

How did Paul counter the Areopagus' charges (vv. 22-31)? Paul began his argument with God as everyone's Creator and transitioned his hearers to God as everyone's Judge.¹

This sermon shows how Paul addressed intellectual pagans. The thrust of his message is clear: the Creator God, who has revealed Himself in Creation, has now commanded all to repent, for everyone must give an account to Jesus Christ whom God raised from the dead.²

What was Paul's message in v. 22? This speech of Paul is known as the Mars Hill Address. It's important to remember that it was delivered to Gentiles and not Jews. The Gentiles were not familiar with the Old Testament so Paul had to find a subject they could understand to start his speech. He started by noting that the people of Athens were very religious.....which was not meant as a compliment. Athens was reputed to be a very religious city with more idols than men.

Message of v. 23? The Greeks were fearful of offending any God by failing to give him attention. This fear would be taken care of by an altar with the inscription TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Paul then goes on to say..... "Let me tell you about a God that can be known."

Message of vv. 24-25? Missionaries tell us that the best place to begin in teaching pagans about God is the account of creation. This is exactly where Paul began with the people of Athens. He introduced God as the One who made the world and everything in it. As he looked around on the numerous idol temples nearby, the apostle reminded his hearers that the true God does not dwell in temples made with human hands (7:48-50). And the true God does not need anything from man, because He is the giver of life, breath, and all things.³

Message of v. 26? The Greeks, including the Athenians, prided themselves on being racially superior to all other people. Yet Paul told them that they, like all other people, had descended from one common ancestor: Adam. This fact eliminates the possibility of the superiority of any one race. God also determines the times of nations—their seasons, when they rise and fall—and their boundaries. In other words, God is sovereign over the political and military affairs of nations. The Greeks liked to think that they determined their own destiny.⁴ But God says otherwise.

Message of v. 27? God's purpose in regulating the times of nations and their boundaries was so that people would realize His sovereignty and seek Him (Romans 1; John 6:44; 12:32). He wanted them to search for Him and find Him, even though in actuality He is not far from each one.

Message of v. 28? To further emphasize the relationship between God and His chosen people, Paul quoted their Greek poets who said "For in him we live and move and have our being." And "For we are also His offspring." The Athenians recognized their Creator God and worshipped Him yet they did not know Him. By quoting their poets Paul was establishing credibility with his pagan audience for further discussion about the truth.

Message of v. 29? Paul's conclusion was that idolatry, therefore, doesn't make sense. It is illogical. If we are His offspring (v. 28), that means God created us. If God created people, that means He cannot be an idol made of gold or silver or stone. Paul was arguing that God's divine nature is essentially spiritual and not material/physical.

Message of v. 30? Having exposed the folly of idolatry, Paul goes on to state that for many centuries the God of the Jews overlooked the human ignorance of the Gentiles. But now that the revelation of the Gospel has come, He commands all men everywhere to repent, that is, to do an about-face⁵ and march to the tune of a different drummer.

How does Paul conclude his sermon (v. 31)? The true knowledge of God leads to (encourages) repentance because it talks about coming judgment. Paul concluded his speech by clarifying His hearers' responsibility. "He has presented God as the Creator in His past work. He shows God as the Redeemer in His present work. Now he shows God as the Judge in His future work."⁶

The proof of Jesus' qualification to judge humanity was His resurrection. Jesus' resurrection proved His claims about Himself, including His claim to be the Judge of all humankind (John 5:22, 25-29).⁷

How did the crowd react to Paul's comments about the resurrection (v. 32-34)? The response of the Athenians to Paul's preaching was typical: some mocked, others procrastinated, and a few believed.

To the Philippian jailer, Paul preached Christ as the personal Savior of individuals. To the Jews in Thessalonica, he presented Him as the promised Messiah. To the intellectual Gentiles in Athens, he proclaimed Him as the proven Judge of all humankind who was appointed by the One True God.⁸ Paul was a master of assessing his audience to deliver an appropriate and personal message.

¹ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Acts, 2022 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), 363.

² Stanley D. Toussaint, "Acts," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 403.

³ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1638.

⁴ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Acts, 2022 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), 365.

⁵ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1639.

⁶ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Acts, 2022 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), 367.

⁷ Ibid., 368.

⁸ Ibid., 371.