



# Journey to Mars Hill: The Power of Resurrection Part 3

Acts 17



## The Scene of the Action: Acts Chapter 17: 1 – 9 (NIV)

**17** When Paul and his companions had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. <sup>2</sup> As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, <sup>3</sup> explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. “This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah,” he said. <sup>4</sup> Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women.

<sup>5</sup> But other Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason’s house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd.<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>6</sup> But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other believers before the city officials, shouting: “These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, <sup>7</sup> and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar’s decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus.” <sup>8</sup> When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil. <sup>9</sup> Then they made Jason and the others post bond and let them go.



## The Scene of the Action: Acts Chapter 17: 10 – 15 (NIV)

<sup>10</sup> As soon as it was night, the believers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. <sup>11</sup> Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. <sup>12</sup> As a result, many of them believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men.

<sup>13</sup> But when the Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word of God at Berea, some of them went there too, agitating the crowds and stirring them up. <sup>14</sup> The believers immediately sent Paul to the coast, but Silas and Timothy stayed at Berea. <sup>15</sup> Those who escorted Paul brought him to Athens and then left with instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible.



## The Scene of the Action: Acts Chapter 17:16 – 21 (NIV)

<sup>16</sup> While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. <sup>17</sup> So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. <sup>18</sup> A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, “What is this babbler trying to say?” Others remarked, “He seems to be advocating foreign gods.” They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. <sup>19</sup> Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? <sup>20</sup> You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean.” <sup>21</sup> (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)



## The Scene of the Action: Acts Chapter 17: 22-28 (NIV)

<sup>22</sup> Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. <sup>23</sup> For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

<sup>24</sup> “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. <sup>25</sup> And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. <sup>26</sup> From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. <sup>27</sup> God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. <sup>28</sup> ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’<sup>[b]</sup> As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’<sup>[c]</sup>



## The Scene of the Action: Acts Chapter 17: 29-34 (NIV)

<sup>29</sup> “Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. <sup>30</sup> In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. <sup>31</sup> For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”

<sup>32</sup> When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, “We want to hear you again on this subject.” <sup>33</sup> At that, Paul left the Council. <sup>34</sup> Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.



The Epicureans and Stoics, the Philosophers of that day had sway:

They influenced how the general public viewed religion, the purpose of life, how to live a good life and cultural norms.

Epicureans saw “the gods” as remote and distant. Therefore you’re on your own, to try to find pleasure in life as best you can.

Stoics in contrast believed that there was a divine force active in the world and within us that people needed to discover.

There was an altar with the inscription: To an unknown god. This suggests a desire to cover their bases and not offend a god they don’t know. It admits an ignorance about God. The question for them and for us is, are we content to be ignorant about God and prefer to be left alone or is there a desire to discover and know God.



Truth: God made the world and everything in it

God gives life and breath and everything else.

In him we live and move and have our being.

“God does not live in temples built by human hands and is not served by human hands as if he needed anything”. Paul makes the point that God and nature and created things are not the same thing.

God can't be contained in a building and doesn't need animal sacrifices. God is the creator of all things and the provider of all things. He is Jehovah Jireh.



Finding an element of truth and redefining it: As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'

In his sharing, Paul re-interprets and re-defines an element of truth from their own culture and confronts falsehoods.

- "We are his offspring". In other words, we are children of God. In scripture there are two frames of reference regarding being children of God. One frame of reference applies to followers of Jesus. We are adopted into God's family and made children of God.
- Galatians 4:4-7 (New International Version)
- <sup>4</sup> But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. <sup>[a]</sup> <sup>6</sup> Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, <sup>[b]</sup> Father." <sup>7</sup> So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

In the other way here, "We are his offspring" is affirmed in recognition that all human beings are made in God's image.

Additionally, all humankind has a common ancestor



God intended a specific time for each of us to live.

There are world views and systems now in our life time that we need to confront.

## How? With weapons that have divine power.

- 2 Corinthians 10:3-5
- New International Version
- <sup>3</sup> For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. <sup>4</sup> The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. <sup>5</sup> We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.



In addition to world views and systems, there are mindsets within ourselves that need to be addressed

- Romans 12:1-2 New International Version
- **12** Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.
- Romans 8:5-6 New International Version
- <sup>5</sup> Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. <sup>6</sup> The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.



## Truth of God's word: Genesis 1:27 (NIV)

<sup>27</sup> So God  
created mankind in his  
own image,  
in the image of  
God he created them;  
male and female he  
created them.

Some faulty world views and mindsets regarding ourselves  
and other people to confront and to address in our sharing:

Disregard for human life

Disrespect for human life

Nihilism

Racism

Sexism

Colorism

Classism

Ableism

Ageism

Not Okay!!

Our job is to open our mouths and confront  
these! The weapons we fight with have divine  
power to demolish strongholds!



## Illustrations

Gunman in the Bronx this past Thursday that repeatedly shot a young man on a sidewalk despite the fact that there were 2 little kids right next to him. Police Brutality and Murder: World view to confront – disregard for human life, nihilism.

Disparities in health care, housing, education, employment, access to voting, criminal justice. World view to confront – racism

Messages on television and media that suggest that men are unnecessary, irresponsible, dumb and out of touch. Messages, music, videos and behaviors that treat women as a commodity. World view to confront – sexism.

Favoritism, social pecking orders, hierarchies. World view to confront - classism

Experience reading magazines designed for black women as a young teenager or seeing images on TV as a young adult and struggling to find anyone with my skin tone or facial features. World view to confront – colorism.

Attitudes that some had towards my brother with cerebral palsy. World view to confront - ableism



Exodus 3:14 (NIV)

<sup>14</sup> God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.”<sup>[a]</sup> This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

Matthew 1:23 (NIV)

<sup>23</sup> “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”<sup>[a]</sup> (which means “God with us”).

John 14:12 (NIV)

<sup>12</sup> Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

Genesis 1:31 (NIV)

<sup>31</sup> God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

Some faulty world views and mindsets regarding God to confront and to address in our sharing:

Miracles don't happen or have ceased.

God is remote and disengaged, or too busy to respond to us.

If there is an explanation using “natural laws” for something, God wasn't involved; Belief in God and Science are incompatible.

Not True!!

Our job is to open our mouths and confront these! We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.



## Illustrations

Christianity is based on the miracle of Jesus's birth, life and resurrection.

We are encouraged to partner with God in prayer. He's with us and miracles still happen today as we pray.

Children have to learn that their parents can be out of immediate view but still with them. That's a lesson for us about God.

There may be "natural" explanations; for example for the Christmas star that led the magi to Jesus, may have been a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn, two bright planets that appear to be really close to each other in the sky. When one happened in 2020 it had been almost 800 years since these planets had appeared to be so close together at night. If the Christmas star was a conjunction, that doesn't negate God's involvement. God created the world and its natural laws. He is free to use them!



# Sharing

- Reflect on how healthy images of earthly fathers and father figures gives us a glimpse of the love of our heavenly Father.
- What are some of the overt or subtle messages that we are bombarded with that are contrary to the kingdom and God's word?
- What are some of the ways that you can confront world views and mindsets that are contrary to the kingdom and God's word?
- How can this impact your sharing with other people about following Jesus?