

# Sermon Handout

## Confronting Idolatry

### Acts 17:16-21

#### I. Paul's First Days in Athens v. 16-18

##### a. An original translation

*<sup>16</sup>But in Athens, while Paul waited for them, he was provoked in his spirit, seeing the city full of idols. <sup>17</sup>Therefore, he disputed with the Jews and God-fearers in the synagogue, also daily in the marketplace with those who happened to be there. <sup>18</sup>But some philosophers, including those of the Epicurean and Stoic parties, entered into debate with him and said, "What is this seed-picker talking about?" Others said, "He seems to be announcing some gods that are foreign to us." They said this because he proclaimed Jesus and the resurrection.*

##### b. Philosophical schools

###### i. Epicurean (Epicurus, B.C. 342-270)

Pleasure is the chief end of man; deist in theology

###### ii. Stoic (Zeno, B.C. 340-265)

Living in harmony with Nature; pantheist in theology

God = "the soul of the world"

##### c. In the synagogue with Jews & God-fearers *cf.* Acts 17:2-3

###### i. Remember the *Shema* & the first two Commandments!

###### ii. Has your synagogue no influence amidst all this idolatry?

#### II. To the Areopagus vv. 19-21

##### a. Not "arrested," but drawn to the Council of the Areopagus

##### b. To give an account of his teaching *cf.* I Cor 10:20; I Cor 1:21

###### i. Perhaps they understood "resurrection" for a goddess' name

###### ii. "We want to understand what you teach" vv. 19b-20

###### iii. Preoccupied by "listening to some new thing" v. 21

#### III. Lessons for the Church

##### a. Pagan philosophy/religion hasn't changed

###### i. Pleasure-seekers & Nature-lovers still dominate culture

###### ii. The answer is Jesus & his resurrection

##### b. Intellectual inquiry is not an end in itself

###### i. To know the Triune God is the principal matter *cf.* Phil 3:10

###### ii. The *Shema* & Commandments are at the center of our Faith

Dt 5 & 6; Mt 28:18-20; Gal 2:20; Rom 6:5-6