

The Athenian Way

Acts 17:16-34

The Athenian Way...

Perhaps the most memorable thing about the **National Enquirer** is its catchphrase during the tabloid's heyday back in the 1980s. Do you remember its slogan?

When Paul's missionary journey brought him to Athens, the Athenians reminded me of the National Enquirer's catchphrase, because that was them. It was the city of enquiring _____.

They were a conquered people, having been defeated by Rome in 146 B.C. So Athenian glory was long past. And yet, Athens continued to be the cultural and intellectual center of the world, with a world-famous university. It was *the central city* of learning, of inquiring, of growing in knowledge. And, of course, Athens was famous for their worship of the Greek pantheon of gods: Zeus, Poseidon, Hera, Demeter, Athena Nike...

It was also the home of some of the most popular philosophies of the day. Two are mentioned in our narrative: The Epicureans and the Stoics. The Epicurean philosophy was "Enjoy life!" by avoiding excesses and fear, and by seeking tranquility and freedom from pain. The stoic philosophy was "Endure life!" by looking within, because enduring self-sufficiency lies within human beings.

It was **the Athenian Way!** Religious and philosophical knowledge, *and* understanding anything new in their insatiable hunger for figuring out what they weren't capable of figuring out on their own: the _____! Then suddenly Jesus Christ's apostle to the Greeks shows up in this crazy pagan city. When it comes to Jesus and His gospel, Paul doesn't know how to shut up. There's **no way** he wasn't going to **confront the Athenian Way**. So let's look at it...

The Athenian Way confronted:

1. **The city that provoked Paul's _____ (16-18).**

As Paul walked through city central, he was struck by the pervasiveness of idol worship in Athens. Every building and every statue was a representation of some god or goddess. And the all-pervasive spiritual darkness, grieved him deeply. **The Athenian Way** broke Paul's heart. Question: Does **the Coshoctonian Way** break our hearts?

2. The people who spend their time in _____ (19-21).

Of course, they did *something*! But isn't it true that in what they spent all their time doing was, in effect, *nothing*? It was a complete waste of time! And in the end, with all the knowledge gained, it meant nothing.

It reminds me of what Paul said of the godless in 2 Timothy 3: "People in the last days will be lovers of self, proud, unholy, reckless, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God...*always learning* but never able to arrive at a knowledge of the _____." That's **the Athenian Way**!

Sadly, **the American Way** is reflective of **the Athenian Way**. I think people waste more time these days than in any other time in my lifetime.

3. The Divine Being who needs _____ (22-26).

Verse 24: "The God who...does not live in temples made by man." And that's *a great reason* why you never hear me call this room *the Sanctuary*. You are the sanctuary of God! This worship auditorium is where God's temples corporately worship Him! Break this _____ theology habit! He temples in His redeemed image bearers!

Verse 25: Another shocker to the Athenian mind! God needs **nothing** from us! But we need **everything** from Him!

Verse 26: The Athenians thought they were a superior race of people! The truth: We all were made from one man! And this awesome Creator God who made us all equal, sovereignly allotted when they would be born, and the place where they would dwell. It was all determined by Him. How do you think the Athenians are doing with that truth?

4. The times of ignorance are now _____ (27-30).

In other words, God was patient with the pagan nations of the past with all their idolatrous ignorance. But now, with the worldwide proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, **the times of ignorance are over!** But people everywhere are now responsible to respond in obedience to the gospel through repentance of their sins.

If **the times of ignorance were now over** for the Athenians, what about the Americans? The Europeans? The South Americans? And all the other nations that are exposed to the gospel? And yet ignorance is all around us. I wonder if we will _____ them of their need to repent...

5. The Man whom God has _____ (31-34).

There's One who is both fully God and fully Man. He had to be fully God in order to judge all people justly, and He had to be fully Human so He could die, the righteous One in the place of all of us unrighteous ones! And this gospel spoke to the heart of what the Athenians needed most—a gracious, risen Redeemer. But to the Greek mind, it was utter nonsense to believe a dead man could be raised from the dead. And yet, amazingly, some came to the faith!

Paul courageously confronted the lies of the Athenian Way with the truth of God's Word! No wonder he could say to Timothy, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Therefore there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day."

But will you...

Communion:

The Bread represents the Appointed Man becoming sin on our behalf...

The Cup represents the God-Man dying for our sins...