

“Gobs of gods!”

1. Intro:

- 1.1. I'd like to start by looking at our *California State Seal*. [Show]
 - 1.1.1. **Ca. grizzly bear** (official state animal) feeding on **grape vines**, representing California's wine production;
 - 1.1.2. **Sheaf of grain**, representing agriculture;
 - 1.1.3. **Miner**, representing the California Gold Rush and the mining industry;
 - 1.1.4. **Sailing ships**, representing the state's economic power;
 - 1.1.5. **San Francisco Bay** or the Sacramento River.
 - 1.1.6. The phrase "**Eureka**," meaning "**I have found it!**" is the *California state motto*.
 - 1.1.7. **But I'm most interested in the Lady on the Seal** – **Who is that?** She is the **Greek goddess Athena** (Latin: Minerva), the *goddess of wisdom!*
 - 1.1.7.1. The folks in **her hometown** are who we're talking about today!

- 1.2. **Pick up in 17:14** - Paul travels about 200 miles south to the famous **Athens**.
 - 1.2.1. **What a fascinating place this Athens!!!**
 - 1.2.1.1. Most celebrated city in all Greece. Home of literature, art, politics, & thought.
 - 1.2.2. **With its Acropolis** (that fortified stronghold situated on a hill); its illustrious **Pantheon** building with its massive pillars could be seen for miles.
 - 1.2.3. **Pop. in Athens was around 10,000...yet, 30,000 statutes of gods!**
 - 1.2.3.1. These idols were etched into public buildings, stationed along the streets, & memorialized in shrines & temples.
 - 1.2.3.1.1. Many statues by the famed **Phidias** (generally acknowledged as the greatest sculptor of all time)
 - 1.2.4. **Maybe similar to Kyoto Japan & its 1600 Buddhist temples, 400 Shintō shrines, & hundreds of stone statues** near their temples.

- 1.3. **Let's here from some historians of the day regarding Athens:**
 - 1.3.1. **Petronius** (Pe-tron-ius) remarked, "**In Athens it was easier to find a god than a man.**" {Roman Historian}
 - 1.3.2. **Pausanias** (Pau-sani-us) said, "**Athens had more images than all Greece put together.**" {Gk. Geographer & Historian}
 - 1.3.3. **Xenophon** (Zen-o-fin) calls Athens "**one great altar, one great offering to the gods.**"¹ {Gk. writer}

- 1.4. **Athens was also home to Socrates, Plato, Aristotle.**

¹ Lenski, Acts pg.708

2. AN UNKNOWN GOD MADE KNOWN! (16-34)

- 2.1. **GOBS OF gods!** (16-21)
- 2.2. (16) No time to wait for backup(Tim & Silas)...let's role.
 - 2.2.1. Note: he **felt**, he **saw**.
- 2.3. Jesus beheld the city **Jerusalem**, & **wept** for it;
Paul beheld the city **Athens**, & was **stirred** by it.
 - 2.3.1. Jesus **wept** because, "they **knew** the truth, & **didn't want it**";
Paul was **stirred** because, "they **wanted** the truth but did **not** know it".
 - 2.3.2. Which better depicts your city?
- 2.4. Where should we take the Gospel?
- 2.5. **[1] RELIGIOUS PLACE!** (Synagogue)
- 2.6. As was his custom.
- 2.7. **[2] MARKET PLACE!** (The Agora[Agg-er-a])
- 2.8. In 1976 The Doobie Bro's sang about *Takin it to the Streets* [Here Paul does exactly that]
 - 2.8.1. He doesn't limit his **sharing about Jesus**, on the Sabbath nor inside the synagogue.
 - 2.8.2. Our last generation bought into the lie, "*never discuss religion or politics.*"
 - 2.8.2.1. But Jesus isn't only for **Sunday** church; but for **Monday** work;
Tuesday sports; **Wednesday** shopping; **Thursday** at the dentist; **Friday** appointments; & **Saturday** neighbors.
- 2.9. (18) **Epicurean** & **Stoics** were at opposite ends of the philosophical spectrum!
 - 2.9.1. **Epicurean** – Followers of Epicurus(400 yrs earlier). Taught **pleasure** as main purpose of life, & regarded gods as living in calm happiness, far removed from all earthly things.
 - 2.9.1.1. So Paul will preach **Jesus, God come near!**
 - 2.9.2. **Stoics** – Followers of Zeno(300 yrs earlier). **Materialism**, **pantheism**, **fatalism**, and **pride** were the leading features of this philosophy.
- 2.10. **Babbler** – "*seed-picker*". Evokes images of a bird pecking indiscriminately at seeds in a barnyard. - "*One who picked up scraps of learning here & there & purveyed(sold) them where he could.*" F.F. Bruce
 - 2.10.1. They accused Paul of "*peeping borrowed ideas*".
- 2.11. **[3] ACADEMIC PLACE!** (Areopagus, Mars Hill/after the Roman god of war)
- 2.12. So Paul hit the **religious folk**, the **regular Joe**, & now the **intelligentsia of Athens**.
- 2.13. (21) **Spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or hear some new thing!**
 - 2.13.1. Some go to church **today** for the same thing. They are looking for "**something new & exciting!**" [a new doctrine to teethe on]
 - 2.13.2. Unfortunately for many, the search for **Novelty** seems to overshadow the search for **Reality!** ☹️

- 2.14. We should seek “freshness” not “newness” when it comes to doctrine!
- 2.15. Ever realize the Greeks had 800 years of Greek Mythology, & 500 years of Greek philosophy...& they were still searching!!!
- 2.16. **RELIGION OR RELATIONSHIP?** (22-34)
- 2.17. Here the Seed-Picker picks his seeds wisely!
- 2.17.1. Paul speaks eloquently & clearly, not about philosophy or culture but about God & His Son!
- 2.18. **5 steps to effective witnessing:**
- 2.19. **Step #1** Find a **Positive Place to Start!** (22)
- 2.20. Start where they are, “You guys are obviously very religious.”
- 2.21. He didn’t blast them with a mean spirited “you pagan Idolaters!”
- 2.21.1. Most people have something in their background about **religion** that makes a good starting place!
- 2.22. **Step #2** Use the **Familiar** to introduce the **Unfamiliar!** (23)
- 2.23. I would like to tell you of the **unknowable** God, who has made Himself **Knowable!**
- 2.23.1. Our God is **Incomprehensible**, yet **Knowable!**
- 2.24. What he does here is **builds a bridge** that would hopefully span the gap between their ignorance & the truth of Christ.
- 2.24.1. Paul basically says, “You Athenians have given me a text. I start where you leave off!”
- 2.25. (Spurg) “I believe a very large majority of churchgoers are merely **unthinking, slumbering worshipers of an unknown God.**”²
- 2.26. **Step #3** Clearly Present God! (24-28a)
- 2.27. (24) He is **Creator!** so He can’t be **contained!**
- 2.28. (25) He is **Self-Sufficient!** so He has **no needs!**
- 2.28.1. Ps.50:10-12 “For every beast of the forest is Mine, And the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the mountains, And the wild beasts of the field are Mine. "If I were hungry, I would not tell you; For the world is Mine, and all its fullness.”
- 2.29. (26,27) He is **Intelligent!** so He has **a plan!**
- 2.29.1. He made man to instinctively long for God.
- 2.29.2. But often times men aren’t seeking for God to find them!
- 2.29.2.1. (Like when we’d play **kick the can**, & we all went into my friends house & left the guy that was it, all to himself)
- 2.29.3. The turning point in our lives is when we “stop seeking the God we **want**” and “start seeking the God **who is.**”³

² Charles H. Spurgeon in Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, Vol. 11. Christianity Today, Vol. 40, no. 1.

- 2.30. (28a) **He is the Sustainer!** so we are **dependent** on Him.
 2.30.1. Here he quotes from **Epimenades** (Gk. Poet) – “for in Him we live & move & have our being.”
- 2.31. **Step #4 Be Relevant!** (28b)
 2.32. Here he quotes from **Aratus** (Gk. Poet).
 2.32.1. **The entire poem:** “Never, O man, let us leave him unmentioned. All ways are full of **Zeus** & all meeting-places of men; the sea & the harbors are full of him. In every direction we all have to do with **Zeus; for we are also his offspring.**”⁴
 2.32.1.1. Showing them that **their own Poets** believe in a **creator-god.**
 2.32.2. Paul takes this Poem about **Zeus** & reveals its true subject...**Christ!**
- 2.33. **Step #5 Make it Personal!** (29-31)
 2.34. (29) Augustine said, “Idolatry is **worshipping** anything that ought to be **used**, or **using** anything that is meant to be **worshipped.**”⁵
 2.35. (30) **Repent** is a command! – **It is not left optional.**
 2.36. (31) He’s not only **Creator**...but **Judge!**
 2.36.1. Your actions **today** do impact your lives **beyond the grave**...where the resurrected Jesus awaits!
- 2.37. **3 RESPONSES!** (32-34)
 2.38. **SOME MOCK!** (32a)
 2.39. Did you know it is **impossible** to talk about God **behind his back?**
 2.40. Did you know you **cannot** speak of God **in His absence?**
 2.40.1. Then, to deny Him is to spite Him,...to His face.
- 2.41. **SOME DELAY!** (32b)
 2.42. They put it off “till later”!
 2.42.1. Like shopping & you tell the clerk, “I think I’ll be back to purchase something”, when you really have no intention on getting it.
 2.43. Or, were interested in hearing them again...but only from an **intellectual** point of view!
- 2.44. **SOME BELIEVE!** (34)
 2.45. One was **Dionysius** (Dia-nis’-sius). He was a member of the Areopagus council.
 2.46. The **gospel** wasn’t very well received in **Athens!** [Prob won’t be on Paul’s Highlight Films!]
 2.46.1. Matter of fact this was the **1st & last** mention of Athens in scripture.
 2.46.1.1. We don’t know if any **church** was planted there?

³ Patrick Morley in The Seasons of a Man's Life. Leadership, Vol. 17, no. 3.

⁴ F.F.Bruce, Acts

⁵ Augustine, Leadership, Vol. 4, no. 4.

- 2.47. **End:**
- 2.48. **Believers:**
- 2.49. Look around who is in **your** marketplace?
- 2.50. **Quote Poem:** by *George MacLeod* (from Chuck Swindoll, Acts)
- 2.51. I simply argue that **the cross** be raised again at the center of the **market place** as well as on the **steeple of the church**,
 I am recovering the claim that Jesus was not **crucified** in a cathedral between **two candles**: But on a cross between **two thieves**; on a town garbage heap;
 At a **crossroad of politics** so cosmopolitan that they had to write in Hebrew & in Latin & in Greek...
 And at the kind of place where cynics talk smut, & thieves curse & soldiers gamble
 Because that is **where** He died, and that is **what** He died about.
 And that's **where** Christ's men ought to be, & what church people ought to be about.
- 2.52. Let's Jesus to our Marketplace, & not leave him between 2 candles in a church!
- 2.53. **Unbelievers:** Remember the *California state motto* was *Eureka*, meaning "I have found it!" - Maybe this morning **you** found it! **Truth, Salvation; Jesus!**