

Welcome to the Worship Celebration of



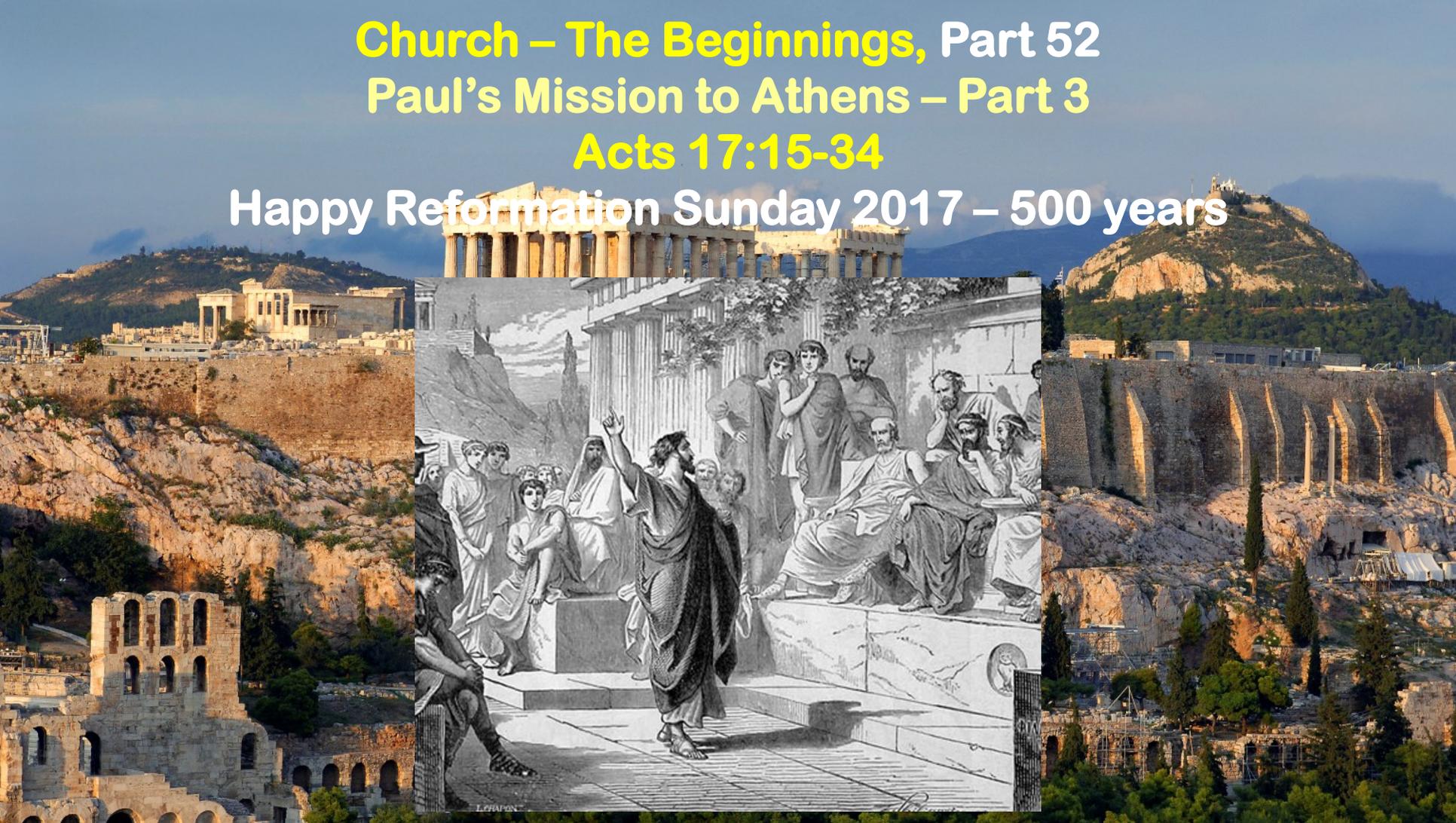
SIMPLY BIBLICAL | FAMILY INTEGRATED

Church – The Beginnings, Part 52

Paul's Mission to Athens – Part 3

Acts 17:15-34

Happy Reformation Sunday 2017 – 500 years



Acts 17:15-34 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁵ So those who conducted Paul brought him to Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed, they departed.

¹⁶ Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols. ¹⁷ Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the *Gentile* worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, "What does this babbling man want to say?"

Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods," because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.

¹⁹ And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new doctrine *is* of which you speak? ²⁰ For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean." ²¹ For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.



19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak? **20** For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean.” **21** For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.

22 Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; **23** for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription:
TO THE (AN) UNKNOWN GOD.



22 Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; **23** for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription:
TO THE (AN) UNKNOWN GOD.

Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing [in ignorance] , Him I proclaim to you: **24** “God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is LORD of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. **25** Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.





So, what about this (or “those”) altar(s) with this inscription:

TO THE (AN) UNKNOWN GOD ???

This is REAL HISTORY – relating to a REAL Event that Impacted Athens and the Greek peoples in the region. God INTERVENED!!!

There was a Plague that hit Athens and the surrounding region in the 6th Century BC. Because of treachery by the Athenians against a certain neighboring people group, they thought it was some god punishing them. It was so bad that they sought every god, goddess, idol, etc. anything. So, the council said that there must be a “god” they hadn’t appeased. So, they called upon a “prophet” – Epimenides – from Crete (see Titus 1:12)





Paul quotes from Epimenides in Titus 1:12

One of them, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons."

...





So Epimenides came up with a plan. He released hungry sheep into the countryside and instructed men to follow the sheep to see where they would lie down. He believed that since hungry sheep would not naturally lie down but continue to graze, if the sheep were to lie down, it would be a sign from God that this place was sacred. At each spot, where the sheep tired and laid down, the Athenians built an altar and sacrificed the sheep on it. Afterward it is believed the plague stopped which they attributed to this unknown God accepting the sacrifice.





1. Paul noticed and knew their Culture and History – their “religious” practices and sought to find something to use – a LAUNCH POINT for the Gospel.

He did not super-impose his culture.

2. Paul used a Historical “God Intervention” as a CONNECTION POINT for explaining the Gospel: “the Altar to an Unknown God” .

3. Paul was Gracious in addressing them as being “religious”. Some translations say “superstitious”, but the overwhelming best practices of translating that would be using the concept/word: “religious”

Paul eased into the TRUTH without Compromising the TRUTH.



3. Paul was Gracious in addressing them as being “religious”. Some translations say “superstitious”, but the overwhelming best practices of translating that would be using the concept/word: “religious” Paul eased into the TRUTH without Compromising the TRUTH.



4. Paul introduced the Real / True God, based upon something that the Athenians could related to: their Own History – God’s Real Intervention in their History. “that which you worship in Igorance ...” “I am here to proclaim to you ...” the whole truth about HIM



4. Paul introduced the Real / True God, based upon something that the Athenians could relate to: their Own History – God’s Real Intervention in their History. “that which you worship in Ignorance ...” “I am here to proclaim to you ...” the whole truth about HIM

5. Paul does not quote the Bible (the Old Testament, etc.) to the Athenians. He does, however explain Biblical Concepts about God, History, Mankind, the Messiah/Savior, etc. He does this, because these people do not have any connection to the Bible (that is, they have not read it, they are not familiar with it, etc.) So, Paul uses concepts and ideas that are common to all humans, because we are created in God’s Image, etc. (ref.: Rom. 1:18-23)

Rom. 1:18-23 –

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, **19** because what may be known of God is manifest in [or “to”] them, for God has SHOWN it to them. **20** For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are CLEARLY seen, being understood by (through) the THINGS that are MADE, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are WITHOUT EXCUSE, **21** because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. **22** Professing to be wise, they became fools, **23** and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man — and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. [e.g.: idolatry and atheism (evolutionism)]





In Conclusion ...

Paul addressed a culture that was as far from God as could be, yet it was highly “educated” and literate, etc. He used their own History of God’s Intervention to explain the Gospel. He did not quote the Bible but used Biblical concepts without compromise.



The culture of Athens at the time of Paul is very similar to ours, here, today in the USA. Although we are not exactly like that – what Paul did is very instructive to us.

We must find those Launch/Connection Points in our Culture – and – on a personal level with people from which to share the Gospel – even without quoting the Bible → He gave them just enough to whet their appetite – to want more