



# CAPITOL COMMISSION™

## The God the Intellectuals Knew They Did Not Know

JUNE 13-15, 2018

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**Acts 17:22-28** *“And Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, ‘Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. 23) For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, “TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.” What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. 24) The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; 25) neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives life and breath to all things; 26) and He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation, 27) that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28) for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, “For we are His offspring.”” (NASB)*

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“WHAT YOURSELVES ACKNOWLEDGE TO EXIST AND TO BE WORTHY OF RELIGIOUS REVERENCE, ALTHOUGH YOU CANNOT EVEN NAME IT, I MAKE KNOWN TO YOU THIS DAY, IN THE PERSON OF THE TRUE AND LIVING GOD.”

J. A. ALEXANDER

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Are Paul’s words about their being very religious actually a compliment? Why were these intellectuals worshipping a god they didn’t know? Does Paul use this altar as a bridge to these intellectual elites? How does Paul first introduce God to those who do not know him? Does Paul’s first sentence overthrow their misconceptions about God? Does God need us or do we

need Him? Were the Greeks racist? Why did God make us? Can we take a single breath or even move without His help?

### FOCUS ON FUTURE BIBLE STUDIES:

- > JUNE 20-22: ACTS 17:28-34 **LEADING THE GREATEST MINDS TO CHRIST**
- > JUNE 27-29: ACTS 18:1-4 **PAUL’S NEW TEAM IN THE WEALTHIEST CAPITAL**

When Paul arrived in Athens, the greatest intellectual capital in the world, he was disturbed by the deceit he saw so flagrantly on display around him. The idols outnumbered the people by three to one, and these world respected intellectuals had allowed their capital of arts and eloquence to be saturated with doctrines of demons through idol worship. This city of world renowned scholarship had become a living lie in that the schools of philosophy taught the opposite of the idol worship, yet they both flourished together, the idols generally accepted by the philosophers while in contrast to what they taught. The Epicureans taught that the world was made by chance, and thus they were philosophically atheists, while the opposite school of Stoic philosophers taught that god was in everything, so there was no need to worship their idol any more than their kitchen table. These philosophers had found Paul preaching in the marketplace, so they drug him to the court on Mars Hill to shut him up quickly and force him out of town.

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“THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUE GOD ALONE IS SUFFICIENT FOR THE ABOLISHING OF ALL IDOLS.” JOHN CALVIN

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### I. MAGNIFICENT STAND FOR TRUTH ACTS 17:22-23

Surrounded by the greatest intellectuals of his day, Paul stood in their midst and began with a sentence that they knew could be taken two ways. The word translated “very religious,” can also mean “very superstitious,” and could cast a negative light on their foolish idolatry and

### BIBLE STUDIES

WEDNESDAY @ 7:30AM –BIBLE STUDY – FREDERICKSBURG – BOB EVANS ON RT. 3 & 12:00 NOON – OAKTON – BOB EVANS – 10443 WHITE GRANITE DR.

THURSDAY @ 7:00AM –BIBLE STUDY – CHESTER – SHONEY’S AT RT. 10 (IRON BRIDGE ROAD) & 301(12531 JEFFERSON DAVIS HIGHWAY)

FRIDAY @ 7:00 AM –BIBLE STUDY – NORFOLK – GOLDEN CORRAL, 6103 N. MILITARY HWY, NEAR THE NORFOLK AIRPORT

# Virginia

## The God the Intellectuals Knew They Did Not Know

fearfulness to appease their many gods. In their pride, they probably chose to take it as a compliment. Brilliantly seizing upon the opportunity to present something new, Paul built a bridge of contact with these intellectual giants through an altar to a deity that they acknowledged they did not know. But since they had been worshipping this deity in shameful ignorance throughout much of their history, their ears were tuned to hear Paul's proclamation of this one as the True God they had ignored for so long.

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**"THE ATHENIANS HAD TAKEN THE FIRST STEP TOWARD KNOWING GOD IN THAT THEY WERE SUPERNATURALISTS. IT IS OBVIOUSLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR THOSE WHO DENY GOD'S EXISTENCE TO KNOW HIM, SINCE 'HE WHO COMES TO GOD MUST BELIEVE THAT HE IS' (HEB. 11:6)."**

**JOHN MACARTHUR**

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### **II. MASTER AND SOVEREIGN OF ALL ACTS 17:24-26**

As the Bible does in Genesis 1:1, Paul first revealed that the True God is the Creator who *"made the world and all things in it."* These intellectuals needed to learn the basics. Common sense requires that there was an initial cause behind the incredible complexity of creation. One school of philosophy said it all began by chance, like many of the intellectuals today embrace evolution. Such cannot be a scientific theory because it is not testable, repeatable or observable. It certainly cannot be factually true or even science because it directly contradicts laws of science. The second law of thermodynamics, also called the law of entropy, is one of the most obvious and well-established laws of science, stating that the natural tendency is that everything moves from a greater ordered to a less ordered state. Yet the philosophy of evolution teaches that precisely the opposite has happened and all creation was built by chance. No one looks at something as simple as a house and will believe that it came together by chance. *"For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God"* (Heb 3:4). Equally telling is the fact

that evolution will claim the fossil record provides verification while just the opposite is reality in that the innumerable gaps between transitional forms have never been found. The final nail in the coffin of the lie of evolution is the discovery of DNA and the vast engineering data that is programmed into every cell. Yet, incredibly, it is still taught as truth in our schools. Because God is the creator, He owns all that He has made and is *"Lord of heaven and earth,"* it naturally follows that He *"does not dwell in temples made with hands, neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives life and breath to all things."* God obviously does not depend upon man for anything, but man depends upon God for everything, including our next breath. Those in Athens held that there were two groups of people upon the earth, Greeks and barbarians. Paul also addressed this national pride with words that would also address evolution, *"and He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth."* Paul made it clear that God had determined that no race is above another. In fact every nation's history and lands are ordained by God, *"having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation."* Gratitude is in order, because God gives us every single thing we have!

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**"THE BEST STARTING POINT FOR EVANGELIZING PAGANS WITH NO KNOWLEDGE OF THE SCRIPTURE IS TO EXPLAIN THE POWER AND PERSON BEHIND THE CREATION. SATAN'S INVENTION OF EVOLUTION CUTS OFF THAT PATH OF REASON THAT LEADS TO GOD." JOHN MACARTHUR**

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### **III. MANKIND WAS MADE TO SEEK GOD ACTS 17:27-28**

The prepositional phrase, *"to seek God"* modifies the verb *"made"* in verse 26, thus, *"He made ... every nation of mankind ... to seek God."* This is the purpose for which God made us and it is therefore our responsibility and highest goal, because He can be found (Jer 29:13).

#### Questions to Ponder:

- 1) Are you willing to take your stand for God's truth even when you are surrounded by unbelieving intellectuals?
- 2) Have you abandoned the philosophies of false science and turned from your sin in repentance to embrace Jesus as Lord?
- 3) How are you seeking God today?