

PAUL'S SERMON ON MARS' HILL

BIBLE TEXT : Acts 17:1-34

LESSON 335 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: : "In him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Acts 17:1-34

¹ Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:

² And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,

³ Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

⁴ And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

⁵ But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

⁶ And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;

⁷ Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, *one* Jesus.

⁸ And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.

⁹ And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.

¹⁰ And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming *thither* went into the synagogue of the Jews.

¹¹ These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

MEMORY VERSE

Preaching the Gospel

Paul and Silas were not discouraged, in spite of the trials they had. Once again they went to other towns to carry the glad news of salvation. In the city of Thessalonica they found a Jewish synagogue where Paul had an opportunity to preach. Many Greeks, both men and women, believed the words of Paul who told them of Christ's sufferings and His resurrection from the dead.

However, some of the Jews became jealous because many people listened to Paul. One day a group of rough men made a great disturbance in the city and searched for Paul and Silas. They thought these missionaries were at Jason's house, but when they did not find them the wicked men took Jason before the rulers of the city. These haters of the truth cried out, "These that have turned the world upside down are come" (Acts 17:6). They told the rulers that Paul and Silas were teaching about King Jesus. This troubled the rulers greatly but they finally let Jason go. However, the friends of Paul decided that he had better leave town in order to avoid further trouble. By night Paul and Silas travelled to Berea, where they were gladly received, and there they told many more people about Jesus.

When the wicked Jews in Thessalonica heard that Paul and Silas were preaching the Word of God in Berea, they immediately went there and stirred up the people. It seems Satan is never content until he has done his utmost to stop the work of the Lord. Nevertheless, God's Word was sown in these cities; and, just as a tiny seed planted in the ground, it would spring up and grow and bear fruit wherever there was a hungry heart.

In Athens

Paul then went to the large city of Athens, Greece, where he waited for Silas and Timothy to join him. Paul did not spend this time in idleness, however; as even today, God's children are ever busy for the Lord. As he walked about the city he was deeply stirred, for he found the city full of idols and idol worshippers. Someone has said that in Athens it was easier to find a god than a man. Every day Paul went to the synagogue of the Jews and to the busy markets telling people about Jesus.

Mars' Hill

The people wondered: What is this that Paul is telling of a strange god from some other land? "What will this babbler say?" some of them said. As if Paul's words were meaningless, idle, foolish chatter! What is this new doctrine, Paul? You bring such "strange things to our ears."

The people decided that this man should be taken up to Mars' Hill, which was the highest court in Athens. There, before the court of Areopagus, Paul was taken for questioning by the men who were supposed to be the wisest men of Greece. Then Paul stood up before all the learned men and said, "As I passed by, . . . I found an altar . . . TO THE UNKNOWN GOD." He had come to tell them about this very God – the God who made the world and all things. Had they never heard about the God who does not dwell in temples made with hands? They need not think that the true God is like a gold, silver, or stone idol made by man. Paul said that there was a

the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

¹² Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

¹³ But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.

¹⁴ And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still.

¹⁵ And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed.

¹⁶ Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

¹⁷ Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.

¹⁸ Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.

¹⁹ And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?

²⁰ For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.

²¹ (For all the Athenians and strangers which 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 Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

²³ For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this

time when God overlooked or bore with their ignorance, but not any more; God now commands all men everywhere to repent. Paul then told them why they should repent of their sins: because God has a certain day appointed in which Jesus will come back to earth and judge the people for the deeds they have done upon the earth. God raised Jesus from the dead to be their Saviour, and the Lord is "not far from every one of us" (Acts 17:27), said Paul. If it is hard to find the Lord, it is not because of His distance from us, but because of our distant attitude toward Him. He is ever waiting for the sinner to repent and turn unto Him for pardon.

Mockers

Did the men of Athens believe these words of Paul? Some of the people mocked at the story of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Just think of people disregarding and ridiculing the truth of the resurrection, which is the hope of the Christian! Paul wrote, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain" (I Corinthians 15:17). Others said that Paul should come again some other day and then they might be interested.

Some people seem to think that the less they know of the Lord and the Gospel, the less they will have for which to be accountable. Some boys and girls think they are better off if they stay away from church, so that they will not be held responsible for a great deal of knowledge or light concerning the Word of God. The fact of the matter is that they will be responsible for the truths set forth in the whole Word of God because these truths are available. Let us fear lest we fail to take advantage of every opportunity to hear and learn about the Lord, for no excuse will pass the judgement of God in that great day.

Only a few believed the words of Paul concerning Jesus, and we read some sad words, "So Paul departed from among them."

There is coming a day when Christ shall laugh and mock at those who have refused the call of God. "I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh" (Proverbs 1:26). That day of which Paul spoke – that God has appointed in which He will judge the people of the world for their sin – is yet to come. On that day not only the people of Athens, Greece, and those of Thessalonica and Berea will be without excuse, but also many, many in all the world will be speechless before the righteous Judge. The Gospel story was told them but they did not open their hearts to it. May God help us to have listening ears and receiving hearts to the story of Jesus and His love.

QUESTIONS

1. What was the theme of Paul's sermons?
2. Tell of the attitude of the Jews of Thessalonica toward Paul.
3. What did Paul do when he reached Athens?
4. What name did they call Paul in Athens?
5. Tell of the sermon on Mars' Hill.
6. What was Mars' Hill?
7. What commandment forbids the worship of images of gold, silver, and stone?
8. Did the People believe Paul's words concerning Christ's resurrection?
9. What does Paul say concerning disbelief in the resurrection?
10. What does Christ's resurrection mean to us today?

inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.

Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

²⁴ God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

²⁵ Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

²⁶ And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

²⁷ That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:

²⁸ For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

²⁹ Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.

³⁰ And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:

³¹ Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

³² And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this *matter*.

³³ So Paul departed from among them.

³⁴ Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which *was* Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.