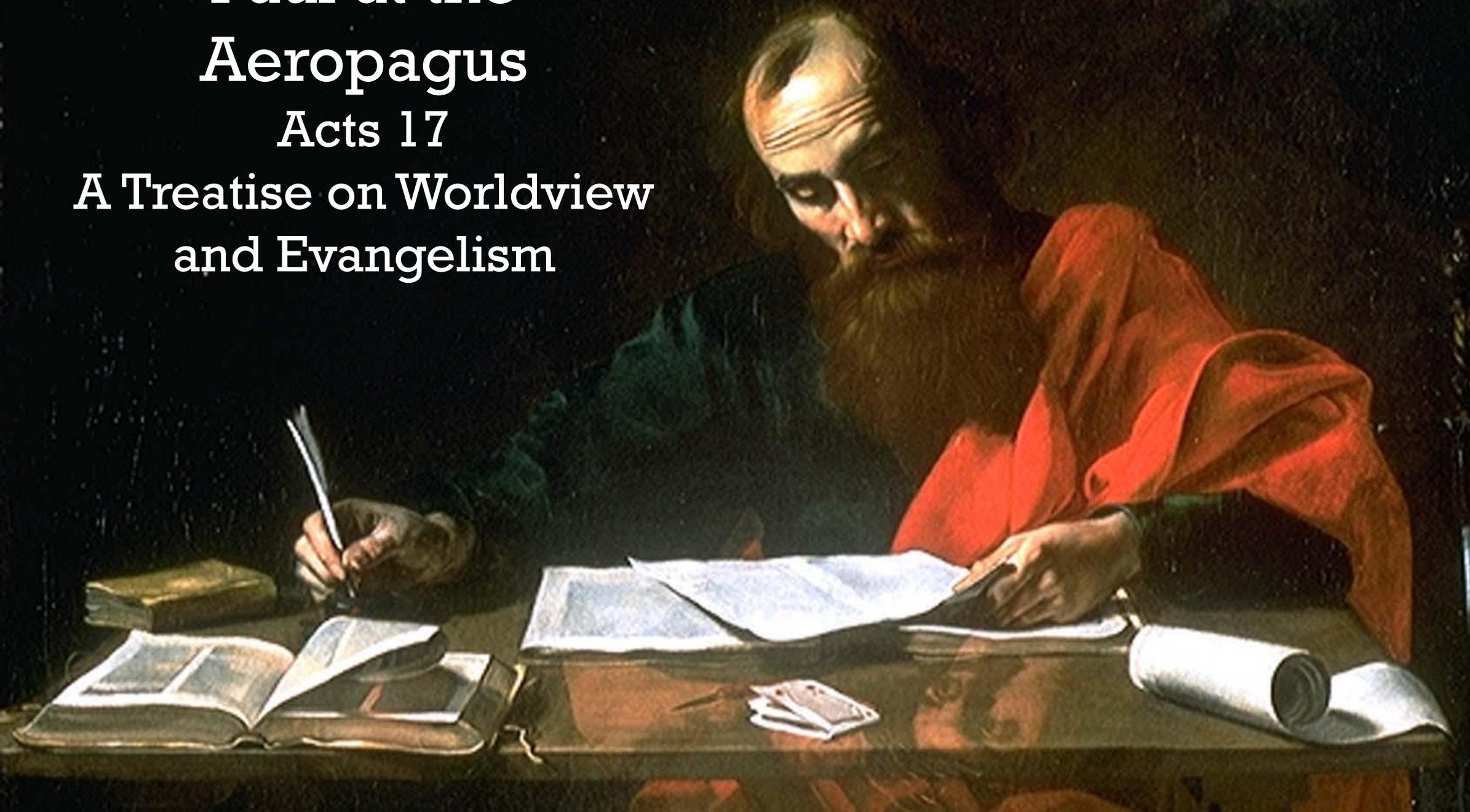


# Paul at the Aeropagus

Acts 17

A Treatise on Worldview  
and Evangelism



# THE BRILLIANCE OF PAUL

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Paul boldly engaged the Athenian elders, developed a relationship, examined their worldview, and presented a new way to be human through Jesus Christ.

## ACTS 17:16 - 21

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<sup>16</sup> Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. <sup>17</sup> So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. <sup>18</sup> Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, “What does this babbler wish to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities”—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. <sup>19</sup> And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? <sup>20</sup> For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean.” <sup>21</sup> Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

## ACTS 17:16 - 21

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<sup>22</sup> So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. <sup>23</sup> For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: ‘To the unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. <sup>24</sup> The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, <sup>25</sup> nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

## ACTS 17:26 - 29

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<sup>26</sup> And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, <sup>27</sup> that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, <sup>28</sup> for

“‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, “‘For we are indeed his offspring.’

<sup>29</sup> Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.

## ACTS 17:22 - 25

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<sup>30</sup> The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, <sup>31</sup> because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.” <sup>32</sup> Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, “We will hear you again about this.” <sup>33</sup> So Paul went out from their midst. <sup>34</sup> But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

# CONTEXT

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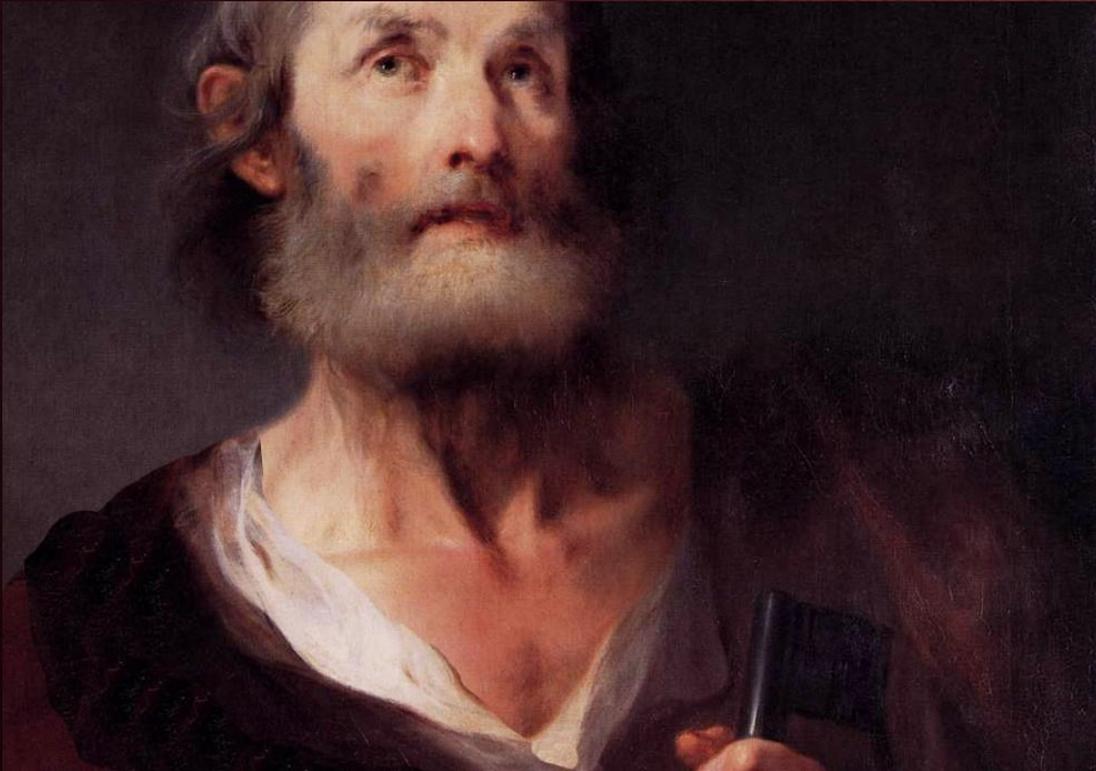


- Why the unknown god?
- Why was Paul's heart stirred?
- The Epicureans and Stoics?
  - Live, Move, Have Being
- The Areopagus?

# COMPARISON

## PETER IN JERUSALEM – PAUL IN ATHENS

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- Peter
  - <sup>41</sup> So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.
- Paul
  - <sup>34</sup> But some men joined him and believed...
- Why the Difference?

# WORLDVIEW

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“A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true, or entirely false) that we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.”

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# APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF PAUL AT THE AEROPAGUS

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- Early Church Fathers:
  - Evangelism
  - Chrysostom - Scripture.
- Luke erred?
- Acts 17 and Romans 1&2
- Lack of a Gospel Message

# APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF PAUL AT THE AEROPAGUS REBUTTAL

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- Paul's sermons are often different.
  - Contextualizing the sermon to the audience.
  - Paul has already introduced Jesus at the Agora.
- Stoic and Epicurean philosophies drove Paul to a specialized approach.
  - From a material god to a transcendental God.
- Paul was on trial.
  - In the same way that Socrates was on trial.
  - Paul then presents the Gospel
  - Appeals to the worldview of the listeners
  - Defends himself from the allegation that he is presenting a new God.

# DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ROMANS AND ACTS

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- In Acts we see:
  - Idolatry of the masses (v. 16)
  - High regard to the philosophical schools (v. 19-20)
  - High valuation of the latest ideas (V. 21)
  - These facts drive composition of the sermon.
- Paul needed to appealed to these ideas for the pagan Greeks to listen to him.
- The sermon is the presentation of an alternative pattern of life.
  - Paul was engaging the culture in Athens
  - Luke understands that the Greek philosophical and Christian way of life are incompatible and are “competing languages about the truth of the world.”

# PAUL

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- Paul is a brilliant evangelist for our Lord.
  - Relationships and perspective taking
- Paul tailors his argument to the worldview of his audience.
- He crafts a detailed and cogent reasoning for the Gospel.
- The result: A sermon that, while different from his other sermons, reflects the context and audience's worldview.
- He is on trial for presenting a “new” God. But, instead he presents the everlasting God.
- Paul's account is a treatise for evangelism for our day.



TIPO  
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# THE ATHENS OF TODAY

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- The polarization of today's worldviews.
- Are we on trial for our views?
- Does the world strike against our sensibilities?
- How great is the harvest of souls?
- Paul's sermon at the Areopagus is a treatise on worldview and evangelism.



**THE  
HOLY  
SEXUALITY  
PROJECT**

# BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS

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- **Normal** – understanding the words of Scripture in their common usage unless otherwise indicated by the context.
- **Literal** – understanding the meaning of Scripture in its ordinary sense unless the context requires a figurative interpretation.
- **Grammatical** – using the recognized rules of grammar to interpret the text
- **Historical** – understanding the words of Scripture in the context of the times in which they were written.
- **Systematic** – categorizing and comparing the teaching of the Scriptures with the whole of Scripture in view.