

# The God Who Is

## Introductory Lesson

Acts 17:16-34

### *Background*

The book of Acts was written by a physician named Luke, probably around 60-62 AD. Acts is an historical narrative, or story, that picks up where the Gospel of Luke leaves off, and traces the rise and spread of the early Christian church. In Acts 17 we see a snapshot of the life of the Apostle Paul. Paul had been a Jew who was so devout in his faith that he actually persecuted and killed Christians. But one day Jesus, who had already lived on earth, been crucified and resurrected, appeared to Paul in person while Paul was walking down the road (see Acts 9). The encounter was so powerful that Paul became not only a Christian, but also the greatest Christian missionary who has ever lived. Luke was a close friend of Paul's who often traveled on his missionary trips with him. The events of Acts 17 take place in Athens, Greece, the intellectual capital of the world at the time.

### *Read Acts 17:16-34.*

In this passage, Paul stands up in the meeting of the Areopagus and makes known the "unknown god". What facts does he emphasize about God in vv. 24-27?

Notice how many times Paul uses words like "all", "every" and "everything". What do you think is the significance of this?

How does God make Himself known today?

Paul's statements certainly challenged the Athenians' view of God. (Some further background: the Epicureans' main goal in life was seeking pleasure, and the Stoics emphasized rational thought and self-sufficiency.) How does the Bible, particularly the above passage, challenge today's misconceptions about God?

In vv. 29-31, Paul was obviously concerned that people would not worship idols, but instead worship the one true God, "the God who is". Today in America, we wouldn't usually form idols out of "gold or silver or stone" (v.29), but we can still worship other people or things above God. What are some of the things we "idolize" above God?