

**PAUL ON MAR'S HILL**  
(Acts 17:15)

**INTRODUCTION:**

- A. Paul's second missionary journey.
- B. His Companions: (Acts 15:22; Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:11; Philemon 24)
  - 1. Silas - a member of the church at Antioch.
  - 2. Luke - the beloved physician.
  - 3. Timothy - a young gospel preacher (Acts 16:1-3).
- C. The Macedonian Call.
  - 1. The journey to Philippi.
  - 2. Conversion of Lydia and the Philippian jailor.
  - 3. Preaching at Thessalonica and Berea.
  - 4. The Jews revolt and Paul travels to Athens alone.

**I. THE SETTING.**

- A. The City of Athens.
  - 1. Her universities were filled with students from all over the world.
  - 2. Her systems of philosophy were well known.
  - 3. Her mathematicians, scientists, philosophers, painters and sculptors were renowned.
  - 4. Her religion was polytheism. Zeus, Athena, Apollo, Vulcan, Aphrodite, Artemis, Hermes.
- B. Idolatry Abounded on Every Hand.
  - 1. Probably walked down the Street Hermes.
  - 2. There were more gods than there were free men in the city.

- (a) Luke uses a medical term to describe the nausea which swept over the Apostle Paul when he saw this vast idolatry.
  - (i) Paul could have kept quiet and disregarded this terrible scene.
    - (1) But this great apostle was burning with the glorious Gospel of Christ and he had to be heard.
    - (2) He decided to begin in the Market Place.

C. Describe the Market Place in those days.

- 1. Explain the physical makeup.
- 2. Explain the medium of obtaining news.
  - (a) Reason that they called Paul the "babbler."
- 3. The Philosophers:
  - (a) Epicurians founded by Epicurious of Athens.
    - (i) Thought that Matter was Eternal.
    - (ii) That the end of life was pleasure of the body.
      - (1) They denied life beyond the grave.
  - (b) The Stoics - founded by Zeno.
    - (i) Thought that both the gods and matter were co-eternal.
    - (ii) That the end of life was self-sacrifice - asceticism.

D. Mar's Hill.

- 1. This hill was located in the center of the city.
- 2. Access to the top of it is almost impossible now. It is too steep.
- 3. The temple of Mars was located on it at one time.

4. The famous Tribunal of the Areopagites was located there.
  - (a) It was there that Socrates was condemned to die.
  - (b) It is not known if Paul was brought before this great court to expound his new philosophy or not.
    - (i) The Athenians were eager to hear a new system of thought not to lay hold on the truth, but to have something to talk about.
      - (1) There were Three Classes of Hearers that day:
        - (a) Some mocked.
        - (b) Some procrastinated.
        - (c) Some believed.

This is true of most modern audiences.

## **II. THE SERMON ON MAR'S HILL.**

- A. "I perceive that you are very religious." - vs. 22-23.
  1. Had observed the objects of their worship all the way from seacoast.
  2. The roads were lined with temples to the various gods.
  3. They had even erected an altar to "the unknown god."

B. "This God whom ye worship ignorantly - Declare I unto you." (vs. 24-25)

1. Paul is a master at psychology. He begins with one of their own gods.
2. He shows that this god does not dwell in temples made with hands.
  - (a) Explain the Greek Temples.
  - (b) He probably pointed over to the Parthenon on the Acropolis.
3. In this God, we live and have our very being.

C. Paul Made Three Profound Statements in Verse 26:

1. He affirms the Fatherhood of God.
2. He affirms the Brotherhood of Man.
3. He affirms God's superintendency over the affairs of the world.
  - (a) He determined the times of each nation's existence.
  - (b) He appointed the bounds of their habitation.
    - (i) We should pray for God's intervention into the affairs of men today that peace might reign in the world.

D. God is Spirit and is Omnipresent. (vs. 27-29)

1. We are to only seek Him in order to find Him.
2. We are the "offspring of God."
  - (a) Paul is here quoting from one of the Greek's poets.
    - (i) Probably it was Aratus or Cleanthes.
    - (ii) This is a good indication that Paul was well-educated.
3. Ought not to liken Godhead to silver, gold, or images in stone.

- (a) In this, Paul was condemning them severely.
- (b) Their gods were nothing but figments of their imagination.
  - (i) All their licentiousness was justified on the basis that their gods did it. Naturally, this was "every man doing that which was right in his own eyes."

E. The times of this ignorance God overlooked. (vs. 30)

- 1. God never accepted this gross and rank idolatry in any age.
- 2. Now with His final revelation of Himself in Christ, he will no longer permit idolatry to go unpunished.
- 3. Paul commands the Athenians to repent - to change their attitudes about these man-made gods and to turn to the one true God - the one they had designated as "the unknown god."

F. God has appointed a day to judge the world. (vs. 31-32)

- 1. He has given assurance of this day by raising Christ from the dead.
- 2. He will judge the world in righteousness.

**III. PAUL HAD VERY LITTLE SUCCESS AT ATHENS IN SPITE OF A PROFOUND SERMON:**

- A. Certain men (among which was Dionysius the Areopagite) and a woman named Damaris and a few others believed.
- B. 1 Cor. 1:26: "For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called."
- C. WE HAVE CATERED TOO LONG TO THOSE EDUCATED, MONEYED, POPULAR, INFLUENTIAL.
  - 1. Ours is to get off our stilts and save the great masses who are hungering for the gospel of Christ and help of a physical and mental nature.
  - 2. Ours is to be like Paul - we must not faint because some monk, others, procrastinate - because some will believe.