

ACTS 17 vs 16

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In the previous chapter, Luke introduced us to the Bereans who were more honorable than the Thessalonians, in that they received the word with an open-mind, **and searched the scriptures daily, to see if these things were so**. So they did what we in the 21st century should do with this gift of the Word of God inspired by the Spirit of God.

16 Now while he waited in Athens, he was deeply distressed when he saw the city filled with idols.

Dr. Dallas Willard, in his book: Knowing Christ Today... writes: Idolatry is error at the worldview level... assigning powers to an object... be it technology gadgets, government, money or whatever we've come to trust including people or politicians; assigning powers it really does not possess; that if humans properly serve it will be used to benefit them. In the end, the idol is always intended to serve the idol worshipers and their desires. Paul calls coveting, idolatry. But idolatry never works out well. Because it is a flight from reality; and from the knowledge of reality.

The Lord, by contrast is a conscious, powerful Being who created the physical world, and has complete control over it; He has a moral purpose of His own that can't be manipulated by human service or worship. The Old Testament command to: Love the LORD GOD with our heart, soul, mind and strength... lies at the necessary center of all existence. It is not an empty ritual or magical incantation, though for many who recite the command, it may be only that.

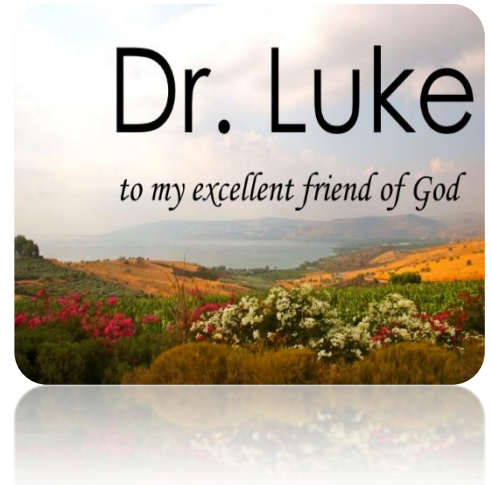
And Paul, as he waited at Athens... saw a city filled with idols.

17 So through reasoning, he disputed in the synagogue with the Jews, and with devout persons, and in the market daily with those who met with him / dialogizomai; by discussing point by point with those of good sense, and even arguing... primarily in 2 parts of the city.

Professor Blaiklock, Auckland University wrote: the Athens of this vivid story was in the late-afternoon of her glory. This city led the world in its intellectual achievement, 5 centuries earlier. In language, Athens produced what is perhaps the most perfect instrument of human expression in the history of speech.

Until William Shakespeare in the late 1500s... the 3 tragic playwright artists: Aeschylus... Sophocles... and Euripides were produced in Athens... 2000 years earlier.

Epicurean philosophy of materialism taught that **pleasure was the chief end of life**. And though celestial beings existed, they cared nothing for the lives of men. Those of the school of Epicurus imagined the world was made by atoms in perpetual motion, that by accident jumped into this frame. They also lived by the axiom: **Eat, drink and be merry... for tomorrow we die**. Epicureanism was a refuge for the hedonist and the sensualist seeking excuse for self-indulgence: like our modern materialists generation!



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Stoic philosophy on the other hand, taught... the highest expression of nature was **reason**. And they stressed the supremacy of the rational over the emotional. They emphasized individual sufficiency and strict, unbending endurance. Stoics held a pantheistic view of god as a world-soul. Stoic cosmology was subject to the laws of fate. Asceticism and contemplation of death... permeated their life.

And into this well-worn, proud, intellectual atmosphere... marched Paul. And we read...

and he was in the market daily with those who met with him.

¹⁸Some of the philosophers of the Epicureans / the materialists, and also of the Stoics / along with the virtuous rationalists, debated him.

And someone said, what will this babbler say? / probably the Epicureans; the word is: **spermo-logos**; So, it sounds like they're saying: sperm-word, or word-sperm. I mean, how would you use that word in a sentence? It might be challenging, wouldn't you think? And in their best Stoic or Epicurean thought, it might be difficult to know exactly what they're saying. But some say it seems like they said something like:

What will this seed-flinger... or seed-picker say? / you know, this bird-brain?! And these people wanted to know, because there's a stranger in their town.

others said, **He seems to be a proclaimer of strange diamonion** / of foreign demons:

because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.

¹⁹And they took him, and brought him to Areopagus / sometimes called: Mars Hill... Or, the high Council and Court of Appeals,

saying, **We want to know what is this new doctrine, which you speak?**

²⁰For you bring certain strange things to our ears: so, we want to know what these things mean.



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21 For all the Athenians and strangers who were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear something new.

This is Paul's first major exposition of the Gospel... to an audience without a background of Old Testament theology, or Jewish thought. Luke's detailed brief report hints at what Paul's lengthy speech contained.



In his book, **The Young Church in Action...** J B Phillips has an interesting, expanded version of Paul's famous speech... from Mar's Hill.

It's the place where they wanted to know... **what's new**? What change is taking place? **Give us the news.** And notice they weren't reading and meditating there. That would build foundations if you had to reflect on what you read.

I bet Paul sounded a lot like Dr. James Tour. Listen to one of many lectures by Dr. Tour, one of the 10 leading scientists in the world today: a synthetic, organic chemist; a professor of and nanoengineering at [Rice University](http://www.rice.edu), Houston Texas, [The Resurrection of Jesus Christ](#). Or; [Jesus Christ and Nanotechnology](#).

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