

# Acts Chapter 17

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[ 0 : 00 ] Next week we're going to detour just a little bit from our text to treat a question that arose this morning, and it's a very good question. It arises from the passage in 1 John 3, where we are told to love not the world, either the things that are in the world, and if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him, etc.

And Timothy, the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy and said, All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. And here we are as believers living in this 21st century, and we are commissioned, in a sense we are commissioned to love the world, because God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, and you know John 3.16.

And yet back in another thing that John wrote in 1 John, he tells us to not love the world. And if anybody loves the world. So there appears to be something going on there.

And if we are to love the world so as to witness to them and communicate to them in an effort to win them to Christ, and their response is, persecution and hatred toward us, how does this mix sort out anyway?

And how are we supposed to conduct ourselves when we have a message to communicate to the world that for the most part the world really doesn't want to hear?

[ 1 : 32 ] And what is this dynamic that is going on here? So we will address that next week, the Lord willing. It's a very provocative kind of subject, and it's one that we need to be in tune with, because I don't know if you, well, I'm sure you are aware of it, that insofar as Christians in general is concerned, the world is turning up the heat.

Have you noticed that? Christianity is becoming less and less tolerable in a whole lot of quarters. And there are some factors that for years have been submerged under the surface and not all that noticeable.

Now they are rising and becoming more and more apparent. And it is in many circles becoming less and less acceptable to call yourself a Christian.

So it will be a very pertinent subject, and we'll get into that next week. But for this morning, yes?

There's a new book out, Global War on Christianity, just came out. Global War on Christianity.

It's very good. Yeah, well. It's just right now reading it, but I can't tell you much about it. There are people, I appreciate you mentioning that, Pat. There are people right now, as we speak, who are undergoing unbelievable persecution, and many of them are suffering death, particularly in Africa.

[ 3 : 00 ] And it has been going on for a long time, and the UN, the useless notions, have done nothing and plan to do nothing.

But the heat is being turned up, and it's going to be more so as time goes on. So that the Scriptures really predict is going to take place in the end time.

And we are living. We may very well be that generation that is seeing these things come to fruition.

So it's very significant. Keep your eyes and ears open.

We are in Acts chapter 17, and we have just come off the incident regarding the Bereans, the noble Bereans. They are described as being more noble than those groups from Thessalonica.

And, fellas, I want you to keep this in mind because this is absolutely essential, not only understanding the book of Acts, but the whole ministry of the Apostle Paul. And that is, when Paul arrives in a new town, first thing he does is head for the synagogue, the Jewish synagogue.

[ 4 : 07 ] And he knows there he is going to find people who have a frame of reference for what he's going to say. Because in the synagogue that is going to be filled with Jews, they all are very much in familiarity with the Old Testament.

The New Testament, during Paul's ministry, didn't even exist, except for some of the portions that he had written to the churches, but they were not yet incorporated in a formal way in what we would

call the New Testament.

So he's preaching to them out of their very familiar Old Testament scriptures, and he is showing them from Genesis onward where Christ is revealed in the Old Testament, and then his climax is we've seen the Messiah in all these places in the Old Testament.

Now, let me tell you, this one of whom Moses and the prophets spoke is the very one whom our countrymen crucified when he presented himself as the Messiah of Israel.

And, of course, it was a bombshell everywhere. This is something that is so contrary to what the Jewish mind was prepared to accept. And wherever Paul went and preached this gospel, the Jews considered him, those who didn't believe at least, considered him the ultimate kind of heretic.

[ 5 : 38 ] And some hated him and his message so much they even took a bow that they were not going to eat or drink until this man's blood ran cold. That's how they received it.

And when he preached that message in the synagogue in Thessalonica, he ended up being rode out of town, and he goes to Berea, and while he is there in Berea preaching the gospel, the same gospel, the Jews there in that synagogue had a different attitude, a different mindset, in that they were at least willing to give what Paul said consideration.

Can this be true? Can what this man is saying about Jesus of Nazareth be true? Could he be the Messiah? And they went to their scriptures, Old Testament, and searched the scriptures to see if those things spoken of by Paul were actually true.

And the result, we are told, is many of them believed. But I want you to put yourself in the position of those unbelieving Jews. They did not reject Paul's message insincerely.

They rejected it in great sincerity. They really believed this man was wrong. And not only that, but his wrong teaching about Jesus being the Messiah is going to be believed by some people.

[ 7 : 02 ] And he shouldn't be able to preach this stuff. Somebody needs to shut him up. And you know, that's exactly the way he felt when he was Saul of Tarsus.

That's why he was persecuting Jewish believers who received Jesus as their Messiah. He considered those people as a cancer growing on Judaism.

Stamp it out. You've got to arrest those people. You've got to silence them. Now, that's exactly what they're trying to do to him. And the thing that enables him to tolerate that and stand up under that barrage of criticism and hostility is that he knows all too well the mindset of those people because that's the very same mindset that he had.

He knows exactly where they're coming from. He knows how they feel the way they do because that's the way he felt. He looks back on the time when he was Saul of Tarsus before the Damascus Road occurrence and he's saying to himself, I know how these people think.

I know what they feel. I know how they reject this message. Same message I rejected. I couldn't believe it either. But it was true. It was true. And because it's true, it deserves to be proclaimed.

[ 8 : 17 ] And that's why everywhere he went, he always got in real difficulty with the Jewish establishment because they just could not connect the dots or would not connect them.

And one of the reasons, give this some thought if you will, one of the reasons they rejected the message was because Jesus of Nazareth presented himself as the Messiah to Israel and Israel rejected his message because they didn't believe it to be true and they had Jesus crucified.

And for many Jews of that day, the fact that God allowed this one to be crucified on a Roman cross to many Jews of that day, that was proof positive that he could not have been the Messiah sent from God.

You think God would allow his Messiah to come to an end like that? You're crazy. So for many Jews of the first century, the mere crucifixion of Christ proved in their mind that he was not the Messiah.

And that just gave more fuel for the fire. But of course, Paul always came back with, but God did not leave him dead. Christ was delivered for our offenses and raised for our justification.

[ 9 : 40 ] And God the Father raised him from the dead. And you know what? He was not only seen of me, says Paul. Actually, he presented himself to the twelve apostles after his crucifixion.

And he was seen of above 500 brethren at one time. And most of those people who saw him are still alive. You can check with them. And then Paul says, And last of all, he was seen of me as one born out of due time.

Paul saw the risen Christ when he was converted on the Damascus road. So this message has built in opposition to it in the mind of these Jews.

And that's what he's encountering everywhere he goes. But in each occasion, wherever he preaches this gospel, there are always some in the audience who say, You know what? He's right. He's right. It all fits. It comes together. Jesus must have been the Messiah. That must have been who David was talking about when he related what he did in Psalm 53.

[10:57] And in Isaiah, this must have been what Isaiah was talking about when he says, He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities.

Our chastisement of our peace was upon Him. It all fits. It comes together. And those Jews were those who became believers because they accepted the truthfulness of the message.

Dave. Why do you think that some became believers and some didn't if they were searching the Scriptures? Do you think that some of them were not searching the Scriptures for the truth?

Well, people... They didn't know that they weren't going to believe it no matter what. Yeah. There were some like that that were all over the map. You know, you can search the Scriptures looking for reasons not to believe.

And you can search the Scriptures looking for reasons to believe. And both of those are wrong. You need to search the Scriptures to learn what comports with the truth.

[12:01] because the truth is the only thing worthy of believing. Everything else is error. Truth is paramount.

Christ Himself presented Himself as the way, the truth, and the life. That's an incredible statement to make. You know, to the best of my knowledge, no one else in human history has ever made that claim.

To be the truth. The truth. The life. The way. Who else do you know whoever made a claim like that?

Nobody I know of. Who else do you know whoever claimed, I am the bread of life. I am the light of the world. I am the resurrection and the life.

For somebody to make a statement like that, he has to be the greatest ego maniac who ever lived with delusions of grandeur or he must be who he says he is.

[13:12] Take your pick. You can't have it both ways. He either is or he isn't. And we of course believe that he is. So, this is this is the message that Paul has to preach.

And he's got tremendous opposition out there. Because first of all there is this thing called spiritual blindness. Here's a verse that you ought to memorize, guys. This verse answers more questions about why people don't believe than anything else.

Paul said, if our gospel be hid it is hid to those who are lost whose minds whose minds their ability to think whose minds have been blinded by the God of this age lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ which is the image of God should shine unto them.

Satan is a blinder of men's minds. This means, guys, in addition to our intellect, in addition to our thinking processes being fallen as all the rest of us are fallen.

You realize you're living in a fallen body. You know that, don't you? If you haven't had any share of aches and pains yet, you will. And the reason you will is because your body is fallen.

[14:40] It's an imperfect body and it is taking on things that are going to be detrimental to your health as you grow older. And your body is going to break down and fail you and decay and all the rest of it with death.

That's because we live in a fallen world. But listen, man's thinking ability, his intellect, that's fallen too. That means that our thinking processes are skewed.

we are not automatically focused on truth. We just aren't. We come into the world and we are all intellectually compromised in addition to being physically compromised.

Do you realize when a baby is born and starts to die, it enters a process of death and when we are born, our thinking, our intellect is skewed.

This is why the scriptures say, listen, there is a way that seems right to a man. But the end thereof is the way of death.

[15:47] Man has his thinking processes skewed and the only thing that can correct them is the light of God's word. Lest the light which is the light of Christ should shine unto them.

So, the only thing that can overpower this spiritual darkness with which we are born is the light of God's word and that communicates the way it really is as opposed to the way we tend to see the world.

And this is a really important thing to consider. Only the gospel of Jesus Christ has the power to overcome that kind of darkness. when Paul wrote to the Romans he said, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God through faith unto salvation.

The gospel is the only thing that can get the job done. It's the only thing that can overpower man's fallen intellect and provide light from God's word.

Only the gospel can do that. That's why we preach it. That's why it is to be at the top of our agenda. It is the proclamation of that truth of the gospel.

[17:06] Richard? Do you know what a reference is to Paul making that statement about the mind being closed? Would you know what that is? About the mind being closed?

That's 2 Corinthians 4 at verse 4. Would you like to that we cannot accept the gospel unless he opens our minds?

Yeah, and the way he opens our minds is through the word. That's why we preach the word. That's the only thing that can open minds. And Paul talks about that. All scripture is given by inspiration of God's profitable doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction, and right that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all.

And in the next chapter he says preach the word. Timothy, preach the word. Because the word is the only thing that will get the job done. Nothing else will. Nothing else will. Only the word of God that gives light.

Did I see another? John? In Romans 10 Paul says he says the burden for his country in Israel that brethren are to desire and the word of God for Israel that they might be saved.

[18:18] For I bear their record they have the name of God but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness and follow them.

He knew what they were like because he was like that. Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely. That's a powerful passage. Romans 10 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved.

For I bear them witness. They have a knowledge of God. They have a zeal for God. A fervor for God. An enthusiasm for God.

But not according to knowledge. Not according to the truth of God's word. Fabulous concept and so important. So Paul had to deal with this everywhere he went. Right, Roger?

After the stoning of Stephen is there any inclination in the Bible that God supernaturally helped blind them or harden their hearts because he did say though I turned to the Gentiles and that's what Paul was ready to death for?

[19:24] Yeah. Well. Suggesting that I mean the God of the world that he get more was he allowed more powers to do that after the stoning of Stephen final straw for Israel?

I don't know exactly what dynamics are involved there but I do know that the nation of Israel I'm talking about the corporate nation of Israel now most of whom of course were a huge percentage were unbelievers just a small number that were believers but as a result of their continued rejection and continued unbelief we do we do come to that passage where where Paul says that blindness blindness in part not in toto not complete but blindness in part has happened unto Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles become in and that's what God is working on right now it's the fullness of the Gentiles the Jewish nation is not on the front burner right now they're on the back burner but the body of Christ

Gentiles is on the front burner and God is calling Gentiles to faith in Christ and when that is finished when that is finished and the body of Christ the spiritual body of Christ is complete the last person who is going to become a believer becomes a believer then we're out of here that's what you think he means by fullness yeah that's the fullness of the Gentiles when the last Gentile who is going to be saved is saved then God is going to turn back again to Israel the church will be removed and he's going to take up unfinished business with the nation of Israel what does it mean I think it just means that spiritual blindness is going to descend on Israel as a people and I think that's where they are right now but fortunately it isn't on the whole nation it isn't on the entire complement of Israel because we all know there are Jewish people who are coming to faith in Christ and in fact in fact fellas this may very well be a vivid sign of the times there are more

Jews who have embraced Yeshua Yeshua Hakamashiach as their Messiah during the last ten years than probably during the preceding one hundred years and that's pretty significant it could very well be that and when a Jew becomes a believer he is in search converted into the spiritual

body of Christ just as a Gentile is when he becomes a believer doesn't mean that he isn't a Jew anymore biologically he's still a Jew but he is what they refer to themselves as not converted Jews but completed Jews when a Jew embraces Jesus as his Messiah he becomes a completed Jew and that's happening in great numbers compared to just a couple of decades ago any other questions we've already shot our wad here this morning we didn't get to this passage but we're still working on it yes Roger when we become a Christian not biologically but we become Jews right no we become we become we become spiritual children of Israel I mean spiritual children of Abraham in that we are justified by faith Abraham was justified by faith and all who believe are spiritual children of Abraham we are not Jews and we never will be Jews but we still have a very coveted position as spiritual children of Abraham Abraham was justified by faith we are justified by faith and the child is here and it looks mighty good so yeah you mentioned near the beginning that Christ reappeared to all the apostles did he appear to Judas or did Judas name himself before death did he appear to who Judas Judas Judas was dead [ 23 : 55 ] Judas was dead as far as we know as far as we know Judas committed suicide before the resurrection of Christ shortly after Christ was crucified we are told that Judas committed suicide so he apparently did not appear to Judas no okay well once again we didn't get to the content this morning but we'll and we won't get to it next morning because we've got something else we're going to take but I'll tell you what rather than covering a certain amount of content in a certain period of time I'm a lot more concerned about dealing with issues that are of concern to you all and questions involving that so we'll stay on that tack and we'll get we'll get back to Acts okay thank you guys enjoy your breakfast when you get back and you get going