



ACM BIBLE STUDIES

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

The Record of the Beginning of Jesus' Reign

Chapter Seventeen

INTRODUCTION

THINK ABOUT THIS:

One man's superstition may be another man's faith, depending upon which view is taken.

Doctrine is often nothing more than one man's guess work accepted by gullible people impressed by status more than by wisdom. Darwin, it was reported, stated that he was amazed people actually believed his theory of evolution.

For millions of people wrong doctrine can be tradition or superstition learned from childhood and taken for granted.

Only by running frequent and honest checks on ourselves – re-examining and testing the scriptures – can we systematically eliminate man's institutionalized errors.

Ultimately, wisdom teaches us that God's point of view is the one for which we must strive. Man's point of view is too often vanity.

THE CONFLICT between two opposing systems – the system of Man versus the system of God – is the drama of the book of Acts. And, as you recall from the beginning, I introduced this book as the record of the early Acts of Christ's Reign manifested through his apostles.

In this chapter we'll notice more of these clear statements about the conflict between the two systems, such as:

5. But the Judaists became jealous and recruited a company of wicked men who were marketplace idlers, and formed a mob, and were setting the city in an uproar, and assaulting the house of Jason in search of them (Paul & Silas) to bring them forth to the public.

6. But not finding them, they dragged Jason and certain brethren to the city rulers, crying, The ones stirring up the occupied world are come here also;

7. Whom Jason has received under his roof: and these all are doing contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is a different king, Jesus.

This study of the book of Acts should convince almost anyone with an open mind that Jesus and his apostles were not establishing church groups! They were building something ... but it wasn't a system of churches. Jesus was hated and murdered by the establishment and the church (synagogue) system ... and it was NOT for getting people together to sing hymns and “save” them to “go to heaven.” The apostles were thrown into prisons, stoned, whipped, and beaten, and sometimes killed – and it was not for organizing churches. Now, if we don't learn anything else from the Book of Acts, we'd better learn this one thing.

Jesus and his apostles were hated and killed because they represented a different Kingship; a different system. They were proclaiming the Reign of Christ. They were establishing ecclesias: patriarchal enclaves of families united in the Body of Christ. Ecclesias were political entities, separate from the Jewish/Roman establishments. In other words, they were establishing societies whose King and Priest was Christ ... not Caesar. These societies were apart from the ruling bodies of the Jewish priesthood. The gospel of the Kingship of Christ offered an alternative to centralized tyranny and slavery. That was what turned the rulers against the apostles. Their message brought persecution down on them. That scenario is played out over and over in this book.

By proclaiming Christ's Kingship the apostles were breaking the Beast government paradigm that had been put in the minds of the people at the grass-roots level.

They were undermining the government's power over the peoples' minds. God doesn't want us to think of men as rulers and lawmakers. The teaching and the works Jesus was accomplishing through the apostles was perceived to be a threat to the rulers ... and rightly so.

The rulers in Thessalonica called the apostles "*those upsetting the occupied world.*" The Greek *oikoumene* (rendered "*world*" in the KJV) means literally "dwelling place" ... hence the lands occupied by Rome. It obviously refers to the domain under Jewish & Roman control. The empire was being stirred up ("caused to rise up") because of the Gospel of Christ's Kingship.

The Jewish priesthood functioned under the umbrella of Caesar. Like the churches of today, the synagogues were legal and complicit with the government of that day. But the apostles were in the Reign of Christ. They were stirring up the empire by declaring *a different king.*" For a churchgoer who has heard only the church rendition of the passage, this puts a different slant on the whole thing.

Along with the overall theme of Acts (the conflict between the system of God and the system of man) we see that chapter 17 helps define the identity of Yahweh:

24. *The God that made the world and all things therein, the One who is Lord of heaven and earth, dwells not in temples made with hands;*

25. *Neither is He attended to by men's hands, as though He needed any thing, seeing it is He who gives life, and breath, and all things to all;*

Paul was in a discussion with some of the superstitious people of Athens concerning the identity of God. He addressed their particular religious belief in an "unknown god." This discussion is especially interesting in light of today's widespread church teaching of an unknowable three-part god they call "the Trinity," as well as another variation depicted as an unknowable two-part god under the "Oneness" doctrine. In Athens of Paul's day, mystery gods were preferred ... and they are still preferred by today's churches, thus the Trinity and Oneness doctrines.

By obscuring truth, rulers keep people under their control. Thus, they obscure the identity of God. In Acts 17 Paul exposes the God-obscuring ploy in Athens. He shows how the Athenian rulers/priests were crippling the Athenians minds by giving them an "unknown god." A mystery god. Give the people a mystery god, and they remain confused about everything. This old scenario also defines the roles of modern-day preachers and politicians.

In Athens, Paul saw that the city was overrun by idols, and was in spiritual confusion. There is a direct correlation in seeing God clearly, and finding freedom. The two principles are mutually dependent. If you can see God and understand his commands, then freedom is accessible. But, if you can't see or understand God (if He is obscured from you), then freedom will be obscured as well.

As we continue our study of Acts, we see that the action and adventure does not slow down. And, if you can place yourself back in time, in the apostles' situation, you can share in that adventure and share in things that changed the world.

ACTS 17:1-4 COME OUT OF THE CHURCHES!

Having made their way through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Judaists.

And Paul, as was his manner, went in to them, and reasoned with them from the scriptures upon three sabbaths,

Opening and referencing (scripture), that it was necessary for Christ to suffer and rise out of the dead; and that this is the Christ, the Jesus whom I proclaim to you.

And some of them were persuaded, and were assigned by lot to Paul and to Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the women and leaders not a few.

AS WE join Paul and his troop in this chapter they passed through Macedonia, and are heading south toward Greece. In each location it appears that the first

order of business was to find the local synagogue (the equivalent to a church of our day). They would speak to the people, either inside the synagogue or as they left their

buildings, encouraging as many as would hear to come out of the synagogue (church) system and acknowledge the Kingship of Christ.

When they came to a new

location, they needed to see if there were people with ears to hear the Gospel of the Kingship. The only way they knew whether or not people were “called” (i.e., had ears to hear) was to offer the message and watch their response. Some of those in the synagogues were Israelites. There were Israelites also outside of the synagogues. Since the primary mission of the apostles was to take the message to the “lost sheep of the House of Israel,” to be thorough they had to give the message in the synagogues (churches) as well as in the streets. Anyone who was “called out” would have ears to hear their message and would come out. However, it’s important to note that Paul and Silas didn’t linger in the

synagogues/churches. They were in and out.

Today many people think that the churches are still Christ’s mission field. The truth is, churches are collection depots for confused religionists and con men. People with correct motives do not remain in churches.

The gospel of Jesus rings through to anyone who has ears to hear. If they hear, they come out voluntarily. However, after they have been given light but they still prefer darkness and refuse to come out, our work there is done. You can’t keep hanging around the graveyards called churches. There is better, more fertile soil elsewhere.

Some in the synagogues (churches) heard Paul and believed. In other words, some had ears to hear. The ones who came out were “assigned to” or “disciplined to” Paul, or Silas. That means Paul or Silas became their teachers.

QUESTION: Because of their familiarity with God and the stories of the Bible, aren’t people in churches more apt to accept truth than those outside the churches who don’t even know the Bible and don’t even care about God?

ACTS 17:5-9 DEALING WITH THE MOB

But the Judaists became jealous and recruited a company of wicked men who were marketplace idlers, and formed a mob, and were setting the city in an uproar, and assaulting the house of Jason in search of them (Paul & Silas) to bring them forth publicly.

But not finding them, they dragged Jason and certain brethren to the city rulers, crying, The ones stirring up the occupied world are come here also;

Whom Jason has received under his roof: and these all are doing contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is a different king, Jesus.

And they agitated the crowd and the rulers of the city hearing these things.

And after taking a security bond from Jason and the others they let them go.

PAUL and Silas were lodging at Jason’s house in Thessalonica. Verse 5 describes how a group of jealous Judaists, fearful of the message Paul and Silas were giving, recruited a mob of “marketplace idlers” (i.e.,

“social scavengers and gossip mongers”) and stirred up the people to assault Jason’s house. They convinced a mob to bring Paul and Silas out before the city judges under some pretext. Fortunately, Paul and Silas weren’t in the

house when it was raided. This assault is typical of modern-day government (ATF/FBI) strategy and invasion.

Rulers love mobs. Uprisings are often provoked by agents provocateur. In America, and other countries, wars, revolutions, radical changes in society are precipitated by mobs and mob mentality. And, of course, Democratic central governments are really nothing but Mobocracies – simply mobs organized in a prescribed order.

Today the lone individual voice is lost in a flood of voices. Even though America was originally blessed by independence and individualism, the mob (large numbers) impress people today. The lone prophet or the spirit of individual wisdom are despised, and are illegal in some cases! On the other hand, a crowd of people chanting, shouting, yelling or “demonstrating” as a mob, is legal and seems to impress people. If you are participating in a mob, then you are working within the system in the accepted way.

Voting is one of the subtle and

successful ploys to recruit people into a mob mentality. And, as long as this society bends to mobs, it will not bend to wisdom and voices of liberty. America will not have freedom as long as mobs are required to get things done. It is ironic that in modern-day America people celebrate a day called "Independence Day," honoring the wisdom of individuals who separated from the majority, and yet the mob has become the accepted way to establish credibility. Of course, the rulers at the top aren't impressed by mobs, but the general public seems to be.

In Thessalonica, Paul's and Silas' reputations had preceded them. The rabble rousers had heard about these apostles "*stirring up the empire.*" The Greek word for "*stirring up*" means literally "*raising up.*" So Paul and Silas were causing uprisings in the lands occupied by the Roman Empire, putting unwanted light upon the rulers by preaching the Gospel of Christ's Reign.

Further more, Jason had even let them come into his house! He was giving aid and comfort to seditionists – men who were undermining Jewish and Roman authority.

Thus, Jason became "guilty-by-association." That made him a conspirator. And, as it is today, if that doesn't get you killed, it will get you imprisoned. At the very least it makes enemies in high places.

The apostles were irritating the men in Church and State. They were teaching freedom in a slave state. They were informing people of the reign of Christ. And, along with that, they were exposing the fact that mobs do not engender freedom.

You see, this tells it like it really is. When you think of the way the system operates as a mob, it all ties together. People say they don't want mobs telling them what to do. But, if you change the word "mob" to a term like "congress," people accept it. The same is true if we substitute the terms "the electorate," "the voters," or "government." The "majority" in a democracy is a mob that forces its will upon the minority. The system is still a mob, but it suddenly becomes acceptable. It sounds more respectable. It lets the mob take on a new face.

But what are they doing? What is the congress, the electorate, the voters, the government and democracy doing? Are they not mobs? Is not the so-called "government" actually an organized crime syndicate? Do they not make their own rules and write their own tickets? And do they not rule us and force us to serve them? But, you see, society has been taught to call the mob by a different name, and accept it as an institution.

The disciples had the same problem as we do today. They had the mob of their day. The Roman Republic, as well as the Jewish priesthood with their courts and soldiers were institutionalized mobs ... the organized bullies. They had total power as long as people saw them as the biggest and the toughest.

But, the apostles were coming into the communities and telling them that true sovereignty and authority do not reside in mobs. And, that the individual must have freedom. He must have freedom to defend his own life, defend and keep the fruits of his labor, and his liberty

cannot be lawfully taken from him by a mob and handed over to a government agency.

In American politics the "mob" is "the majority" (as in "majority rule"). But a mob by any other name is still a mob. Out of one hundred people, fifty-one will force their will upon the remaining forty-nine. The Kingship of Christ does not authorize this.

Notice why Paul and Silas were hated by the Roman government and the Pharisees ... and why you will also be hated by today's establishment if you reject man's government-by-mob. Now you can understand that it was not just another religion or church that was stirring up the Empire. No, the stir was because of another King; another system; one that undermined Caesar and the Jewish Sanhedrin.

The Judaists organized the people and rulers of the city into a mob. Their position of power was being threatened. History buffs may remember what often happened in England and other nations with monarchies, when heirs and their families were vying for the throne. The two opposing heirs would become mortal enemies. And eventually one of them would come up dead. That's politics. And that was the way it was in Rome and in Jerusalem.

Thessalonica was a Roman land, and when another heir (Jesus) was brought into the picture the rulers didn't like it. Caesar's lackeys were threatened. But the new King, Jesus, was not like other kings with whom they had competed. Jesus was not susceptible to murder or threat. He had been murdered once. But He couldn't be murdered again. He was not vulnerable to the priests, politicians, lawyers, and courts of Emperors. Caesar couldn't get to Jesus, so he took to murdering those who followed Jesus or proclaimed his Kingship ... those who were mortal and vulnerable.

QUESTION: Isn't an agreement by the majority (or "mob" as you call it) in any situation a logical and reasonable way to solve problems? If most of the people in a group agree on how something should be decided, wouldn't that prevent conflict between people? If we said there didn't have to be an agreement of a majority in a group of people, how would anything get accomplished? Wouldn't there be too many individual opinions resulting in everybody heading in different directions?

ACTS 17:10-15 THE SINCERE BEREANS

And the brethren immediately, by night, sent away Paul and Silas to Berea: who having arrived went into the synagogue of the Judaists.

But these were of better breeding than those in Thessalonica, receiving the word with all mental readiness, examining the scriptures daily proving whether these things were so.

Therefore many of them believed; the honorable Greek women as well as the men, not a few.

But when the Judaists of Thessalonica knew that the word of God was preached also in Berea by Paul, they came and stirred up the crowds there too.

And immediately the brethren sent Paul away to the coast: and Silas and Timothy remained behind.

But they that conducted Paul led him as far as Athens, and receiving an order from Silas and Timothy to come quickly, they departed.

THOSE gathering in the Berean synagogue were of better breeding and spirit, than those in Thessalonica. The Greek word rendered “*more noble*” by the KJV is *eugeneis* (i.e., “eugenics” or “good breeding”). The KJV obviously twisted the meaning. But here is clear wording from the Greek that breeding was recognized as important.

This controversial phrase might indicate that the Berean Judaists were racial Israelites, whereas the ones in Thessalonica were not. At any rate it was a fact that there were many non-Israelite (Edomite, Persian, etc.) members of the synagogues.

The better-bred Bereans were not opposed to hearing truth. They looked into the matter carefully and fairly. They had “ears to hear.” The Word made sense to these hearers. And because they were receptive, they were willing to look into the scriptures honestly to see if these things were true. This was an indication that they were possibly of “the lost sheep of the House of Israel.”

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”

John 10:27

Again, in Berea, Paul and Silas reenacted the same scenario as they did in Thessalonica. With their good message they drew people out of the synagogue. But then Judaists from Thessalonica attacked them again. They followed Paul from one city to the next, stirring up and inciting mobs against them. So, Paul went on to Athens and Timothy and Silas followed later.

The fact that the Bereans were initially open to truth indicates that they were probably sincere and unencumbered by the Jewish mentality. Otherwise they would have had an immediate adverse reaction to the news of the Kingship like Paul encountered with the politicians and priests in the other cities.

ACTS 17:16-22

DEMON-FEARING: A COMMON THREAD BOTH THEN AND NOW

But in Athens, waiting for them, Paul was troubled in his spirit seeing the city full of idols.

Therefore he began reasoning with the Judaists in the synagogue and with the ones showing respect, and daily in the marketplace with whoever happened to be there.

But some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers conspired against him. And some said, What does this petty agitator want to say? Some said, He seems to be a preacher of foreign demons; because he preached the good news of Jesus and the raising.

And they laid hold of him, and led him to the Areopagus [Mars’ Hill], saying, May we know what this new teaching is which is spoken by you?

For you are bringing strange things to our ears. Therefore we wish to know what these things mean.

(For all the Athenians and visiting foreigners spent their leisure time in nothing else than telling or hearing the newest thing.)

Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ Hill, and said, Men, Athenians, I see that in all things you are demon-fearing.

ATHENS was a religious city in the sense that the people were superstitious. Typically, the religions worked hand-in-glove with the politics of Athens. The city was filled with temples, statues, gods and goddesses.

Paul was provoked by the idolatry. So he went into the synagogue as he did at his other stops along the way. He also preached the gospel of his King in the marketplace. "Marketplace" is an old term which today would probably have been translated "town square." It was a public place of political and religious exchange. In the Athens marketplace there were discussions of religion and politics, along with the daily gossip. Those frequenting the marketplace spent their time just trying to hear new and entertaining things. And, of course, for the rulers it was a good place to monitor the people. So Paul, seeing all these people wanting to hear new things, proceeded to explain the newest and most revolutionary thing of the day: the Reign of Christ.

It didn't take long for Paul to make enemies in Athens. Soon he had the attention of the Epicureans and the Stoics, who condescended to hear his views. The Epicureans were the liberals, and the Stoics were the conservatives. Political and religious dialectics back then were the same as today. It continues the same as always. The Epicureans (liberals) had the "if it feels good, do it" philosophy. And the Stoics had the philosophy of "if it feels good you shouldn't do it." They were political/religious parties in Athens.

Both sides challenged Paul. They described him as a "preacher of foreign demons" because he preached Jesus and the raising (new life). They took him to the Areopagus ("Areopagus" is a combination of two Greek words meaning Hill of Ares [Mars Hill]).

Mars' Hill was among the pagan temples. It was the spot where the Areopagites aired debates on religious and political issues. Here was an opportunity to introduce people to the Gospel of Christ's

Kingship. So Paul spoke.

The wording in verse 22 has been changed radically by the King James translators from the original Greek language. In Greek the verse says "*I see that in all things you are demon-fearing*" (The Greek word used in verse 22 is "*deisidaimonia*." It means literally, "demon-fearing"). Demons were deities. To the Greeks, deities could be good or bad. The KJV renders this word "*too superstitious*." The intent was obviously to circumvent the literal meaning. It is difficult to find a Bible that uses the literal and correct translation. The Greek word is clearly "demon-fearing." Perhaps the translators were/are themselves demon-fearers.

For instance, you could say that churchgoers today are "religious" in nature. But, you see, that term is innocuous – like a meaningless euphemism. "Religious" becomes an empty word that doesn't reflect the meaning of Paul's words. He specifically used the term, "demon-fearing" to describe certain people. The term portrays a distinct image that ought not be obscured.

If you were to go into a Judeo-Christian church today, you would soon discover that they too are demon-fearing. In fact, when you compare modern churchgoers with the Athenians, there's not much difference in regard to demon-fearing.

Their demons were minor gods, and "demon-fearing" was a form of idolatry. Today, demons are still feared in churches, but under a different pretext. They think of demons as evil ghosts. Athenians called their lesser gods "demons." Some of their "demons" were good gods, while others were evil gods. Athenians had statues of demons they worshipped ... much like modern Catholics and Anglicans. Some of them were supposed protectors, and some were supposed tormentors. It's similar to what some churches teach these days about so-called "angels." They claim some angels are good and some are bad. The ancient Athenians had their idols (demons). Like-

wise, the churches today have their idols.

By the way, "*deisidaimonia*" is also used in Acts 25 where an explanation is being given by Festus to King Agrippa. He was explaining Paul's case as Paul was being shuffled from court to court. The Judaists were trying to develop a case against Paul. After hearing their accusations, Festus gave this explanation to King Agrippa:

18. About whom (Paul), when the accusers testified, they brought no accusations of the wicked things I had supposed.

19. But they had some disputes with him about their own demon-fearing, and about Jesus having died, whom

The accusers were Judaists who hated Paul. Festus was surprised that their accusations were so trivial.

That Greek word "*deisidaimonia*" in verse 19 is the same word that is used here in Acts 17:22. Again, it means "demon-fearing." This also applies to the demon-fearing that is carried on in the churches.

Nearly every church teaches its members to fear demons. Some go so far as to try to "exorcise" the demons they think are inside people. And some people exhibit a fear of demons by destroying or getting rid of certain objects in their possession they think are empowered by demons.

QUESTION: Why do you equate today's Christian doctrine with ancient Greek superstition? Demons (or "devils") are mentioned many times in the Bible. Devils possessed men, and Jesus or the apostles cast them out.

Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases.

Luke 9:1

ACTS 17:23-27 JESUS AND YAHWEH ARE NOT UNKNOWABLE!

For as I passed through and noticed the objects of your worship I found an altar which had been inscribed, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, this which you worship in ignorance, I proclaim to you.

The God that made the world and all things therein, the One who is Lord of heaven and earth, dwells not in temples made with hands;

Neither is He attended by men's hands, as though He needed any thing, seeing it is He who gives life, and breath, and all things to all;

And He made each nation (race) of men of one (stock) to dwell on the face of the earth, and has determined the appointed times, and the bounds of their dwelling;

To be seeking God, if in fact they may grope for Him, and find Him. In fact He exists not far from each of us:

THE Athenians had various gods. One of these gods was called "the unknown god."

Apparently he was unknowable; a god that was mysteriously obscured from the people. Rulers like mysterious gods because they sabotage people's minds and keep them confused, passive and more easily controlled. The rulers gave them an unknowable god and a legion of demon-idols (demi gods) to divert their attention away from reality — exactly what church-and-state (the Beast System) does today.

Paul hit the Athenians squarely. By focusing upon their "unknown god" Paul was able to make the point that the people were being misled. The implied question was (and still is): Should men worship something or someone they cannot identify? Paul was saying, in essence: "To worship a god you can't identify is blind worship." Indeed, worshipping blindly is very dangerous. It is idolatry. No god worthy of worship would prefer that his followers remain ignorant of him. Nonetheless, it is the nature of the world's many mystery religions.

There is a real lesson to be learned from Paul's experience among the Athenians. Pay attention, this lesson

may strike close to home. You may notice the Athenians were not unlike people you know today.

People programmed to obey an unknowable god are complacent and tractable. They do not demand proof. Indeed, truth cannot be proven because their source of truth is unknowable. With a theology like that, opposing ideas can co-exist in one mind undetected. Error and truth together can enjoy simultaneous approval. With unknowable gods, theological maxims are not expected to make sense. You can talk out of both sides of your mouth, contradict yourself, and people cannot tell! It is a politician's dream.

Once unknowable gods are established, rulers are safe from being exposed ... since there are no identifiable standards to which they can be held. As with gods ... standards, principles and laws can be made ambiguous and unknowable. It perpetuates confusion of thought. You see, people are not told that they must tolerate evil. Instead they are denied a standard of right and wrong by which evil may be defined.

This is a lesson to be learned by our generation which seems to have lost the ability to differentiate between good and evil. Scripture tells us to reject wickedness. We're also to prove all things and strive for truth.

But if one's god is unknowable so are his laws and standards.

Sadly, some folks seem to prefer not having answers. They like the comfortability of not being responsible to standards. Idolaters think they are very comfortable ... until their world falls apart.

A modern example of an unknowable god is the Trinity god worshipped in most churches. There is no possible explanation of the Trinity god that makes sense. The Trinity god is so totally unknowable — without definition — that it must be accepted without proof. Churchgoers are commanded to accept it blindly.

There is also another unknowable god that has been popularized in recent decades. It is called the "Oneness" god, also called the "Deity of Christ." This dual god incorporates two entities rather than three as with the Trinity. The Oneness doctrine claims the Father and the Son are both one-and-the-same being. This god is no less blatant than the Trinity god. He's just received less fanfare.

You can see why rulers love to propagate and promote unknowable gods. It opiates the people. It keeps them mentally dull, and more easily controlled.

Now, as we read about Paul

exposing the idolatry of the Athenians, you must understand that Paul is also talking to us ... today! Paul is also exposing the modern-day unknowable gods like the Trinity god and the Oneness god ... and all other mystery gods people may have.

Paul offers a partial definition of the true God. He begins by saying in verse twenty-four that Yahweh, the God that made heaven and earth, "*dwells not in temples (houses) made with hands.*" The Athenian gods supposedly dwelt in temples, statues and monuments. Thus, the contrast is obvious.

Here we could also use this definition to expose the "Oneness" doctrine, which holds that Jesus (the Son) and Yahweh (the Father) are synonymous. So we might ask, did Jesus live in houses that were made with hands? Yes, He did. Jesus also lived in Mary's womb for a while, and that was even smaller than a house. Thus Jesus was finite. But Yahweh is infinite. This certainly distinguishes between Jesus and Yahweh. Jesus dwelt in houses made with hands. Yahweh does not. So much for the "Oneness" doctrine.

In verse 25, speaking of the Infinite Creator God (Yahweh) Paul asks his audience to consider their pagan practice. He points out that the true God who gives them everything cannot be helped by them. What can they do for Yahweh? The word wrongly rendered "worshipped" in the KJV is actually "*therapeuo*" in the Greek, and it means "to assist, help, or improve." The infinite Yahweh God is not helped by man. How can anyone offer help to the One that gives them life and ALL THINGS? And Paul still asks us, today, how can we *therapeutically* help the One that gives us EVERYTHING ... who gives us our very life and breath, and keeps the universe running? The obvious answer to this rhetorical question is ... we can't help or improve Yahweh in any way. The only thing we can offer Him is our love. In fact, that is what He requires of us.

Now, let's focus again on the definition of Yahweh compared to Jesus. Let's ask the question, was Jesus ever helped by men's hands? Yes, He was. When Jesus was an infant He needed a lot of help from human hands, just like any infant. And because He was mortal, He was helped and ministered to by human hands often ... even as an adult.

The point is, there are obvious differences between Jesus and His Father, Yahweh. To ignore these differences is to acquiesce into mystery and doctrines of unknowable gods.

Let's again apply to both Yahweh and Jesus what is said in verse 26. Let's ask the question, if the infinite Yahweh Creator God has determined the appointed seasons, and the bounds of their dwelling? Could Jesus have possibly been Him? Did Jesus know the times and seasons appointed? The answer is no. We have only to listen to what Jesus himself says about whether He had His Father's ability to predetermine and appoint certain times, in Matthew 24:36:

36. But of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the messenger of heaven, but my Father only.

Matthew 24:36

Jesus didn't know. Only His Father knew. Thus, it seems on every page of the New Testament there is proof of the distinction between Yahweh and Jesus.

Paul says that Yahweh is the One and only Creator God in all of heaven and earth, and if they would seek after Him they would find Him and He would no longer be unknown to them. He is known of his people!

QUESTION: Aren't you using rationalistic thinking and claiming too much? Man's reasoning abilities are only foolishness compared to the wisdom of God.

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.

1 Corinthians 3:19

Isn't God bigger than our understanding? Isn't it wrong to question his identity?

DO ALL RACES COME FROM ONE STOCK?

Acts 17:26 has been popularly mistranslated to twist people's perspective on race. It should read:

26. And He made each nation (race) of men of one (stock) to dwell on the face of the earth, and has determined the appointed times, and the bounds of their dwelling;

One of the reasons for the confusion of churchgoers on the subject of race stems from the KJV's twisting of this verse to imply that all races originated from one man (supposedly Adam).

26. And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, ... (KJV)

The word "blood" was supplied (it isn't there in the Greek), and "all" should have been "each." There's a big difference between "all" and "each."

Instead of "nations" (plural) it should be "nation" (singular). EVERY/EACH race of men has its own PROGENITOR/STOCK! Every nation (race) is unique. In other words, Yahweh created the races unique and separate. We recognize, accept, and respect their differences ... as well as their appointed times and boundaries.

ACTS 17:28-34 THE RAISING OF "THE DEAD"

For in Him we are living, and moving, and existing; as some of your own prophets have said, For we are born of Him.

Since we are existing as born of God, we ought not to be thinking of God to be like gold, or silver, or stone, or sculptured art and device of man.

Therefore, indeed, God overlooks the times of this ignorance; but now is commanding all men everywhere to repent:

Accordingly He is setting a time in which He is judging the occupied world in justice by a man whom He ordains, raising Him from the dead, and giving faith to all.

But hearing of the raising of the dead, some were mocking; and others said, We will hear you again about this.

So Paul departed from among them. But some men, believing, were joining him:

Among them was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

PAUL was talking about the absurdity of sculpting idols out of gold, silver, stone or even creating them with thoughts or folklore. Since Yahweh creates man, gives him life, and supplies every element required for him to live, it doesn't take too much intelligence to figure out that Yahweh doesn't need anything from man. There is nothing man can offer God that He needs. God is not in need of gold, silver, or sacrifices.

Love (honor; respect) is the only thing man has that God desires. If man understands this one truth he will learn the true nature of Yahweh ... and blessings and enlightenment will follow.

Verse 32 says that when those who were listening heard of "the raising of the dead," they mocked. The word "dead" in this verse is plural in the original Greek. In other

words, this does not refer to Jesus (who was one), but the dead ones (plural). These are those who were spiritually dead and then were raised (born again) to new life in Christ. This raising was the new birth; the New Covenant age begun by Jesus.

Now, what we read here is proof that the first raising was already in progress. The raising of the spiritually dead (the giving of life) was already happening at that time! This is why many of the people there mocked Paul, just like people mock today when they hear this gospel of life and death.

"... How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? (Jn. 3:4)

Or a churchgoer may ask, "How can you say the first "resurrection" isn't future? It can't happen until Jesus returns

and the 'millennium' begins." (according to dispensational, Masonic church doctrine)

The dead were being raised. They had been spiritually dead ... not biologically dead. Paul was talking about the "walking dead." They were dead of spirit; without eyes to see or ears to hear. They were dead in sin, but now had been raised (i.e., inspired; spirit driven) in new life in Christ. The proof of this is that the verse is not talking about just one man being raised up. But many had been, or were being, RAISED UP after Jesus came to His throne (the KJV's "resurrected" is the wrong word). These were the brethren who received life and followed Jesus. They were the new-born, New Covenant Christians redeemed by the new King.

The Areopagites were the students of religious tradition there at Mars' Hill. They were curious about Paul's doctrine. Dionysius heard Paul, and believed him. He apparently gave up his "unknowable god" and accepted the God of Israel who makes Himself known. Also a woman named Damaris, and others with them believed, after hearing Paul. It's interesting to note that these were Greeks, and they were able to hear the truths the Judaists couldn't (or wouldn't) hear.

QUESTION: You talk about the first resurrection as if it's already happened. Where are these "resurrected" people? How do you explain the fact that evil is not yet eliminated from the Earth, and Christ has not yet returned?

PSEUDO-DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE

Most people don't realize how Dionysius the Areopagite innocently figured into the shaping of orthodox church doctrine concerning the classic belief in angels. He was only mentioned once in the Bible and, at that, just in passing here in Acts 17. But that was enough to establish his name in church theology. His name now carried some religious significance.

Much later, in the fifth century A.D., some unidentified person (thought by scholars to be a Syrian Monk) wrote four treatises which outlined a complete theology mixing Christianity with Mysticism. The treatises were titled 1. *Divine Names*, 2. *Mystical Theology*, 3. *Celestial Hierarchy*, and 4. *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*.

This anonymous mystic published his works under the pseudonym "Dionysius the Areopagite" ... after the man of some 300 years earlier mentioned in Acts 17:34. This pseudonym gave the writer's treatises and letters an air of credibility. But because he was not the real Dionysius, scholars have called him "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite."

Pseudo-Dionysius devised his own magical stories about supernatural winged beings he called

angels or cherubs. He gilded his fantastic treatises of these imaginary creatures by claiming there were three hierarchies (i.e., three heavens), each containing three orders or "choirs" of heavenly beings. The cherubim were supposed to be the second of the nine orders. Thus, the foundation was laid for the perversion of the Bible terms, "angel" and "cherub."

Medieval and Renaissance religious writers became interested in Pseudo-Dionysius' fantasies (which he held to be true) and produced a body of commentaries concerning them, assigning them more importance in religious communities. This body of additional literature was instrumental in establishing the mythical models of angels, which, in time, superseded the Bible meanings.

This magical misconception of angels and cherubim has prevailed down to modern times. Today, most everyone mistakenly thinks that the model of winged angels came from the Bible ... not realizing it actually came from 5th-century religious mystics.

(For a more in-depth study of the original meaning of the term "cherub" see **The Cherub Unmasked**, parts 1 & 2 in the Jan-Feb and Mar-Apr 1983 issue of **The American Christian**.)

END OF CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

FOR ANSWERS AND NOTES, SEE ENCLOSED "ANSWER SECTION."

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POINTS TO REMEMBER:

1. Freedom is the natural result of following God's law. It prevents oppression. The Kingship of God is comprised of people who honor his Son (the current King) and his law. His law is negative ("*you shall not ...*"). Thus, freedom and the Kingship of God result from the honoring of negatives (no idolatry, no murder, no stealing, no false witness, etc.). This means that freedom comes not from doing something, but rather from NOT doing a few certain things: not having other gods, not committing idolatry, not murdering, not stealing, etc.. God's law lists a few things we can't do, leaving us a whole world of things we CAN do. That is freedom.

2. The common expression, "*building the Kingdom of God*" is actually a misnomer. First, the actual word is "Kingship" (thus a matter of the heart ... not real estate). Secondly, it cannot be built for it already exists. It can only be recognized and joined.

You also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

(1Pet. 2:5)

The Kingship is God's natural order of creation. Separate your heart from the idols and institutions that man has built and the Kingship shines through naturally. Man cannot improve on God's creation (i.e., His Kingship). But man thinks he can, and has been trying for thousands of years.

After separating from Man's system we can build within the Kingship.

Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:

(Rom. 15:20)

Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

(1Cor. 3:12)

But in terms of the Kingship itself, it already exists. There was never a time that Yahweh was not sovereign. Now He has appointed his Son Jesus as King. The Kingship and its laws can be seen and appreciated by simply clearing away the idolatry and confusion created by man's attempts to improve upon it. Tear down the idols, and the Kingship stands where it always has stood.

For I am Yahweh, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.

(Mal. 3:6)

Come out of her (the Beast System), my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues.

(Rev. 18:4)

They shall build, but I will throw down;

(Mal. 1:4)

And you shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; you shall throw down their altars (avoid their system):

(Judges. 2:2)

3. The history of religion and government is the history of man's idolatry in his attempts to improve or circumvent God's Kingship. All the idols, all the kings and laws created by man only obscure the natural and blessed Kingship of God, and detour men away from it. Tear your eyes away from man's religion and government and what do you see? The Kingship of God.

4. The governments of nations, states, cities, and priesthoods are monuments to the perversions of man in his attempts to improve on God's Kingship. They have effectively obscured the Kingdom so that men cannot see it or access it. Man's system makes walls blocking people from seeing God's Kingship.

5. In most cities visited by the apostles they were blocked by those walls ... i.e, by opposition from

the rulers and the defenders of systems of men (i.e., those who built institutions circumventing God). The Gospel of the Kingship was offensive to the empire builders because it dispossessed their enslaving government, military, and religious institutions and reverted back to God's laws and his creation (family, honesty, freedom).

6. The empire mentality rides on the Utopian (false) promise that big government provides "freedom and justice for all" via police and threat. But freedom cannot be legislated, and justice is never served by putting power in the hands of thugs. The power to define "freedom" and "justice" is the government's license to "*change times and laws*" (Dan. 7:25), enslave the people, and to obscure the Kingship of God.

But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees [lawyers and politicians], hypocrites! for you are shutting up the kingship of heaven against men: for you are not entering, neither do you allow them that are coming in to enter.

(Matt. 23:13)

7. When bankers build empires they incorporate religion in their take-over strategy. Empire religions normally are mystery religions with mystery gods. The element of mystery keeps the common people off balance, and unable to pin down anything. That insures that the rulers will never be held accountable. In time, mystery becomes institutionalized the people accept it as normal and good. This leaves the politicians and priests with an open playing field where they can do just about anything they want ... because all standards and promises have become mysterious. No one knows, or expects to know, what is what. God, along with standards of right and wrong, have become unknowable.

This was the environment Paul encountered in Athens (vs.16), and is the Beast System environment that has been developed and perfected by western culture (U.S. and Europe).

ANSWERS:

pg.3

It is wrong to assume that churches help people become familiar with God and the message of the Bible. Most churchgoers are as ignorant of the message of the Bible as the typical Atheist. The Atheist rejects Scripture, and churchgoers are taught myths and lies. Both are ignorant of what the Bible teaches.

pg. 4

This question assumes that central government is necessary for society. It is not. It is not necessary for the majority to rule the minority.

When the majority amasses power to force its will upon the minority, or upon individuals, freedom is lost and that culture falls into decay.

Agreement and voluntary cooperation is great. It is the spirit of ecclesia. But forced democracy is slavery, and is a sin against man and God.

A popular assumption has it that compliance must be legislated and enforced upon people to get things done. But the question is ... for WHOM are these things getting done? People usually get the government they want. If they prefer force rather than freedom, then they will end up with a government that forces them into involuntary compliance. It is their choice.

pg. 6

Scripture speaks of demons. The question is, what are they? If you assume there to be an invisible army of evil ghosts controlled by a supernatural Satan, then you are in agreement with the churches and most other world religions. However, we do not believe that.

Demons were demigods (mythical entities) formed in the imaginations of men. They were thought to be "lesser gods" who did the bidding of the bigger gods. All kinds of problems and diseases were blamed on them.

Churches have used this fear tactic to control people.

In the Bible "casting out demons" was a loose term – an idiomatic expression – for curing a problem or disease, either physical or mental.

pg. 8

I've heard this objection from insincere debaters. It attempts to remove the use of reason in understanding and knowing God and his Scriptures ... thus, claiming God uses mystery to veil Himself from us. It leaves man with no means to identify God or develop acquaintance and faith in God's instruction.

God does not say that He is unknowable. He does say that his knowledge is greater than man's.

pg. 9

The first "raising" (wrongly translated "resurrection" in the KJV) began happening soon after Christ was "raised" from the dead. It is still happening today. The official beginning was at Pentecost, 50 days after Jesus was crucified.

Jesus died biologically. When He came out of the tomb He was not merely restored (resurrected). Rather, He was "RAISED" to a higher life form. He was raised immortal.

The "life" He gave to is followers "raised" them also, but not to immortality. They were "raised" to an upgraded life called "new birth," "new life in Christ," "awaking," "arising from the dead," being "translated into the kingdom," "quickenened," "putting on the new man," etc.. This I refer to as "spiritual life" from "spiritual death."

Evil is not a force that overpowers people. Evil is the natural result of the absence of God's spirit. God allows man to choose to ignore Him.

14. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the trees of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

15. For without are dogs and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loves and makes a lie.

Rev. 22:14-15

19. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both you and your seed may live.

Deut. 30:19

"Resurrection" is the wrong term. It comes from the Latin "re" (again) and "surgere" (rise). It means "rise again," and implies restoration to a former state. However, the actual Greek word is "anastasis," meaning "raise up," implying a move to a higher state. Jesus was not restored (resurrected) to his former biological state. He was raised to a higher state: immortality.

"The raising" is NOT "resurrection." "Resurge," a form of the term, describes ocean waves falling and rising again. Each new wave is a resurrection of a former wave. When you awake in the morning and rise again from bed, you "resurrect."

"Anastasis," on the other hand, means to "rise" to a new, higher state. Lazarus was "resurrected" and he was still mortal. However, Jesus was RAISED to a higher life! He wasn't "resurrected."

By the same token, when Jesus' disciples were "born again," they were "raised" (upgraded) by receiving a higher life than they had before. This, too, is not "resurrection," for it is an upgrade ... not a return to a former state.

Furthermore, when we, in the future, are "raised" to immortality (as was Jesus) that, too, will be a "raising up" – not a "resurrection."

The wording of the scripture is critical. Meaning can be lost if the words are changed or misinterpreted. In this case, the difference in the two words carries more import than can be addressed here. But it is enough for now to establish the fact that accuracy is essential to reveal truth.