

**TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
IHOP BIBLE STUDY**

14 – Acts 17: 16 – 34, “Paul’s sermon on an “Unknown God.” – with comments

The purpose of the Book of Acts is to record the activity of the Holy Spirit in the Vision and Ministry of Peter and Paul. **Today’s study is the 14th of 20 lessons.**

A contextual statement:

Interestingly, *The Interpreter’s Bible* makes the following observation. In the book of Acts, “The Lord is not returned, but in the meantime the word of God is being carried on by the church. The Gentile mission is itself the eschatological action of God.” (*The Interpreter’s One-Volume Commentary on the Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1971. p. 730.)

This I want to affirm as our perspective. **We will study this book from the perspective of the in-breaking of the Holy Spirit.** This puts us on the cusp of a deep and foreboding spiritual hole that is eternally deep. The Holy Spirit is that intuited presence within us that urges us to “Jump.” “Jump!” To take this leap of faith means to surrender ourselves to the eternal deeps. The discovery, to which I can personally testify, is that this deep, dark, mysterious hole is the place where God lives within us. As we lose control of everything— our-selves, our relationships to neighbor and to God— then we can discover that God really does sustain us. But the experience is like falling, and it is not entirely comfortable. But it works.

According to our Study Chart today we finish “Paul’s 2nd Missionary Journey to the Greek Lands,” (15:36 to 18:21). In general this section covers Paul’s vision from Macedonia, his sermon on an Un-known God, and the early preaching of Silas and Timothy.

Read the assignment in one reading.

I. vs. 18a, Define

A. Epicurean

WS:

The *Epicurus & Epicurean Philosophy* web site introduces Epicureanism to both the serious student of philosophy and to anyone seeking useful and inspiring ideas.

Epicurus helped lay the intellectual foundations for modern science and for secular individualism, with many aspects of his system still highly relevant some twenty-three centuries after they were first taught to Epicurus's students at his school in Athens, called “the Garden.” Follow the links below to learn more about Epicurus and his philosophy! (**The *Epicurus & Epicurean Philosophy* web site, hosted by [Vincent Cook](#), has been on-line since December 4th, 1996.**

B. Stoic philosophies.

WS: Stoic ethics achieves certain plausibility within the context of their physical theory and psychology, and within the framework of Greek ethical theory as that was handed down to them from Plato and Aristotle. It seems that they were well aware of the mutually interdependent nature of their philosophical views, likening philosophy itself to a living animal in which logic is bones and sinews; ethics and physics, the flesh and the soul respectively (another version reverses this assignment, making ethics the soul). Their views in logic and physics are no less distinctive and interesting than those in ethics itself. ([Copyright © 2004 Dirk Baltzly](#),

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I. vs. 22, Define

A. Aeropagus.

WS:



The Acropolis as seen from the Aeropagus (Hill of Ares). The monuments on the western slope of the Acropolis - the Propylaea, the marble pedestal of Agrippa and the small temple of Athena Nike - are visible

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III. Read very carefully vs. 22 – 28.

A. vs. 24 and 25, Paul's definition of God.

1. What does he say God is NOT?

WS: Not live in a temple built by hands.

Not served by human hands - needs nothing.

2. What does he say God is?

WS: From one man God made all humans.

Provided for life and breath.

B. vs. 26, Paul defines what it means to be a human. Describe.

WS: From one man God made all humans: Our purpose is to inhabit the earth. God determined the time for them and their places.

IHOP comments: All are brothers and sisters. God is over every aspect and essence. We discussed at length the Calvinistic aspects of this statement of Paul; that is the aspects of pre-destination. Our conclusion is that each of us was comfortable in living in the age and time in which we do live. One IHOPer suggested the moving "A Wonderful Life" in which a man is given the opportunity to see how his present day experiences give shape to and influence the direction of the future.

WS: Please note the following: In Vss. 27 through 32 Paul lays out much of his Christian theology. In vs. 27 he describes who God is not and who God is. In vs. 28 Paul describes what it means to be human. In vs. 30 and 31 Paul defines the work of Jesus Christ. In vs. Paul illustrates what he means by the work of the Holy Spirit.

C. vs. 27a, Paul defines our purpose as humans. What is it? (This may be one of the most important and helpful statements in the New Testament!)

WS: Our purpose as human being is to seek God, to reach out and find God.

IHOP comments: The human situation is that humans are asleep to our spiritual resources.

D. vs. 27b, Paul tells us where we can find God. What does this mean for Gut-Trip Analysis?

WS: God is not far from us. Gut Trip Analysis embraces the experience of God found in our

insides; that is, in our innards.

IHOP Comments: The IHOP members posed the question, "Are fish aware of the water in which they swim?" I told of one woman at church who believed they were aware, because when they were out of the water that flopped around and gasped for air. This analysis was applied to an alcoholic who is blind to his or her spiritual resources and is flopping around and gasping for air.

The Christian experience is that we are swimming in God; that is, we are swimming in our spiritual resources. It is only when we experience some kind of a wakeup call—like the alcoholic hitting bottom—do we awaken to these spiritual waters.

E. vs. 28, read this carefully to discover Paul's definition of "God's offspring."

Describe.

WS: God's offspring Live and Move and have our Being in God. What is our experience of these dynamics?

IV. Vss. 30, 31, Paul describes the work of Jesus Christ. Describe.

WS: First, Jesus calls for repentance, which is the experience of "turning around" to look in a new direction. In one sense, this changes nothing, all we've done is to turn around. In the second sense, everything is now transformed because we are looking in a new direction.

IHOP comments: The alcoholic is living in one direction of life that is killing her or him. At the time of repentance, the alcoholic is looking in new directions and discovers spiritual resources. But the alcoholic is still an alcoholic, nothing is changed. Yet, everything is transformed.

V. vs. 32, Describe

A. The various responses made by those listening to Paul.

WS: Vs. 32a - Concerning the resurrection - why question it?

Vs. 32b. - Some scoffed or sneered.

Vs. 32c - Others wanted to hear more.

Vs. 34 - A few became followers.

Alright folks, talk to me!