athens as a _____

- Was no uncultured philistine
- Could have lingered in the *agora* (Gk. "gathering place" or "assembly") - central public space in ancient Greek city-states for athletic, artistic, spiritual, and political life of the city.

The city's _____ caught Paul's attentions

- κατείδωλος ("kateidólos") - full of images of idols, grossly idolatrous
 - Adjective used nowhere else in Scripture, nor any other Greek literature
 - Could mean: "_____ with idols" or "_____ by them"

- *Kata* often expresses luxurious growth
- One ancient student of Socrates referred to Athens as “one great altar, one great sacrifice”
 - It would be “easier to find a god in Athens than a man.”
 - The entire Greek pantheon was represented
 - The gleaming spearpoint of Athena was visible from 40 miles
- The people of Athens were “very religious” (v. 22)
 - Paul was not impressed, he was oppressed

What Paul Felt

V. 16 - “his spirit was being provoked within him”

Παροξύνω (“paroxunó” = “alongside” + “sharp edge”) - become emotionally provoked, roused to anger, spurred to action

- Medical associations, referring to a seizure or epileptic fit
- Cf. I Cor. 13:5 - “love...is not easily provoked to anger...”
- V. = _____ tense: a continuous, settled reaction to what he saw.
- Verb often used in LXX for the Holy One of Israel, particularly in his reaction to idolatry
 - Golden calf at Sinai (Deut 9:7, 18, 22)
 - Baal of Peor (Ps. 106:28-29)
 - Northern Kingdom’s calf in Samaria (Ho. 8:5)
 - Isaiah 65:2-3 - “I have spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in the way which is not good, following their own thoughts, a people who continually provoke Me to My face, offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on bricks...”
- Paul was provoked to anger, grief, and indignation for the honor and glory of God’s name.
 - Often called “_____” (Ex. 34:14)
 - Jealousy = the _____ of rivals
 - Whether it is good or evil depends on whether the rival has any business being there
 - Looks, brains, abilities, wealth, etc. vs. exclusive relationship
 - Isaiah 42:8 - “I am the Lord, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven images”
 - God has exclusive right to our allegiance
 - His people should _____ in his jealousy of it
 - Phil. 2 - Paul’s rejection of “vainglory”
 - I Ki. 19:10 - Elijah in a time of national apostasy, distressed that God’s honor was being profaned
 - II Cor. 11:2ff. - Paul to the backsliding Corinthians

Paul’s pain for what he saw in Athens:

- Was not due to: bad temper, pity for their ignorance, fear of their eternal salvation
- Was due to: his abhorrence of idolatry, deep jealousy for the name of God
- Commentator: “His whole soul was revolted at the sight of a city given over to idolatry.”

What moved Paul then should move us today

- Our chief motivator for sharing the good news should be a zeal or jealousy for the glory of Jesus Christ.