

Will the Real God Please Stand Up?

Acts 17

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In this sermon by the Apostle Paul, there will be a transition from a general belief in God to God fully revealing Himself to the human race in God the Son. Christ the Lord took on our humanity so that we might know who God is in Jesus Christ! (Christ, as we will see in the Scriptures, possessed all of the attributes of God.)

When people used to talk about God because of our Christian heritage, they at least knew His name and they would turn to the Bible for answers. Plain common sense and reason in those civilized nations whose God is the Lord knew God to be One Living personal God Who was respected as man's Creator.

In our pride of great achievements and prosperity we let it go to our heads and have seen the way of all the other nations before us who forgot God and in the vacuum opened the door to a flood of imaginary gods. This caught on in sophisticated circles where it gained great popularity and within intellectualism because of our scientific achievements.

Athens was a place of sophisticated paganism. They took pride in their philosophers: Plato, Socrates, Aristotle. They were stoics and Epicureanists. Epicureans believed in self-mastery; they believed there was no resurrection; they believed pleasure to be the chief end of man.

Simply put, we didn't need God anymore. All we had to do now was push buttons and we would instantaneously have whatever we needed.

In its wake we have been left in a post-Christian era that has chosen to completely detach itself from God. Secularism, a people without God who chose to go their own way in this brave new world only ushered in an openness to worship the creation rather than the Creator.

In our foolishness we did not become less about our faith in God, we fantasized a cosmic deity that is more personal with the spirituality that sees energy being all that there is and if we can become part of it we will discover our own deity.

Modern man has become a worshipper of himself and has chosen by faith to believe in himself. This takes a lot of faith that cannot be proven, but only the imagination thinking, it must be true. We are the god-makers.

Evangelism and our personal way of witnessing to the lost have taken on a completely new approach. We used to assume that people basically believed in the One True Living God of the Bible, but all that has changed. We now have to make a distinction about which god we are talking about and put forth a defense of the God of Christianity. This is even before we can get to the Gospel of Christ.

The Apostle Paul argued his case for Christ and the resurrection beginning with a basic understanding of the eternal attributes of a God above His creation and not part of it. This is the transcendence of God.

Acts 17:22 “Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars Hill (the Areopagus) and said ‘ye men of Athens I perceive that in all things you are too superstitious²³ for as I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, to the unknown god whom therefore you ignorantly worship: Him declare I unto you.’”

In their fears, these people had a god for everything but just in case they had missed one, they had an altar to “the unknown god”.

It was true that they had missed Him in their ignorance and Paul used this as an opportunity to explain Him. God has become unknown today in our ignorance of Him. We need to make Him known.

Paul begins with God being the Creator of the world where everything came from (for things can't come from nothing). He is Lord for He was eternally before all things and outside His creation, for He couldn't have been created. He lives in the eternal heavens above it all.

²⁴ “God that made the world and the things therein, seeing He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;”

This is the immensity of God. He is the God of infinity. The heavens above, where He dwells, have no end to them. It is impossible for God to be confined to space or He would be limited. God is limitless; He has no limitations. If He did there would be something or someone greater than He. God is infinite.

God does not need manmade temples for us to house Him in to care for Him. How could God be God if He needed us to do anything for Him? If we think we need to build Him a house then this makes man greater than God. Christianity is not about what we can do for God but what He has done for us.

²⁵ “Neither is worshipped with men’s hands as though He needed anything, seeing He gives to all life and breath and all things;”

If God needs us to feed Him and build Him and stand Him up on a pedestal and move Him about then His life depends on us. What is there to worship but ourselves who take care of Him? It is the Living God where man has his existence, His life from Whom we draw our life and every breath we breathe. He provides everything we would ever need. This is The Living God Who has His eternal existence in Himself. The I AM that I AM; I AM because I AM in Myself, eternally.

This is the eternal self-existence of God.

He is the sovereign God of the nations Who has eternally decreed their existence for His own purposes and set limitations upon them though they think they reign in their own power.

²⁶ “and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the boundaries of their habitations;”

It is not the politicians and kings, not world leaders who create nations, expand their borders in a time of their choosing, but it is God in His time Who brings them into existence, limits their power that they go no further for His own purposes.

This is the sovereignty of God. He rules over the world and will bring all things to their conclusion according to His prophetic plan given to us in the Scriptures from the beginning of time. God is directing absolutely and completely to their ultimate end, to His glory. Nothing happens in the world and current events outside of God’s rule and authority over the kings of the earth.

This is the sovereignty of God. He is Lord. God rules uncontested in unlimited authority in irresistible power after the counsel of His own will.

The challenge that God has set before man is to earnestly seek Him and find Him when we have sought for Him with all our heart.

²⁷ “that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us: ²⁸ for in Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, ‘for we are also his offspring.’”

God has made Himself obvious to the human race. Anybody with a sane mind of sheer common sense knows that life is a miracle and that we draw our life from God, Himself. Our existence, our very being and personhood, with all that life gives us the ability to do is no accident.

Knowing that there is a God, it only makes sense that we put out the effort to discover Who He is; how to know Him and make it our most passionate desire. The importance of knowing and loving God should be the daily passion of our soul. Once we have found Him in the Scriptures and through Jesus Christ our Lord, our whole life and primary purpose ought to be about Him, getting to know Him and loving Him. It is a pursuit of God and a daily labour in the Scriptures that begins to consume our whole life, “God, help us to be men and women after your own heart. Give us an interest and love for the Scriptures that will not be at rest until we have discovered everything there is to know about Yourself.” It is when God has done a work of grace in our hearts and has given to us a burning desire to know Him that God, Himself, engages us to hold us up in our search until we have found our “All” in Him.

Being as we are, the very offspring of God, bearing His very image, marked by majesty as the crowning feature of His creation, there is something very apparent about us as human beings. We are a living soul that can think, feel and will to do what we set our minds toward. We are not a piece of rock, a piece of carved wood or a lifeless object and neither is God.

²⁹ Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

³⁰ And the times of this ignorance God winked at (God, in the past, has been super-patient with man); but now commands all men everywhere to repent:”

The question we need to ask ourselves is: what event happened in our times that brought us out of the dark where there is no excuse for not knowing God? What is it that God has done to make Himself so very well known that he has left us with an obvious need for repentance?

It has been the coming of Jesus Christ into the world, the Son of God, God Himself in humanity that an ignorance of God is no longer excusable.

Where is this knowledge of God in Christ taking us in what should be pure common sense?

It is that we are accountable to God and will be judged by Him according to what we have done with Jesus Christ.

³¹”Because he hath appointed a day (at the second coming of Christ), in the which he will judge the world in righteousness (which is His holy standard) by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”

What is it about the very action of God in the world that gives us conclusive proof, an unmistakable evidence for the claims of Jesus Christ? Why should we believe that He was the Son of God and repent of our sin and turn to Jesus Christ for salvation? It is in the miracle of the resurrection of Christ in that God hath raised Him from the dead.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ? Why would you not believe in Jesus Christ?

Where ever the Gospel of Christ is preached; where ever the truth of God has been told in the coming of Christ, there will be a reaction to it that is universal.

³² “And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. ³³So Paul departed from among them. ³⁴Howbeit certain men followed him, and believed:”

- Today some of you hearing about God will ridicule the whole idea of Him in Jesus Christ and His resurrection.
- Some of you will procrastinate, and put off making a commitment of your lives to Jesus Christ and fail to be saved.
- Others of you will believe on Him as your Savior and will follow others in the truth. You will become a participating member in the Church and the family of God.