

Berea of ACTS 17 fame who further learned and ...kept the word of my patience... like the Philadelphia Saints do.

ACTS 17:11 *These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received 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.* Brother Hill used to note that it is thought that the Apostle Paul was at Berea for a period of time between six weeks, and three months. We are not told in scripture how long a time Paul was at Berea. Yet during his stay at Berea, the Berean's were given all the tools necessary to become full overcomers. Note also in verse 12 the great percentage of those who believed there at Berea: ...*many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.* Once again we have few names given us as to who these people were. We do know from ACTS 20:4 of one man, Sopater of Berea, who accompanied Paul on his later journeys.

Of those that believed there in Berea were ...*honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.* It is thought by some scholars that these particular Greeks were well educated upper class citizens. Paul himself came from an well educated upper class background, and could very well relate to these people, and communicate to them both in Latin and Greek, as well as speak Hebrew to the Jews. To such an educated man these ...*honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few....* would not have a hard time paying attention. Thus the Apostle Paul was able to win these ...*honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few...* unto the Lord.

By now we know that nearly everywhere Paul went he also faced opposition inspired by Satan in the lives of unbelievers. This opposition often times is what moved Paul along from one place to another, and in the end made him the famous Apostle that the Lord intended him to become. All of this opposition was inspiring the Apostle Paul to learn what he would later write in ROMANS 8:28. ROMANS 8:28 reads: *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.* Usually the opposition that Paul faced came from those to whom he was preaching, however in Berea the opposition Paul eventually faced came from those unbelievers of Thessalonica, some of whom heard him preach at Thessalonica. ACTS 17:13 *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.*

Note that only Paul was sent away from Berea. Why only Paul? ACTS 14:12 informs us that Paul was "the chief speaker." Since Silas wasn't "the chief speaker" the opposition wasn't as eager to shut him up as they were Paul. Perhaps they thought that Paul couldn't function without Silas or Timothy. This also created an opportunity for Silas and Timothy to take their place as Apostles. Neither one of these two had up to this time been perceived as leaders, but rather followers only of the Apostle Paul. Certainly neither Silas nor Timothy were seen as "the chief speakers," so it was thought that neither of them would impose a threat. We are not told in scripture exactly when Timothy rejoined Paul and Silas, but obviously he was with them here at Berea.

Paul at Athens

ACTS 17:15 *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.*

In the above verse we find the Apostle Paul is brought to Athens. Those "*that conducted Paul*" were, no doubt, Berean Saints, recent converts of the Apostle Paul. In verse 14 we read that Silas and Timothy stayed behind at Berea, and further established the Saints of Berea in the gospel. Paul would have several days travel time, probably a couple of weeks with the Berean Saints "*that conducted Paul,*" during which time he would be able to further establish them also.

The distance from Berea to Athens was about 300 miles, most of which Paul traveled by sea. Upon his arrival at Athens Paul must of had a great deal of mixed emotions. From a youth at Tarsus, Paul had been taught historical facts about Athens. Tarsus, where Paul grew up, was actually ranked above Athens for its school of Greek literature, and philosophy. We know from ACTS 21:37 that Paul knew Greek, and not only did he know the language, but he also knew their philosophy. Paul would use his knowledge of what he had learned about Athens, and it's culture to his advantage here on this visit, as we will see as we study the rest of ACTS 17. What Paul had studied about Athens from his youth must have come alive when he first saw that ancient city, and now he finds those *"that conducted Paul"* ready to return home to Berea, having brought Paul safely on his journey. For the first time since Barnabas had brought Paul to Antioch, Syria in ACTS 11:25 & 26, Paul was now to be left alone. This was a part of the mixed emotions he felt upon his arrival at Athens, and Athens was a big city to be left alone in. However Paul was never really alone, and neither are you. Like Brother Hill so often used to say: "one with God is a majority," and so we find Paul alone, with God, in Athens. Some wonderful things will take place in the heart of the Apostle Paul while "alone" at Athens, just like some of the wonderful things that take place in our own heart when we take the time to be alone with God.

Paul must have felt an urgency to send for his friends, and fellow Apostles, Silas and Timothy, so we read in ACTS 17:15 that Paul gave a commandment to those *"that conducted Paul..."* *"...unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed...."* If it took the Apostle Paul ten days to two weeks to go from Berea to Athens, then it would take at least twice that long for Silas and Timothy to rejoin him, for the messengers who carried this message had to first return to Berea, and then Silas and Timothy could retrace the steps of Paul. That means Paul would be alone in Athens for the better part of a month, if not longer. Knowing what we know of the Apostle Paul, and his instructions from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself found in ACTS 26:16-18, we don't expect to find the Apostle Paul sitting idly by until Silas and Timothy arrive. Recall again the verses just referenced: ACTS 26:16 *But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; 17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, 18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.* Certainly the Apostle Paul had been an active testimony everywhere he went, whether alone, or with somebody, and as we will see in the rest of ACTS 17, Athens was no exception.

No doubt Athens was a tourist trap even in Paul's day. There were many famous places to see, and Paul would have known about these places from his youth. Paul would have known from his youth that Athens was the capital of Attica, and the center of Grecian refinement and philosophy, and it's famous arts. At this point in time Athens had over 30,000 public statues, and countless private statues, which were located in Grecian homes. One historian notes that Athens had more images in it than all of the rest of Greece put together. Four famous hills are found within Athens; the Acropolis, a 150 foot high rock on the Northeast, upon which was built the Parthenon, whose picture you no doubt have seen; West of that is the Areopagus known also as Mars Hill, which we will read more about later in ACTS 17; on the Southwest is the Pnyx, or Assembly Hill where the Athenian democratic assembly met; and on the South is Museum Hill. Athens was also known for the many so called great men who had come from there, whether they be scholars, lawyers, statesmen, poets, or warriors. No doubt you have heard of some of these famous men: Pericles, Demosthenes, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Sophocles, and Euripides. Athens was a very civilized city known for the politeness of its inhabitants. Athens was about 600 years old by the time Paul visited it. Even though the Greeks of Athens were under Roman rule at this time, it doesn't mean that the Greeks went along with the Roman ideals, much the same as the Jews didn't go along with Roman ideals either. Greek philosophy was always regarded with some degree of distrust among the Romans. Thus Paul here at Athens was dealing with a people whose feelings and opinions were somewhat different than those whom he had been dealing with previously. Furthermore Athens was probably a little like most of our big liberal

American cities today where nearly everything thought up by man could be found. In Athens case, nearly everything could be found there, except Jesus. The arrival of the Apostle Paul will change that. Athens is found six times in scripture. Six is the number that has to do with MAN; SATAN; and SATAN'S INFLUENCE OVER WORLDLY MAN. A Godly man like the Apostle Paul saw Satan's influence over these worldly Athenians everywhere he looked, as we will see in ACTS 17:16. One more thing about Athens. Athens means uncertainty.

ACTS 17:16 gives us a quick snapshot of the Athens of Paul's day. ACTS 17:16 *Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.*

In verse 16 we find the word "stirred." This is not the same word in the Greek as was found in verse 13. In verse 13 the Jews of Thessalonica "stirred" up the people of Berea hoping to overthrow the Apostle Paul. In the process Paul was led out of town. Here in verse 16 the word "stirred" references the inward emotions Paul experienced as he witnessed the total lack of Jesus in Athens. Different translators state that "his soul was irritated;" that "he was exasperated;" or that "his soul was deeply vexed;" that "his indignation was aroused;" and finally that "his spirit was stirred to its depths." It literally means that Paul's spirit was sharpened within him, provoking him into a positive loving action.

What so sharply provoked Paul's inner spirit, and caused him such deep vexation and exasperation was "...when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry." We mentioned above that Athens had over 30,000 public statues at the time Paul visited Athens. These statues were of the images of gods, and men; idols in other words. One visitor noted that in Athens it was easier to find a god than to find a man there. When you look up the word "idolatry" as used here in ACTS 17:16 you will find that this usage comes from the Greek adjective kateidolos {kat-i'-do-las}, number 2712 in the Strong's Greek Concordance, and is only used this one time in scripture. The meaning is "full of idols." In other words, Athens was full of idols, a point we have already also noted.

Whatever excitement Paul may have felt upon his arrival in Athens, having learned about it from his youth, was soon turned to a disappointing irritation "...when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry." Knowing the little of what we know about Athens, we too probably would have felt the same way as Paul. But let's bring Paul's experience down to our day. What do you think Paul would feel if he were alive today and came for the first time to Denver? Do you think he would find the city of Denver wholly given to idolatry? Maybe not in the same sense as Athens, but let me give you a definition of idolatry from Webster's Dictionary: idolatry -- "excessive devotion to or reverence for some person or thing." One could say Invesco Field at Mile High is a place where excessive devotion is shown to an athletic team. The same could be said of Coors Field, or The Pepsi Arena, and to some these are places where their idols are worshipped. Go to Saint Anthony's Hospital and you will find a garden full of statues, many of whom people pray to. Go to almost any house or establishment in Denver, and there you will find at least one television. How many people in Denver have an excessive devotion to, or reverence for their television? The television has become their idol, and on it they can watch such foolishness as "American Idol," or waste endless hours being entertained. Having said all of this, it makes us take a little different perspective of things, and realize that if the Apostle Paul were to show up in Denver today, he too would find ...the city wholly given to idolatry.

Recall from ACTS 17:1 & 2 that it was Paul's manner in every city he visited to first visit the synagogue of the Jews, that is if that city had a Jewish synagogue. Certainly we would expect a city the size of Athens to have a synagogue of the Jews, and, in fact, ACTS 17:17 tells us as much. ACTS 17:17 *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.*

The key word in understanding this verse is the word "disputed." The word "disputed" conjures up the thought in our mind of a heated argument, however the Greek word used here doesn't immediately convey this sharp of a meaning. The Greek word used here is dialegomai {dee-al-eg'-om-ahee}, number 1256 in the Strong's Greek Concordance, and is the same word translated "reasoned" in ACTS 17:2. Scofield in his notes also notes that this word "disputed" here in ACTS 17:17 is probably better translated

“reasoned.” One translator states that Paul “had discussions” in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the others he met daily.

Note next in ACTS 17:17 that there are three groups of people mentioned that Paul reasoned with: “the Jews,” “the devout persons,” and “them that met with him” from the market, which he apparently visited on a daily basis. We know from ACTS 26:17 that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself made Paul an Apostle to the Gentiles, and in ROMANS 11:13 Paul states *...I am the apostle of the Gentiles...* . In 2 TIMOTHY 1:11 Paul once again states: *Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.* Yet everywhere Paul went we find him first going unto the Jews. Paul tells us a little of why this was in ROMANS 1:16 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.* Again in ROMANS 10:1 Paul gives his reasoning: *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.* In the first sermon we studied of Paul's found in ACTS 13:16-41, Paul preaches in a synagogue of the Jews, but in so doing he was also addressing the Gentiles in attendance. Note how he addresses this assembly in Antioch in Pisidia in ACTS 13:16 -- *Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.* The “ye that fear God” were non Jews, thus Paul was addressing the Gentiles. So yes Paul went to the Jew first everywhere he went, but in so doing he was also reaching out unto the Gentiles. Again in his sermon to those of Antioch in Pisidia we read of Paul reaching out to the Gentiles in ACTS 13:26: *Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.* Whosoever among you that feareth God included the Gentiles who were present at this sermon.

Here in Athens Paul reasoned with *...the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.* {ACTS 17:17}. I am sure that his intention was not to bring attention unto himself, but rather Paul drew attention unto our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Paul himself noted how his conduct was before the Corinthians in 1 CORINTHIANS 9. 1 CORINTHIANS 9:14 *Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. ...19 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. 20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; 21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. 22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. 23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.*

Now as we read ACTS 17:17 again, consider the tone of Paul's disputing: ACTS 17:17 *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.* His intention was to gain lost souls for the Lord, and so he kindly, but firmly, reasoned with those he came in contact with, showing them the love of God. So the essence of ACTS 17:17 is that the Apostle Paul did what he was called as an Apostle to do, that is, he daily reasoned with those he came in contact with, affirming that Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of God, whom man crucified, whom God raised again from the dead. Now I know that ACTS 17:17 doesn't state all of this, yet as you study the rest of ACTS 17 you will find the above facts preached in Athens. This indeed was the foundation of Paul's gospel.

The first part of ACTS 17:18 reads: *Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him.* Here we find two groups of philosophers, which we need to go over; the Epicureans, and the Stoicks. These two groups represented two opposite schools of philosophy prevalent in Athens during the time of Paul's visit. The philosophy of Athens itself started with Socrates. One author noted that Socrates may be said to have prepared the way for the gospel by leading the Greek mind to the investigation of moral truth.

The Epicureans were the followers of another Athenian philosopher named Epicurus, whose teaching started around 300 B.C. Epicurus taught that the aim of philosophy should be happiness and pleasure, not absolute truth. He relied upon experience rather than reason as the test of his theory. Materialism and sensual selfishness was ultimate tendency of his teaching. Pleasure and happiness were the center piece of his doctrine. The Epicureans held to the theory that the world was made

by chance; that there is no divine providence, no resurrection, no immortality, and that pleasure is the chief good. Simply put, the Epicureans denied that the world was created by God, and didn't believe in the Greek gods of mythology either as having anything to do with human affairs. The Epicureans were virtually atheists. They believed that there was nothing to alarm them, and nothing to disturb them. Their highest aim was to gratify themselves. It seems to me that the Epicurean philosophy is alive and well in so many today. Associate the word Epicurean with pleasure.

The Stoics philosophy was founded about 280 B.C. by Zeno. The Stoics claimed that the whole creation is God. The Stoics condemned the worship of images, and the use of temples, regarding them as nothing more than ornaments of art. The Stoics considered the gods of Greek mythology as minor developments of the great world, which they called God. In the Stoics view, God was simply the Spirit of reason of the universe. They claimed that God did not create, but only organized. The Stoics thought that the soul in death would be burnt, or returned to the earth to be absorbed in God. Thus a resurrection from the dead, in the sense in which the gospel revealed it, must have appeared to the Stoics as irrational. To the Stoics, all actions conformable to reason were equally good, and all actions contrary to reason were equally evil. Egotism and pride are at the root of the Stoic philosophy. Nothing could be more contrary to the Stoic than the news of a Saviour who has atoned for our sin, and is ready to be our ever present help in the time of need. A Stoic felt that he was perfect and self sufficient. The Stoics chief religious boast was to be severely indifferent under all circumstances -- neither rejoice over blessings and pleasure, nor wince under pain. Associate the word Stoics with pride.

Let me quote some of what Brother Copley wrote concerning the pleasure minded Epicurean, and the pride filled Stoics. "...Both of these religious theories had their roots in Cain's self-effort. Self-will is at the bottom of all false religions. Is Cain's doctrine still in evidence? Are there any Epicureans and Stoics around today? Yes. All self-made men are Cainites. All self-righteousness, all self-improvement, self-perfection, even tho' it is styled "entire satisfaction," is Cainish, because it robs Christ of His glory. Stoicism, or self-killing, is another word for legality. Epicureanism is another way of spelling lasciviousness. Do as you please; have a good time; spare yourself, "eat drink and be merry; for tomorrow we die." Both of these religious philosophies have imbedded themselves in Christendom. If believers do not learn the precious secret of recognizing Christ within them as their life, they will almost invariably end up in one of these cults. Some Saints grow weary of victories and defeats, and finally give up to a life of ease. Others, strong in themselves in certain things, seem to cultivate a self-control and graduate into a self-denying, make believe religious conduct. Both grieve our dear Lord, who is worthy and wants to be the victorious life in all His people." (End of quote from Brother Copley).

Having introduced the kind of people Paul was dealing with here in Athens, which were for the most part philosophers, or followers of philosophy, let's review a little of what the Apostle Paul later wrote concerning them. We read in COLOSSIANS 2:8 *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.* Paul faced many such men here at Athens. Let's do a quick Bible study of this verse, especially noting the wisdom found herein.

COLOSSIANS 2:8 *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.* The word "beware" come from the Greek word blepo, number 991 in the Strong's Greek Concordance, which itself is found 135 times in the New Testament, usually translated as "see." Seven time we find this word blepo translated as "beware," or "beware of." In other words we need our spiritual eyes opened to see things, and to be spiritually perfect, and spiritually complete. (The number seven is the number of SPIRITUAL COMPLETION or SPIRITUAL PERFECTION). The word "spoil" as used here comes from Greek word sulagogeo, number 4812 in the Strong's Greek Concordance, and means to "carry you off as spoil." In other words, the false teacher, through his *...philosophy and vain deceit...* would carry them off as warrior would carry off a prize of war. This is why the Apostle Paul also wrote in EPHESIANS 6:11 *Put on the whole armour of God, that*

ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. "The wiles of the devil" are often best delivered by any man ...through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world. The next word we will look at here in COLOSSIANS 2:8 is "philosophy," which is a word that portrays the love and pursuit of wisdom. Here the word "philosophy" warns of such teaching by men who are not in tune with Jesus Christ, thus their ideas and teachings may be, and probably are false. "Vain deceit" means empty delusion, that is something that is totally unprofitable. "Tradition" is one of those words which should raise a big red flag in your mind, especially if you remember a quick study I once did on this word. "Tradition" come from the Greek word *paradosis* {par-ad'-os-is}, number 3862 in the Strong's Greek Concordance, and is one of two words that numerically adds up to 666. REVELATION 13:18 tells us: *Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.* Over the centuries there have been a lot of traditions of men that have kept many from ever receiving Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour, and other traditions have hindered believers from ever achieving God's best. We are best off not to follow traditions of men. "Rudiments of the world" simply means following the elements of this world, or put in another way, following the material ways of looking at things.

ACTS 17:18 *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.* We are spending a lot of time on this verse because it lays the foundation for what is covered in the rest of ACTS 17. We have looked at who the Epicureans (pleasure seekers) and Stoicks (pride) were, and now find that these two groups of philosophers teamed up together, and "encountered" Paul. In other words they attacked the Apostle Paul with their words, and disputed with him concerning the points of their philosophies which were contrary to their own ideas. We get the tone of their verbal encounter in the following question: *And some said, What will this babbler say?* The word "babblers" is not a term of endearment as used here. Rather the "babblers" was an Athenian slang word used to describe someone outside their so called literary circle, whom they would consider ignorant, or foolish. In one sense it was a word that described those who were poor and needy and lived off of the refuse they found in the streets. Such a one was compared to birds who picked up scattered seeds of grain in the field, or in the market place, chirping so much that their noise was likened to "babbling." They likened Paul to a man who picks up scraps of information, and retails them second hand much like a plagiarist, or as being one of those who make a show in unscientific fashion of knowledge obtained from misunderstanding lectures, and then goes around talking "babbling" about it. Some other translations of this word "babblers" are: picker of scraps; scraps of truth picker; beggarly babblers; rag picker; chatter box; and amateur talker. In other words the word "babblers" was the way the Greeks expressed their distaste for an unknown foreigner who should be so bold as to pretend to instruct the well learned men, and philosophers of Greece. Thus we find this question: *And some said, What will this babblers say?*

Not all of those philosophers termed Paul a "babblers" however, for some of them with opposing views expressed: *...He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.* The written word doesn't always convey the tone in which these opposing views were voiced. On the surface this would seem to be a mellow enough of a statement, however the tone of this comment was also one of scorn or contempt. An expounded translation of this portion states: "His business seems to be to cry up some foreign gods to us, and outlandish ones at that." The reason they were making such a statement was *...because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.* So it appears that these opposing groups of Epicureans and Stoicks were seeking to hear what Paul had to say as a form of entertainment for themselves with neither group really that interested in believing the words of Paul, whom they really thought was "a contemptible and worthless person;" in other words "a babblers."

We need to spend a moment on the subject of the resurrection. This one word, "resurrection," will arouse in the Greeks at Athens a wide spread reaction similar to the response that the word "Gentiles" did with the Jews of Jerusalem in ACTS 22:21-23. (ACTS

22:21 *And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles. 22 And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live. 23 And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air,...).* These Greeks will not throw dust up into the air, but will cry out in ACTS 17:32 *...when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.* The Greeks with their mythology had so many stories of resurrections, that the concept of a resurrection was to them as familiar an idea as awakening in the morning. Most of these Greeks thought Paul was introducing to them another god of mythology. But some will believe his story, and what a witness the Apostle Paul was to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul first hand witnessed the resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus, and the resurrection of Jesus became one of the main themes presented throughout all of Paul's gospel record. Perhaps Paul's dealings with these Athenians inspired him to write the 15th chapter of 1 CORINTHIANS, known also as the resurrection chapter.

For those of you interested in studying further the subject of the resurrection, and it is a big subject to study, you may notice that you won't find the word "resurrection" until the New Testament. Not once is the word "resurrection" found in the Old Testament. However the concept of the resurrection from the dead is found in the Old Testament in several places. I will give a few examples from the Old Testament. Did not Abraham himself believe in the resurrection from the dead when he was about to slay his son of promise, Isaac, in GENESIS 22? Sure he did. Abraham believed that God would raise Isaac from the dead in GENESIS 22, and would have slain him had not the angel of the Lord stopped him. The most touching, and far reaching part of that story to me is when Abraham told Isaac in GENESIS 22:8 *...My son, God will provide himself a Lamb...*, and that Lamb God provided for me, and you, was the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ Himself, who was slain on the altar of Calvary, and raised to live again on the third day, and is become the firstfruits of the dead. {See 1 CORINTHIANS 15:20}. God counted the faith of Abraham for righteousness because he believed God, and in the process he became the father of the faithful. {Study ROMANS 4}. Brother Hill noted that the book of JOB was probably the oldest book of the Old Testament. Job himself believed in the resurrection of the dead, and wrote in JOB 19:23 - 27: *Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! 24 That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! 25 For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: 26 And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: 27 Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.* PSALMS 16 is a prayer of David's, and in verse 10 we read: *For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.* This was the scripture referenced in JOHN 20:9 after Jesus resurrection, which states: *For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.* Fifty days later Peter preaches his first sermon, and quotes PSALMS 16:10, which we can read in ACTS 2:27 *Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.* The Apostle Paul also quotes PSALMS 16:10 in his sermon to those of Antioch in Pisidia, stating in ACTS 13:35 *Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.* So we note that the subject of the resurrection from the dead is taught in the Old Testament, and as we noted above, was a common ideal believed by the Greeks.

ACTS 17:19 *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.)* Let's study these verses a little closer.

Areopagus is also known as Mars' Hill as it is called in verse 22. To the Athenians Areopagus, or Mars' Hill, was a place of great significance. Areopagus, or Mars Hill is 370 feet high in total, but there was a valley about 50 below the peak where an assembly of over 500 could meet. This was the place where the supreme judges of Athens assembled, similar to our supreme court I suppose. Some record that this place was the assembly of the most celebrated tribunals in the world. The decisions rendered here

were distinguished for justice and correctness, thus this Greek court was placed above all others in Greece. It is noted that the justice administered here at Areopagus were so strict and impartial, that it was generally allowed that both defendant and plaintiff left this court satisfied with the decision that this supreme court rendered. The court was held outdoors, and always held at night so that there would be no outside distractions keeping the judges from making a correct decision. Ancient accounts also record that extreme and violent means involving torture were used to insure that both accuser and defendant would testify to nothing but the truth. I suppose one could say that it was the truth these Greeks were seeking from atop Areopagus, and the real Truth would be presented unto them by the Apostle Paul upon this very same famous hill. Jesus Christ Himself told his disciples in JOHN 14:6 *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.* The Apostle Paul was brought to this famous hill, not as a defendant or an accuser, nor as one on trial, but rather he was brought here to satisfy the curiosity of these Athenian philosophers, and those who spent endless hours upon Areopagus ...*in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.*

There were sixteen steps cut in stone that led up to the top of the hill. Sixteen recall is the number of LOVE. Sixteen things are said about LOVE (charity) in 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-8. 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4 *Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 5 Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; 6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; 7 Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. 8 Charity never faileth:...* I doubt if the Apostle Paul got these sixteen thoughts on LOVE climbing these sixteen stone steps up Mars Hill, but I know he showed these Athenians the LOVE of God as he spoke to them from a top of Mars Hill, in spite of the fact that they mockingly accused him of being a "babbler." It is recorded that in the valley below Mars Hill more than 500 can clearly hear and see the proceedings above.

Perhaps Paul's preaching at Mars Hill inspired him to write the following thoughts also found in 1 CORINTHIANS. 1 CORINTHIANS 1:17 *For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. 18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. 20 Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. 22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: 23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; 24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: 27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; 28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: 29 That no flesh should glory in his presence. 30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: 31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. 1 CORINTHIANS 2:1 And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. 3 And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. 4 And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: 5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. 6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: 7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a*

mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: 8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. 16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. ...1 CORINTHIANS 3:18 Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. 19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. 20 And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.

Six times in Paul's writings he uses the word "foolishness." All six times are found in the above portion of scripture from 1 CORINTHIANS. Yet not once do we read in ACTS 17 of the Apostle Paul calling the Athenians' foolish. Paul will preach his sermon on Mars' Hill in the spirit of love; in the spirit of 1 CORINTHIANS 13; and full of the power of the Holy Ghost. At the conclusion of his sermon some will mock him, and these may have very well been mocking him from the beginning, however we do not find the Apostle Paul responding to them in any way other than in love. MATTHEW 5:11 tells us: *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.* The Apostle Paul may not have known that scripture, but he did know the following scriptures: PSALMS 103:8 *The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.* PSALMS 145:8 *The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.* PSALMS 15:18 *A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.* PROVERBS 16:32 *He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.* The common phrase in these four Old Testament scriptures is "slow to anger," which is a phrase found eight times total in scripture. By now we all should associate the number eight with a full overcomer, for in part the number eight has to do with the Bride of Christ. One of her qualities will be that she, like our lovely Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, will be "slow to anger," and full of love, and full of the Holy Ghost.

Paul arrives in Athens and gives his sermon at Mars Hill approximately thirty years after the crucifixion of Christ Jesus. Thirty, we learned in our meaning of the numbers study, is the number that has to do with THE BLOOD OF CHRIST, or THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST, which Jesus really began when He was thirty years old. It is truly amazing to me that these seemingly educated Greeks knew nothing about the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus until thirty years after this event. Yet it was the Apostle Paul who was about to introduce unto them this good news gospel message. There were even those who didn't hear the good news gospel message until a time much later than these of Athens. There are still those in the world today who haven't heard this message! The last words of the Apostle Paul recorded for us by Luke in the book of ACTS are these found in ACTS 28:28 *Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.* So we see that as the Apostle to the Gentiles, the Apostle Paul, was fulfilling his calling, which Jesus Christ Himself gave him to do back there on that road to Damascus, which once again is recorded for us in ACTS 26:16-18 *...for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; 17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, 18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*

To those in Athens the words of the Apostle Paul were to them "new doctrine;" "some new thing." ACTS 17:19 *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.)* An expounded translation of this portion reads: "So they took him by the sleeve, and brought him to the Mars' Hill auditorium saying, Will you make clear to us what is this new teaching of yours, for the things you are saying sound strange to us: we are consequently interested to know what it means. (Now everybody in Athens, and even the foreign visitors to Athens, found no time for anything else than to be telling or hearing some new ideas.)" ACTS 17:32-34 tells us of three kinds of listeners that heard Paul's sermon here on Mars' hill: (1) the mockers; (2) those that would hear more later; and (3) those who immediately loved the doctrine of Paul, and believed.

Paul's sermon on Mars' Hill

Paul's sermon on Mars' hill is found in ACTS 17:22-31. This is the second complete sermon we have of Paul's found so far in the book of ACTS. Paul's first sermon that we have a complete record of was preached in the Jewish synagogue in Antioch in Pisidia back in ACTS 13:16-41, which we termed a "master piece" sermon. {Review pages 133-201 of these notes}. Paul's sermon at Antioch in Pisidia was really a sermon unto the Jews, which reached out also unto the Gentiles who were present. However here in Athens on Mars' Hill, Paul's sermon was preached exclusively unto the heathen Gentiles. Furthermore it was an impromptu sermon. In other words this was one of those sermons where Paul was "instant in season" like he admonished the Apostle Timothy to be in 2 TIMOTHY 4:2. 2 TIMOTHY 4:2 reads: *Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.* To be "instant in season" means to be of a mind set that is always ready, and always willing to do whatever the Lord wants you to do at a moments notice, even if it means preaching a sermon to a bunch of rebellious heathens, like the Apostle Paul was called to do here at Athens. (The Apostle Paul had himself first witnessed such a sermon by Stephen back in ACTS 7.) The Lord had been working this particular sermon out in Paul's mind ever since he arrived at Athens, for recall the words of ACTS 17:16 concerning Paul: *....his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.* Keep this also in mind as we read and study this sermon on Mars' hill, that even though Paul was preaching to a bunch of non-believing heathens, Paul did so, not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power of the Holy Ghost, and in the Spirit of the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, who shed His precious life's blood as of a Lamb without blemish, and without spot, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins. {See 1 CORINTHIANS 2:4, ROMANS 8:39, 1 PETER 1:19, and ACTS 10:43}. This kind of the love of God is lacking in so many sermons today, for the focus of the majority of Pastors is on what you have, and you achieving the worlds best, and not on what God wants you to have, and achieving God's best. In other words instead of focusing on Jesus, they focus upon man. The Apostle Paul always had his focus upon Jesus. In 1 TIMOTHY 2:4-6 Paul wrote concerning God our Saviour: *Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; 6 Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.* Here at Athens, now was the due time in which the man Christ Jesus was introduced unto the Athenians here at Mars' Hill.

We will read this sermon on Mars' Hill from Conybeare's translation of ACTS 17:22-31:

Ye men of Athens, all things which I behold bear witness to your carefulness in religion. For as I passed through your city, and beheld the objects of your worship, I found amongst them an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom, therefore, ye worship, though ye know Him not, Him declare I unto you.