SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES



DEEP DIVE

Acts

Chapter Seventeen, Verses 1–34

Noble Bereans and an Unknown God — three cities, one Bible, and a God who is not far from each one of us

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

In Thessalonica a mob says the gospel has upset the world; in Berea eager listeners check every word against the Scriptures; in Athens, a city full of idols, Paul names the unknown God — Creator, Giver of life, and Judge of the world through a Man He raised from the dead. Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind Luke's key words.

THE PASSAGE

Acts 17:1–34

Thessalonica · Berea · Athens · Areopagus

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Five movements from the synagogue in Thessalonica to the hill of Ares in Athens

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"He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist." — Acts 17:27–28

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

Acts 17:1–34

Noble Bereans and an Unknown God — Paul reasons from the Scriptures in Thessalonica, is examined by the Bereans, and preaches the living God on Mars Hill

† How to Read This Study

This study walks Acts 17 in 5 movements, in Luke's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the passage so you can see where Luke is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions; Command / instruction; Key repeated word; Sin / warning; Promise / blessing; Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · ACTS 17:11

"Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so."

† Before the Passage

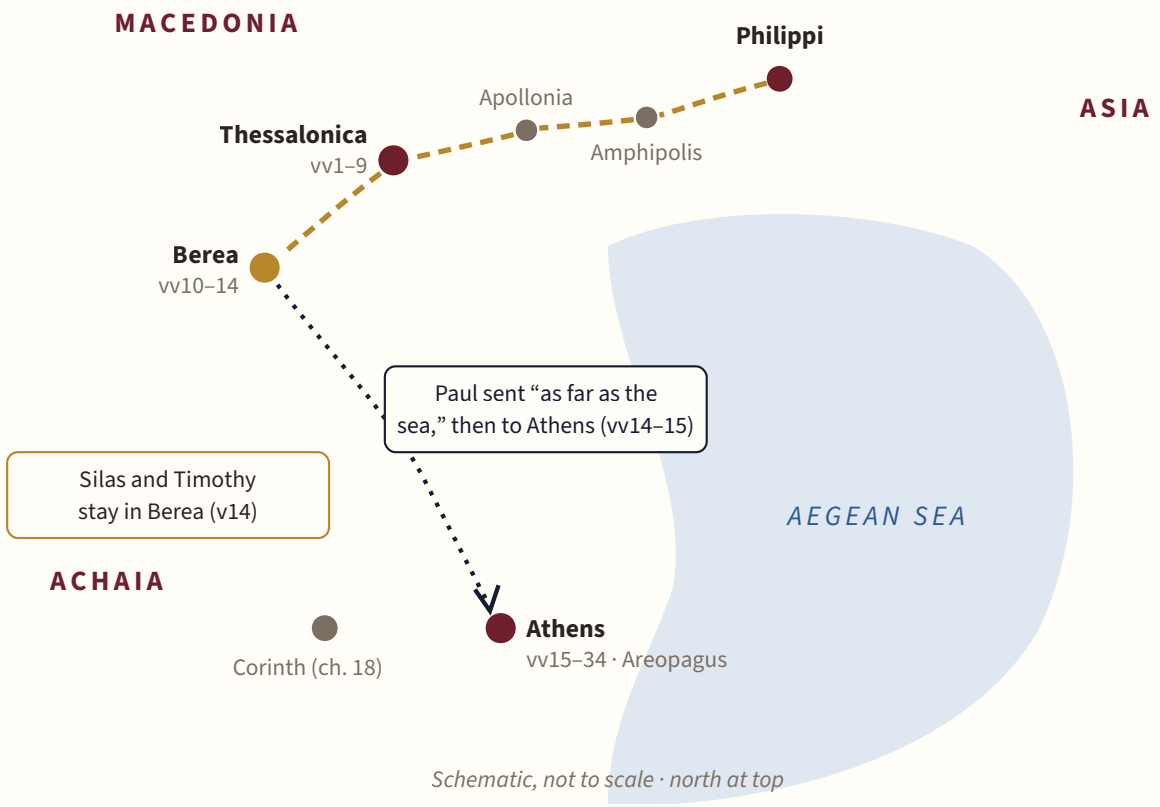
Acts 16 ended in Philippi with Paul and Silas beaten, jailed, singing at midnight, and finally escorted out of the city by apologetic magistrates (16:37–40). This is Paul's second missionary journey. The vision of the man of Macedonia (16:9) had brought the gospel into Europe, and now the team — Paul, Silas and Timothy — follows the great Roman road west through Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica. Guzik calls it "an important port city, about 100 miles (160 kilometers) and a three-day walk from Philippi."

Chapter 17 is a tale of three cities and three kinds of hearers. In Thessalonica, the capital of Macedonia, some are persuaded and others form a mob. In Berea, a smaller town to the southwest, the Jews of the synagogue receive the word eagerly and examine the Scriptures daily. In Athens — the old capital of Greek learning, which Bruce (quoted by Guzik) calls "the highest level of culture attained in classical antiquity" — there is no Bible-reading audience at all, only philosophers, idols, and a love of anything new.

Watch how Paul's method changes and how his message does not. To the synagogue he "reasoned with them from the Scriptures" (v. 2), showing that the Christ had to suffer and rise, as Jesus Himself had taught (Luke 24:26, 46). To the Areopagus he begins with creation, the God who gives "life and breath and all things" (v. 25), and quotes their own poets. But both sermons end in the same place: Jesus, raised from the dead.

Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, written soon after from Corinth, fills in what Luke compresses here: the church that was born in those three Sabbaths "turned to God from idols" and held firm under pressure (1 Thess 1:9; 3:6). For a Bible-study ministry the center of the chapter is verse 11. Luke praises Jews who would not take even an apostle's word for it until they had checked it in the Book.

FIGURE · MACEDONIA TO ACHAIA



Follow the gold road west from Philippi to Thessalonica and Berea, then the dark line by sea to Athens, where Paul waits for Silas and Timothy.

I
MOVEMENT

ACTS 17:1–9

Reasoning from the Scriptures

Three Sabbaths in Thessalonica, a suffering Christ, and a mob that says the world is upside down

> [1] *Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.* [2] *And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,* [3] *explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again*

from the dead, and saying, "△ This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ." 4 And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women. 5 But the Jews, ⚠ becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. 6 When they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, "◷ These men who have upset the world have come here also; 7 and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that △ there is another king, Jesus." 8 They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things. 9 And when they had received a pledge from Jason and the others, they released them.

ACTS 17:1–9

"and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day,"

LUKE 24:46

διελέξατο

DIELEXATO · "REASONED" · G1256

From *dialegomai*, to discuss, argue, reason back and forth. Guzik: "The Greek word translated 'reasoned' is the root for our English word dialogue." Luke uses it again and again for Paul's method — in the synagogue at Thessalonica (v. 2), in the synagogue and marketplace at Athens (v. 17), and every Sabbath at Corinth (18:4). Paul did not simply announce; he opened the text, set the evidence beside it (*paratithēmi*, G3908, "giving evidence," v. 3), and answered questions. Henry: "Reason must not be set up in competition with the scripture." Paul reasoned *from* it.

ἀναστατώσαντες

ANASTATŌSANTES · "UPSET" · G387

From *anastatoō*, to stir up, unsettle, overturn — the KJV's famous "turned the world upside down." The same verb names the Egyptian "who some time ago stirred up a revolt" (21:38), and Paul uses it of the false teachers "who are troubling you" (Gal 5:12). The mob meant it as a charge of sedition, and they paired it with another: "there is another king, Jesus" (v. 7). Guzik calls the charge "an unintended compliment to the effectiveness of God's work through Paul and Silas."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that Thessalonica was "an important port city, about 100 miles (160 kilometers) and a three-day walk from Philippi," and that Paul went first to the synagogue, as was his custom. His method was dialogue — "The Greek word translated 'reasoned' is the root for our English word dialogue" — and his content was a Messiah who had to suffer and rise. When the mob cried that these men had turned the world upside down, Guzik hears a truth they did not intend: the charge "gave an unintended compliment to the effectiveness of God's work through Paul and Silas," because "Jesus turns the thinking and the power structures of this world around."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul preached this passage on 19 December 2004 in a sermon titled "Reasoning from the Scriptures" (Acts 16:35–17:15). Ligonier's summary of it says the sermon shows how "the Apostle Paul remained faithful to the preaching of God's Word," and how that faithfulness led "many of his listeners to examine Scripture for themselves." His 2000 conference message "Upsetting the World" takes up the mob's charge; its summary begins, "Throughout the book of Acts, Christians are persecuted for their impact on society," and asks, "What does it mean for Christians to live in this world?"

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry delights in Paul's habit of worship: "Sabbaths and solemn assemblies are always very precious to those to whom Christ is precious." He explains why the Christ "must needs" suffer: "He must needs have suffered for us, because he could not otherwise purchase redemption for us;" and "if he had not died, he could not have risen again from the dead." Paul "reasoned with them out of the scriptures," and "Reason must not be set up in competition with the scripture." As for the riot, Henry notes the old trick of persecutors: "Their enemies set the city in an uproar, and then laid the blame upon them;" yet "Christ's kingdom was not of this world."

II
MOVEMENT

ACTS 17:10–15

More Noble-Minded

Berea: eager hearts, open Bibles, and many who believed

10 The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 Now these were ☆ more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. 12 ☆ Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men. 13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there as well, agitating and stirring up the crowds. 14 Then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there. 15 Now those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they left.

ACTS 17:10–15

"But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good;"

1 THESSALONIANS 5:21

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work."

2 TIMOTHY 3:16–17

FIGURE · TWO SYNAGOGUES, TWO RESPONSES

TWO SYNAGOGUES, TWO RESPONSES · ACTS 17:1–13

	THESSALONICA (vv1–9)	BEREA (vv10–13)
What Paul did	reasoned from the Scriptures, three Sabbaths (v2)	the same: into the synagogue of the Jews (v10)
How the word was met	some persuaded (v4); others "becoming jealous" (v5)	"received the word with great eagerness" (v11)
What they did next	formed a mob, dragged Jason to the rulers (vv5–6)	"examining the Scriptures daily" (v11)
The outcome	a pledge taken; Paul sent away by night (vv9–10)	"many of them believed" (v12)

Open hearts and clear heads: eager to receive, careful to check — and "therefore" many believed (vv11–12).

Read across each row: Paul did the same thing in both towns; the difference was how the hearers met the word and what they did with their Bibles.

εὐγενέστεροι

EUGENESTEROI · "MORE NOBLE-MINDED" · G2104

The comparative of *eugenēs*, literally "well-born," of noble birth. Luke uses the plain word for the "nobleman" who went to receive a kingdom (Luke 19:12), and Paul reminds the Corinthians that among them there were "not many noble" (1 Cor 1:26). Here Luke turns a word about pedigree into a word about character. These Jews were noble not for their ancestry but for how they treated God's word: "with great eagerness" (*prothymia*, G4288, readiness), and with daily checking.

ἀνακρίνοντες

ANAKRINONTES · "EXAMINING" · G350

From *anakrinō*, to examine closely, to sift, to question — the word for a judge's hearing. Luke uses it of court examinations (Luke 23:14; Acts 4:9; 24:8), and Paul uses it for the spiritual man who "appraises all things" (1 Cor 2:15). The present participle with "daily" pictures a habit, not a single check. The Bereans put the apostle's sermon on trial before the Scriptures — and the Scriptures upheld it. Henry: "Searching the scriptures must be our daily work."

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik says "their audience was more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica," and explains why: "They would not accept Paul's teaching without checking for themselves, so they could know if these things were so." That required confidence in the Book itself — "They believed they could understand and find out truth from the Bible." He puts the Berean balance memorably: "When Paul preached, they had open hearts; but also clear heads." Others have only half of it: "Many people have clear heads but closed hearts, and never receive the word with all readiness." Readiness and examination together are why many believed.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's sermon on these verses, "Reasoning from the Scriptures," is summarized by Ligonier as showing that Paul's faithfulness to the preaching of God's Word led "many of his listeners to examine Scripture for themselves." That is exactly the Berean response: the preacher's faithfulness to the text produced hearers who went to the text.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry calls the Bereans "more noble than those in Thessalonica" and explains the nobility in their minds: "They were very willing to hear it, presently apprehended the meaning of it, and did not shut their eyes against the light." They "searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so," and he draws the rule for every believer: "Searching the scriptures must be our daily work." Henry also notes that Paul's enemies followed him from Thessalonica, so that he had to be sent on toward Athens while Silas and Timothy stayed behind.

III
MOVEMENT

ACTS 17:16–21

A City Full of Idols

Paul's provoked spirit, the marketplace, the philosophers, and the love of something new

16 Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, ⚠ his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing ⚠ the city full of idols. 17 So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present. 18 And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, "What would this idle babbler wish to say?" Others, "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,"—because ⚠ he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. 19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming? 20 "For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean." 21 (Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than ⏲ telling or hearing something new.)

ACTS 17:16–21

"Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures."

ROMANS 1:22–23

παρωξύνετο

PARŌXYNETO · "WAS BEING PROVOKED" · G3947

From *paroxynō*, to sharpen, stir up, provoke (our word "paroxysm" comes from it). Its only other New Testament use is 1 Corinthians 13:5 — love "is not provoked." The two fit together: love is not irritated by wrongs done to itself, but Paul's spirit was stirred by wrongs done to God. Luke ties the grief to what Paul saw: the city was *kateidōlos* (G2712), "full of idols," a word found nowhere else in the New Testament.

σπερμολόγος

SPERMOLOGOS · "IDLE BABBLER" · G4691

Literally "seed-picker," a bird pecking up seeds in the marketplace; then a scrap-collector of ideas, a man who picks up bits of learning and repeats them without understanding. It occurs only here in the New Testament. The other group thought Paul was "a proclaimer of strange deities" (*daimonia*, G1140), perhaps because he spoke of "Jesus" and "the resurrection" (*Anastasis*) as if they were a pair of new gods.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik pictures Paul, left alone in the most cultured city of the ancient world, unimpressed by its glory: "his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols." A tourist would have admired the temples, "But when Paul toured Athens, he was only depressed by the magnitude of the idolatry he saw all around." He explains the schools: "The Epicureans pursued pleasure as the chief purpose in life." And he is candid about why Paul got a hearing: "It was the novelty of Paul's message that earned him the invitation to the Areopagus."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's devotional on Acts 17:16–17, "Moving Out of the Temple," fastens on where Paul did his reasoning — in the synagogue and in the marketplace "every day." "The cradle of the church was the marketplace," he writes; the apostles' mandate was to await the Spirit and then "to move out of the temple and into the world." That witness "was public, not private; open, not secret; dangerous, not safe." His sermon "Paul at Mars Hill – Part 1" (2 Jan 2005) is summarized: "When Paul came to Mars Hill in ancient Athens, he was confronted by skepticism, relativism, and cynicism."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry reads Paul's grief as godly: "He beheld these transgressors, and was grieved; and horror took hold of him." He notes the irony of Athens: "the greatest pretenders to reason were the greatest slaves to idols." The Athenians' hunger for news was not a hunger for truth: "They affected novelty; they were for telling and hearing some new thing." So they called Paul a "babbler," and yet took him to the Areopagus to hear more.

IV MOVEMENT

ACTS 17:22–31

The Unknown God Made Known

Creator, Giver, Ruler, near to all — and Judge of the world through a risen Man

22 *So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in*
all respects. 23 *"For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar*
with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to

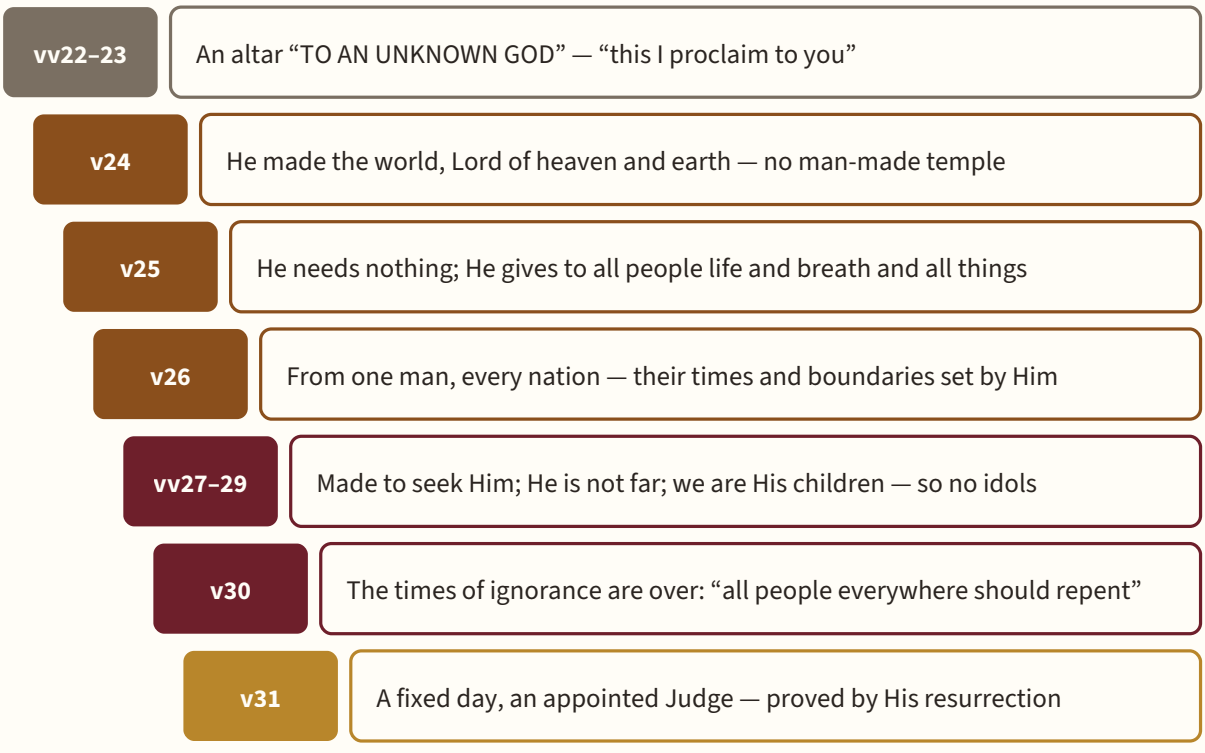
you. 24 "△ The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; 25 nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since △ He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; 26 and △ He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, 27 that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though ☆ He is not far from each one of us; 28 for △ in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.' 29 "Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. 30 "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, 31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men △ by raising Him from the dead."

ACTS 17:22–31

"Thus says God the LORD, Who created the heavens and stretched them out, Who spread out the earth and its offspring, Who gives breath to the people on it And spirit to those who walk in it,"

ISAIAH 42:5

FIGURE · THE SERMON ON MARS HILL



Paul's Areopagus sermon steps down from the Creator to the coming Judge; notice that it ends, like his synagogue preaching, at the resurrection.

ἀγνώστῳ

AGNŌSTŌ · "UNKNOWN" · G57

Agnōstos, "not known," found only here in the New Testament, on the altar inscription Paul read while "examining the objects of your worship" (*sebasmata*, G4574). Paul's next sentence plays on the word: "what you worship in ignorance (*agnoountes*), this I proclaim to you." Their "very religious" (*deisidaimonesteros*, G1174) city had left a blank on the map of the gods. Paul fills it in — not with a new deity but with the Maker of heaven and earth.

ψηλαφήσειαν

PSĒLAPHĒSEIAN · "GROPE FOR" · G5584

From *psēlaphaō*, to feel about, to touch, as a blind man gropes for a wall. The same verb is used when the risen Jesus says "touch Me and see" (Luke 24:39), and when John speaks of what "we have looked at and touched with our hands" (1 John 1:1). The optative mood ("if perhaps they might") is tentative: fallen men grope in the dark. Yet the God they grope for "is not far from each one of us" (v. 27). Spurgeon: "Like blind men who grope for the wall, you stretch out your hands to feel after him."

μετανοεῖν

METANOEIN · "REPENT" · G3340

To change one's mind and direction. God "overlooked" the times of ignorance (v. 30) — not excusing them but withholding judgment — and now "is declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent." The reason is a day (*hēmera*) fixed and a Man "appointed" (*horizō*, G3724, the same verb as "determined" in v. 26). The God who set the boundaries of the nations has also set the date of their judgment.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik follows the sermon step by step. Paul read their altar "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD" and began there. "Paul spoke about the God who created everything, yet is distinct from His creation." "Paul told them we are all descended from Adam through Noah, and that there is one God who created us all," and so "we should seek the Lord... though He is not far from each one of us." The poets (Epimenides and Aratus) were a bridge, not an authority. Citing Stott, he notes that God "now he declares such ignorance to be culpable," and that the resurrection is the proof of judgment: "He has given assurance of this by raising Him from the dead."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul's "Paul at Mars Hill – Part 2" (9 Jan 2005; Acts 17:26–33) is summarized by Ligonier in pointed questions: "The altar dedicated by the people of Athens to the 'unknown god' was just an attempt to play it safe." "But did it work?" "Will we be able to plead ignorance about God's identity when we come to His appointed day of judgment?" In it, the summary says, Paul "reveals to the Athenians the identity of the true God in whom we live and move and have our being."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon preached "God's Nearness to Us" on verse 27 (17 July 1887). Sin makes men feel God is far away, but "The living God is not far from any one of us." "Man will not seek God, but God seeks man." For the careless that is solemn — "God is near each one of us, observing us with exactness, perceiving the secret intents of our hearts." For seekers it is hope: "Like blind men who grope for the wall, you stretch out your hands to feel after him." "If I seek God, and he is not far from me, I shall surely find him." "When the sinner seeks God and God seeks the sinner they will soon meet."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry hears Paul offering Athens "the God whom it is our unhappiness not to know." "He is the God that made the world, and all things therein," and therefore "He that made all, and maintains all, cannot be benefited by any of our services, nor needs them." "He made them all of one blood, of one and the same nature;" so "it concerns us all to enquire after God." "Since in him and upon him we live, we ought to live to him;" and the call is urgent: "Now repent; now at length, now in time, repent; for you have too long gone on in sin." "God's raising Christ from the dead is the great proof of his being appointed and ordained the Judge of quick and dead."

V
MOVEMENT

ACTS 17:32–34

Some Sneered, Some Believed

The resurrection divides the hill — mockers, delayers, and a few who joined Paul

> 32 *Now when they heard of the* ⟳ *resurrection of the dead,* ⚠ *some began to sneer, but others said, "We shall hear you again concerning this."* 33 *So Paul went out of their midst.* 34 *But* ☆ *some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.*
>
> ACTS 17:32–34

ἀνάστασιν

ANASTASIN · "RESURRECTION" · G386

Anastasis, a standing up again. It brackets the Athens story: Paul was preaching "Jesus and the resurrection" in the marketplace (v. 18), and when they heard of "the resurrection of the dead" on the hill, some began to sneer (v. 32). In the synagogue it was the same claim — "the Christ had to suffer and rise again" (v. 3, *anistēmi*). The resurrection was the offense in Athens and the proof in Paul's sermon (v. 31).

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik explains the sneer: "The Greeks were fond of the idea of the immortality of the soul, but not of the idea of the resurrection of the body." Citing Boice, he adds, "They felt that anything material was inherently evil, so there really could be no such thing as a glorified body." Yet the fruit was real: Dionysius, who "must have been a regular participant at the Areopagus," and "a woman named Damaris" believed. "The results at the Areopagus seemed small, yet some did believe." Guzik disputes the theory (Ramsay) that Paul was disappointed in Athens and changed his method; the small harvest says more about the hearers than the preacher.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry sorts the hearers. Some mocked at the resurrection; others put Paul off with "We will hear thee again of this matter." But "There were certain men that adhered to him, and believed," among them Dionysius the Areopagite and "The woman named Damaris." Henry's line is the point: a few, but real.

VI
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

The suffering Christ, the searching of Scripture, the Creator who needs nothing, the Judge who is coming

> *"Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures."*
>
> LUKE 24:26–27

> *"You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me;"*
>
> JOHN 5:39

> *"Thus says the LORD, "Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest?"*
>
> ISAIAH 66:1

> *"To whom then will you liken God? Or what likeness will you compare with Him?"*
>
> ISAIAH 40:18

> *"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse."*
>
> ROMANS 1:20

> *"Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other."*
>
> ISAIAH 45:22

> *"For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son,"*
>
> JOHN 5:22

> *"For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil."*
>
> ECCLESIASTES 12:14

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry turns Berea into a rule for every reader of the whole Bible: "Searching the scriptures must be our daily work." Paul's message was tested by Moses and the prophets — and it passed.

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four teachers, one chapter. Guzik walks the three cities and gives the background; Sproul's Ligonier sermons (known here through their published summaries) and his devotional press the public witness of the church and the coming day of judgment; Spurgeon pleads from verse 27 that God is near; Henry turns every scene into counsel — most memorably, that searching the Scriptures must be our daily work.

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · Thessalonica	"Reasoned" is our word dialogue; the charge was an unintended compliment.	Faithful preaching of the Word; Christians upset the world by their impact.	— (no Spurgeon sermon on these verses sourced here)	Christ must needs suffer; reason serves Scripture, never competes.
II · Berea	Open hearts and clear heads; they checked for themselves.	Faithful preaching sends hearers to examine Scripture themselves.	— (no Spurgeon sermon on these verses sourced here)	Willing, quick to understand; searching the Scriptures is daily work.
III · Athens	Depressed by the idols; novelty, not depth, got Paul his hearing.	The cradle of the church was the marketplace — public, open, dangerous.	— (no Spurgeon sermon on these verses sourced here)	The greatest pretenders to reason, the greatest slaves to idols.
IV · The sermon	Creator distinct from creation; ignorance now culpable; resurrection the proof.	The unknown-god altar was playing it safe — it will not work on judgment day.	Not far from any of us; seeker and Seeker soon meet.	He needs nothing; live to Him in whom you live; now repent.
V · Responses	Soul yes, body no — yet some did believe.	— (his Mars Hill sermons are sourced at IV)	— (no Spurgeon sermon on these verses sourced here)	Mockers, delayers, and a few who adhered to him.

ACTS 17:1–34 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **Paul reasoned; he did not just announce.** Guzik: "The Greek word translated 'reasoned' is the root for our English word dialogue." Opening the text, setting out the evidence, answering questions — from Thessalonica (v2) to Athens (v17). GUZIK
- **A suffering Messiah was the sticking point.** Paul had to show "that the Christ had to suffer and rise again" (v3) — the very thing Jesus explained on the Emmaus road (Luke 24:26). Henry: He "could not otherwise purchase redemption for us." HENRY
- **Upside down is right side up.** The mob's charge (v6) was, Guzik says, "an unintended compliment," because "Jesus turns the thinking and the power structures of this world around." "Another king, Jesus" (v7) was simply true. GUZIK
- **Noble is a word about the Book, not the bloodline.** *Eugenēs* meant well-born; Luke uses it for people who received the word eagerly and examined it daily (v11). Nobility is how a man treats God's word. THE GREEK
- **Open hearts, clear heads.** Guzik: "When Paul preached, they had open hearts; but also clear heads." Eagerness without examination is gullible; examination without eagerness is cold. The Bereans had both — "therefore many of them believed" (v12). GUZIK
- **Searching the Scriptures is daily work.** Henry's rule from verse 11. The Bereans checked even an apostle against the Old Testament, and the Scriptures confirmed him. HENRY

- **Provoked, not impressed.** Athens' temples did not dazzle Paul; its idols grieved him (v16). The same word, *paroxynō*, says love "is not provoked" (1 Cor 13:5) — Paul was stirred for God's honor, not his own. THE GREEK
- **The church belongs in the marketplace.** Sproul: "The cradle of the church was the marketplace." Paul reasoned there "every day" (v17), with whoever happened to be present. SPROUL
- **God needs nothing and gives everything.** "He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things" (v25). Henry: He "cannot be benefited by any of our services, nor needs them." Worship is receiving before it is giving. THE TEXT
- **He is not far — and He has fixed a day.** Spurgeon: "When the sinner seeks God and God seeks the sinner they will soon meet." But the same God has "fixed a day" and proved it "by raising Him from the dead" (v31). SPURGEON

† Questions for the Table

1 **Paul reasoned "from the Scriptures" that the Christ had to suffer and rise. If someone asked me to show them Jesus from the Old Testament, where would I start?**

Beginning with Moses and with all the prophets (Luke 24:27).

17:2–3; Luke 24:26–27

2 **The mob said the gospel had "upset the world." What has Jesus turned upside down in my life — and what still needs turning?**

Jesus turns the thinking and the power structures of this world around (Guzik).

17:6–7

3 **The Bereans had open hearts and clear heads. Which am I weaker in — eagerness to receive the word, or care to examine it?**

Many people have clear heads but closed hearts (Guzik).

17:11–12; 1 Thess 5:21

4 **When I hear a sermon, a podcast or a friend's advice about God, how do I check it against the Scriptures? What does my daily habit actually look like?**

Searching the scriptures must be our daily work (Henry).

17:11; 2 Tim 3:16–17

5 **Paul's spirit was provoked by a city full of idols. What are the idols of my town — and do they still bother me?**

The greatest pretenders to reason were the greatest slaves to idols (Henry).

17:16, 29

6 **God "is not far from each one of us," and He "has fixed a day." How do both truths — nearness and judgment — change how I talk to a lost friend?**

When the sinner seeks God and God seeks the sinner they will soon meet (Spurgeon).

17:27, 30–31

Acts 17 is three cities and one gospel. Paul opens the Scriptures to Jews, names the unknown God to philosophers, and in every place ends at the risen Christ. Be a Berean: receive the word eagerly, check it daily, and then repent and believe the One God raised from the dead.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

† Sources

Each teacher's section summarizes the pages below in our own words; short quotations are verbatim from them. Matthew Henry (1662–1714) completed his *Commentary* himself through the Gospels and Acts. Henry's Commentary and C.H. Spurgeon (1834–1892) are in the public domain; Guzik and Sproul are summarized — consult each author's own work.

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