

Athens - The Soul of the West - Acts 17E

Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Ezekiel 8 summarized situation in the temple.

Philippians 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

For many people in the world, especially in the Western World; there is a great influence from Ancient Greece, in particular Athens. That is due to the form of governance, which affects many aspects of our lives. Democracy, even though in its early stages, was first started here. And over the years, it has changed a lot.

Many autocratic rulers did not willingly share their grip of power. They, like Charles I of England, claimed their Divine Right to Rule. Their arrogance, combined with incompetence and corruption, led to many civil wars and revolutions.

To the victors, went the spoils. The new leaders had a choice. Were they going to continue on in the practices that had just brought down the previous government? Or would they resist the allures of unrestricted power; knowing that absolute power corrupts absolutely?

There were a few notable men, Oliver Cromwell and George Washington are a few. Both were very principled men, even refusing to take the crown, when offered to them. Both were Born-Again Christians also.

On the other hand, there are bad examples too.

In 1980, Ian Smith, the leader of Rhodesia, buckled under tremendous international pressure, and turned the country over to Robert Mugabe. They since have destroyed the most prosperous country in Africa; which was known as the Bread Basket of Africa. Now foreign aid feeds half the population, so that they do not starve. Zimbabwe, now has the lowest life expectancy in the world.

About the same time, the Shah of Iran was deposed from his throne. All the work that he had done with the oil money, to rebuild the nation stopped. The Iranians chose an extreme and harsh religious system to control them. It didn't take very long before all the previous benefits of civilization were gone.

As we live in a democratic society; which evolved in Athens, Greece; we should take a look at it, to see what spiritual roots might be there. And if there are any ungodly ones; they should be removed, in Jesus' Name.

However, Athens, like most Ancient Greek cities, was a very religious one.

In fact, it was the most religious city in Ancient Greece.

When Rome conquered Greece, it left Athens as the cultural hub of the new Roman Empire. The Greek gods were renamed and brought into the Roman fold. Athens, also remained the intellectual capital of Rome. Greek scholars, teachers and tutors were in great demand by the Roman people. Greece was such an important focal point of the world then, that Paul spent much of his time evangelizing there. Most of his epistles were written to their Churches. When Paul tried to go in another direction, the Holy Spirit re-focused his attention.

Acts 16:6-10 - Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

And as Paul and his team went around Macedonia or Greece, they arrived at Athens; as is recounted in Acts 17.

Acts 17:16-21 - Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. 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. 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. And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. (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.)

Paul went first to the synagogues to preach to the Jews. Then he went to the other people to preach. Athens was a really religious place with many gods.

As we begin to look at Athens; is it mentioned a lot in the Bible?

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.

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.

Acts 17:21 (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.)

Acts 17:22 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

Acts 18:1 After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;

1 Thessalonians 3:1 Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;

1 Thessalonians 5:28 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen. The first epistle to the Thessalonians was written from Athens.

2 Thessalonians 3:18 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. The second epistle to the Thessalonians was written from Athens.

Athens was fairly important and Paul could see that so he spent much time there ministering.

What do we know about Athens?

Wikipedia says: Athens is one of the oldest named cities in the world, having been continuously inhabited for at least 7000 years. Situated in southern Europe, Athens became the leading city of Ancient Greece in the first millennium BC and its cultural achievements during the 5th century BC laid the foundations of western civilization.

During the early Middle Ages, the city experienced a decline, then recovered under the later Byzantine Empire and was relatively prosperous during the period of the Crusades in the 12th and 13th centuries, benefiting from Italian trade. Following a period of sharp decline under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, Athens re-emerged in the 19th century as the capital of the independent Greek state.

In 88 - 85 BC, most Athenian buildings, both houses and fortifications, were levelled by the Roman general Sulla, although many civic buildings and monuments were left intact. Under Rome, Athens was given the status of a free city because of its widely admired schools. The Roman emperor Hadrian, in the 2nd century AD, constructed a library, a gymnasium, an aqueduct which is still in use, several temples and sanctuaries, a bridge and financed the completion of the Temple of Olympian Zeus. Hadrian also built the Hadrian wall in England.

The city was sacked by the Heruli in AD 267, resulting in the burning of all the public buildings, the plundering of the lower city and the damaging of the Agora Market and Acropolis fortress. After this the city to the north of the Acropolis was hastily refortified on a smaller scale, with the Agora left outside the walls. Athens remained a centre of learning and philosophy during its 500 years of Roman rule, patronized by emperors such as Nero and Hadrian.

But the conversion of the Empire to Christianity ended the city's role as a

centre of pagan learning; the Emperor Justinian closed the schools of philosophy in AD 529. This is generally taken to mark the end of the ancient history of Athens.

The city had been named after one of the main Greek deities, Athena.

In Greek religion and mythology, Athena or Athene; also referred to as Pallas Athena/Athene, is the goddess of wisdom, courage, inspiration, civilization, law and justice, just warfare, mathematics, strength, strategy, the arts, crafts, and skill. (A lot of demons are included in there also. Outside many Justice buildings is the statue of Athena with scales. Minerva is the Roman goddess identified with Athena.

Athena is also a shrewd companion of heroes and is the goddess of heroic endeavour. She is the virgin patroness of Athens. The Athenians founded the Parthenon (Temple of Athena) on the Acropolis of her namesake city, Athens (Athena Parthenos), in her honour.

Athena's veneration as the patron of Athens seems to have existed from the earliest times, and was so persistent that archaic myths about her were recast to adapt to cultural changes. In her role as a protector of the city (polis), many people throughout the Greek world worshipped Athena as Athena Polias , "Athena of the city"). The city of Athens and the goddess Athena essentially bear the same name (Athena the Goddess, Athenai the city), but according to the myths, the city was named after the goddess, who supposedly gave them the olive tree.

In this den of idolatry was a colony of Jews. How did they react to the preaching of the Full Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ?

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.

When they refused the Good News, Paul moved on to the others.

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.

Athens was the centre of philosophy and that is all they spent their time doing.

Strong's #5386 philosophos fil-os'-of-os AV-philosopher 1; 1

1) a philosopher, one given to the pursuit of wisdom or learning

2) in a narrower sense, one who investigates and discusses the cause of things and the highest good

As you can see, philosophy involves a lot of talking about many things. But it is all from man's point of view. When it is all over; they are still lost in their sins, and not saved.

That is why Paul said 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.

In a newer translation, it says Colossians 2:8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

Good advice for us today too. You see, the traditions of men do not get people saved.

Mark 7:1-13 - Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

Where there is a religious system that puts their traditions on the same level as God, there is a problem.

As you can see, humility is not their strong point.

Romans 12:1-3 - I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

It is important that Believers not be conformed to the traditions of man.

Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind...

When the Athenians heard that Paul was preaching something new; they had to find out what it was about.

Acts 17:21 (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.)

There were two main groups of the philosophers; the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks.

Easton's describes them.

Epicureans - Followers of Epicurus (who died at Athens B.C. 270) or adherents of the Epicurean philosophy #Ac 17:18 This philosophy was a system of atheism, and taught men to seek as their highest aim a pleasant and smooth life. They have been called the "Sadducees" of Greek paganism. They, with the Stoics, ridiculed the teaching of Paul #Ac 17:18 They appear to have been greatly esteemed at Athens.

You could say they were the eat, drink and be merry crowd.

How did they receive the Good News of Our Lord Jesus Christ Shedding His Blood to pay the penalty for their sins?

Acts 17:18 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.

Calling Paul a Babblers that was very derogatory.

They did not accept the Gospel Paul preached. The Lord had not prepared their heart yet.

Easton's says of the other group; Stoics - #Ac 17:18 A sect of Greek philosophers at Athens, so called from the Greek word stoa i.e., a "porch" or "portico," where they have been called "the Pharisees of Greek paganism." The founder of the Stoics was Zeno, who flourished about B.C. 300 He taught his disciples that a man's happiness consisted in bringing himself into harmony with the course of the universe. They were trained to bear evils with indifference, and so to be independent of externals. Materialism, pantheism, fatalism, and pride were the leading features of this philosophy.

Paul had a way of putting things. And when most of them rejected Our Lord Jesus Christ and the resurrection; they moved on to the next step.

Acts 17:19 And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.

They took Paul to their special council, the Areopagus, to investigate him. You see, the preaching of new gods in Rome, without Senate approval was illegal.

Easton's: Areopagus - The Latin form of the Greek word rendered "Mars' hill." But it denotes also the council or court of justice which met in the open air on the hill. It was a rocky height to the west of the Acropolis at Athens, on the south-east summit of which the council was held which was constituted by Solon, and consisted of nine archons or chief magistrates who were then in office, and the ex-archons of blameless life. On this hill of Mars (or Greek god Ares) Paul delivered his memorable address to the "men of Athens" #Ac 17:22-31 which we will deal with later.

Mars Hill - The Areopagus or rocky hill in Athens, north-west of the Acropolis, where the Athenian supreme tribunal and court of morals was held. From some part of this hill Paul delivered the address recorded in #Ac 17:22-31

Ares was the Greek male god of war; very brutal and dumb.

Athena was the Greek female goddess of war; very smart and efficient. Her attributes were, the goddess of wisdom, courage, inspiration, civilization, law and justice, just warfare, mathematics, strength, strategy, the arts, crafts, and skill.

You can see all the areas that are involved; from war to justice etc. If you are praying over those areas; try binding the evil spirits of Athena, as well and then cast them out in Jesus' name.

Wikipedia: Ares is one of the Twelve Olympians, and the son of Zeus and Hera. In Greek literature, he often represents the physical or violent and untamed aspect of war, in contrast to the armoured Athena, whose functions as a goddess of intelligence include military strategy and generalship. Just some more demons to bind up. These are the Olympic group of 12 demons. Like Orion & Boyce. Don't forget to break the 12 fold cord.

Did the Good News resonate with anyone?

ISBE: - When "certain of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered" Paul at Athens, and when, after the apostle had spoken on Mars' Hill, "some mocked; but others said, We will hear thee concerning this yet again" (#Ac 17:18,32), it is no improbable inference that the Epicureans mocked, while the Stoics desired to hear more. For they would find much in the apostle's teaching that harmonized with their own views. Paul's quotation from the classics in his Athenian speech was from the Stoic poet, Aratus of Soli in Cilicia: "For we are also his offspring." His doctrine of creation, of divine immanence, of the spirituality and fatherhood of God, would be familiar and acceptable to them. His preaching of Christ would not have been unwelcome to them, who were seeking for the ideal wise man.

Some people would say, why bother preaching to those ungodly. Paul had a Divine Commission to do it. Therefore it was a matter of obedience for him.

The Epicurians and Stoics were no different than the Pharisees and Sadducees. They all liked to talk. And they were all lost in their sins.

Paul's warning to the Colossians is still valid for us to-day.

Colossians 2:4-12 - And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. 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. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

That is a very important thing. Being born-again believers, we have Jesus Christ on the throne in our hearts.

Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

It is important to remember we have Jesus Christ on the throne of our heart.

Philosophy, in and of itself; will not get anyone saved. Only the preaching of Our Lord Jesus Christ and His Shed Blood will. But the roots of it are tied in with democracy, of which we are part of. So when praying, bind all those demons that we have mentioned, and cast them out in Jesus' Name. As Paul said you have to watch out for those vain philosophies.

The devil wants us to Compromise. Romans 12:2: Do not be conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

God set up His Rulers. 1 Timothy 3:2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

Beware lest any man spoil you. 1 Corinthians 15:33 Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

Mark 16:15-18 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. 17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; 18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink

any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

James 5:14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: The Gospel of Mark has more people healed by casting out demons than by any other means.

spoil by philosophy & vain deceit -

Schools now teach the theory of evolution instead of Creation.

Matthew 24:4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.

Beware of traditions Mark 7:13 Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye.

after rudiments of world -

Olympics on now, many watching television and cheering for their athletes. Be good if they cheered for God and Jesus. They rejected Christ so the devil leads them far away.

We are baptized in Christ to put off the ways of the world.

1 Peter 4: For the time past of *our* life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: 4 Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with *them* to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of *you*:

John 8:32,36 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Explained how to pray for freedom from past involvement in the Greek religion to get freedom in Jesus' name.

Amen. Praise the Lord!

Praise the Name of Jesus. Amen.

**Pastor T. John Franklin
Church of Salvation, Healing, and Deliverance
COS-HAD.org**