

Acts Series

Lesson #119

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Dean Bible Ministries

www.deanbible.org

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The Acts of the Apostles “To the end of the earth” Acts 1:8

Athens: The Challenge of the Gospel Acts 17:23–31





PAUL'S FIRST AND SECOND

Introduction (17:16–21): Paul is upset over the number of idols in the city and goes to the synagogue and market place to reason. He is confronted by various Epicurean and Stoic philosophers who cannot comprehend his message. They take him to the Areopagus council for evaluation.

Paul's Sermon (17:22–31): Challenging the Athenians to worship the Creator rather than the creation.

- **Paul's introduction**: The touchstone of the unknown god (17:22–23)
- **Paul's description of God** (17:24–29)
- **Paul's challenge** (17:30–31)

The Reaction (17:32–34)

Acts 17:22, “Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, ‘Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious;

Acts 17:23, “ ‘for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you:’ ”

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δεισιδαίμων deisidaimōn

acc masc plur comp

religious; superstitious

Mars' Hill
Height: Reaches 377 ft.



Stairway cut into
the rock (still in
use today).

Paul

Mars' Hill in Athens

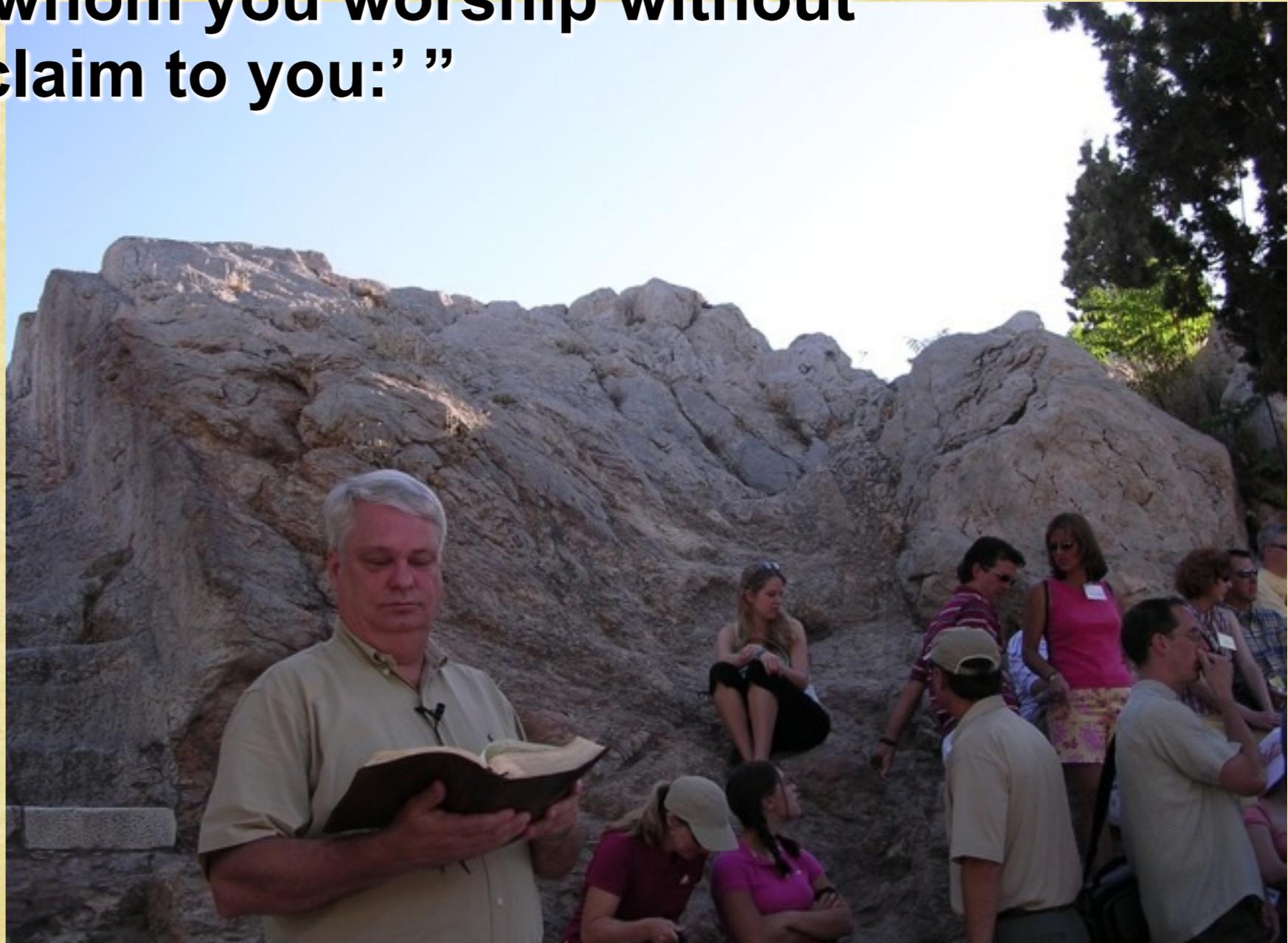
At Mars' Hill, also known as the Areopagus, Paul used an inscription to an "unknown god" as a starting point for proclaiming the good news of Christ to the Greeks. He confronted widespread idol worship by declaring the true identity of the Creator. Using Greek worship and poetry, Paul articulated God's demand for repentance and His provision of salvation through Jesus: "Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said ... 'What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you'" (Acts 17:22, 23).



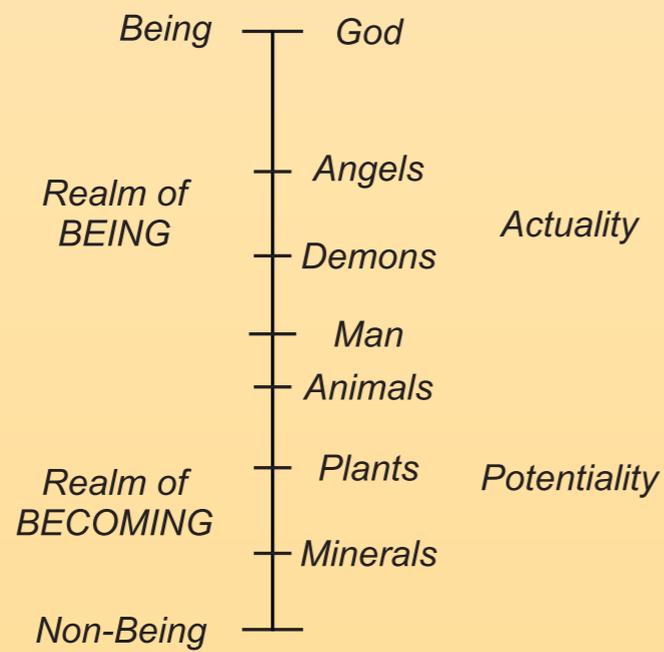


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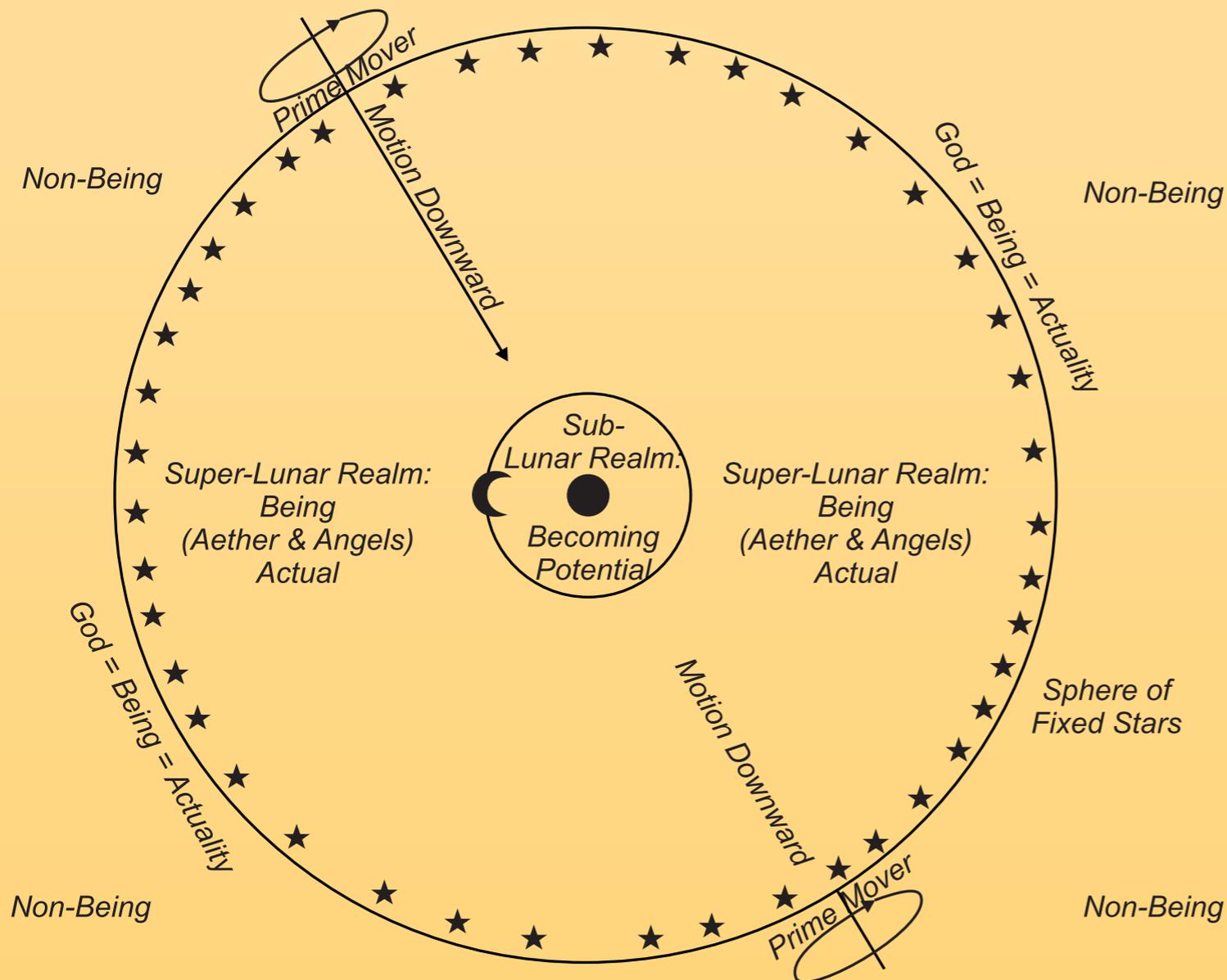
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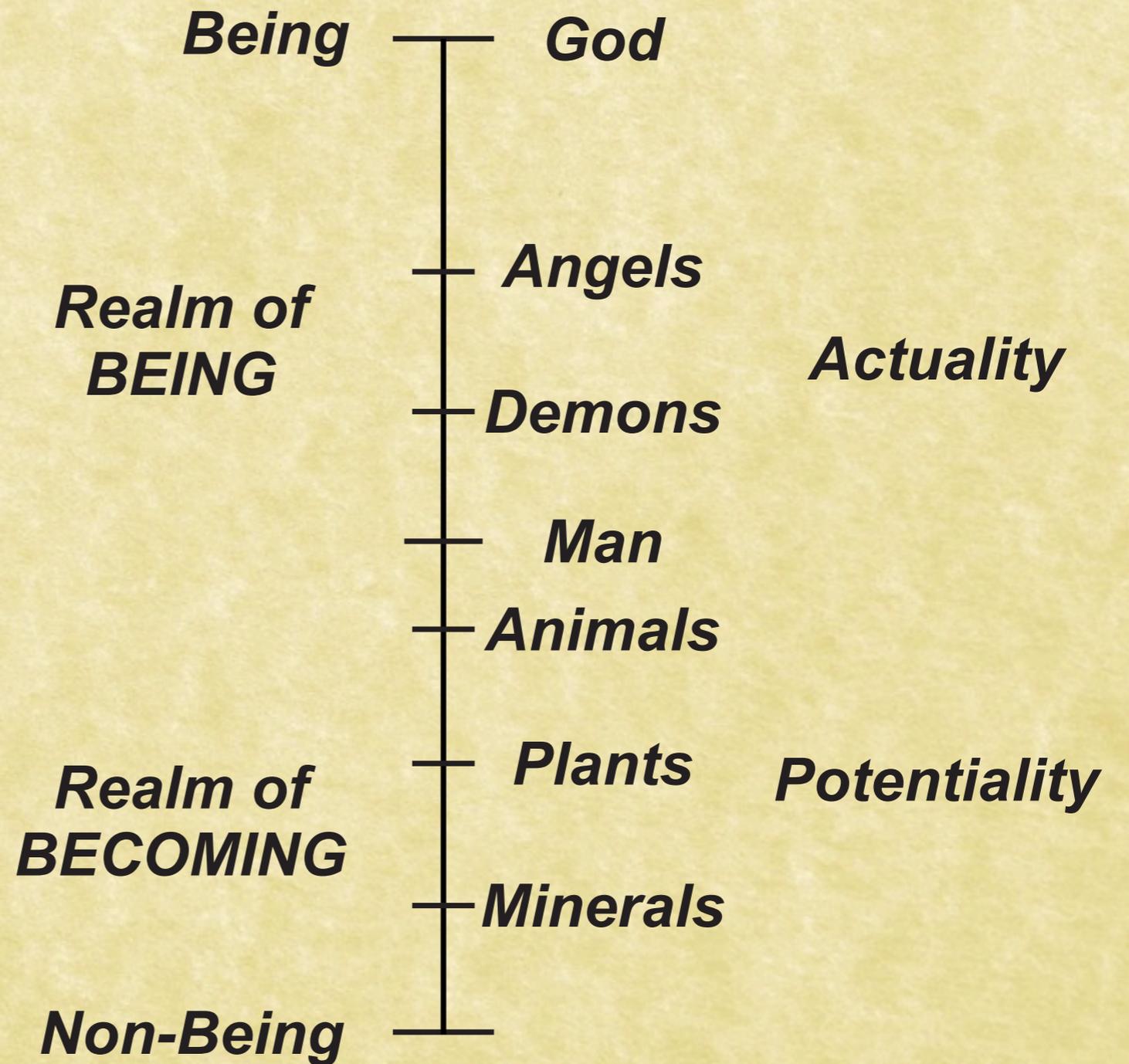
The Great Chain of Being



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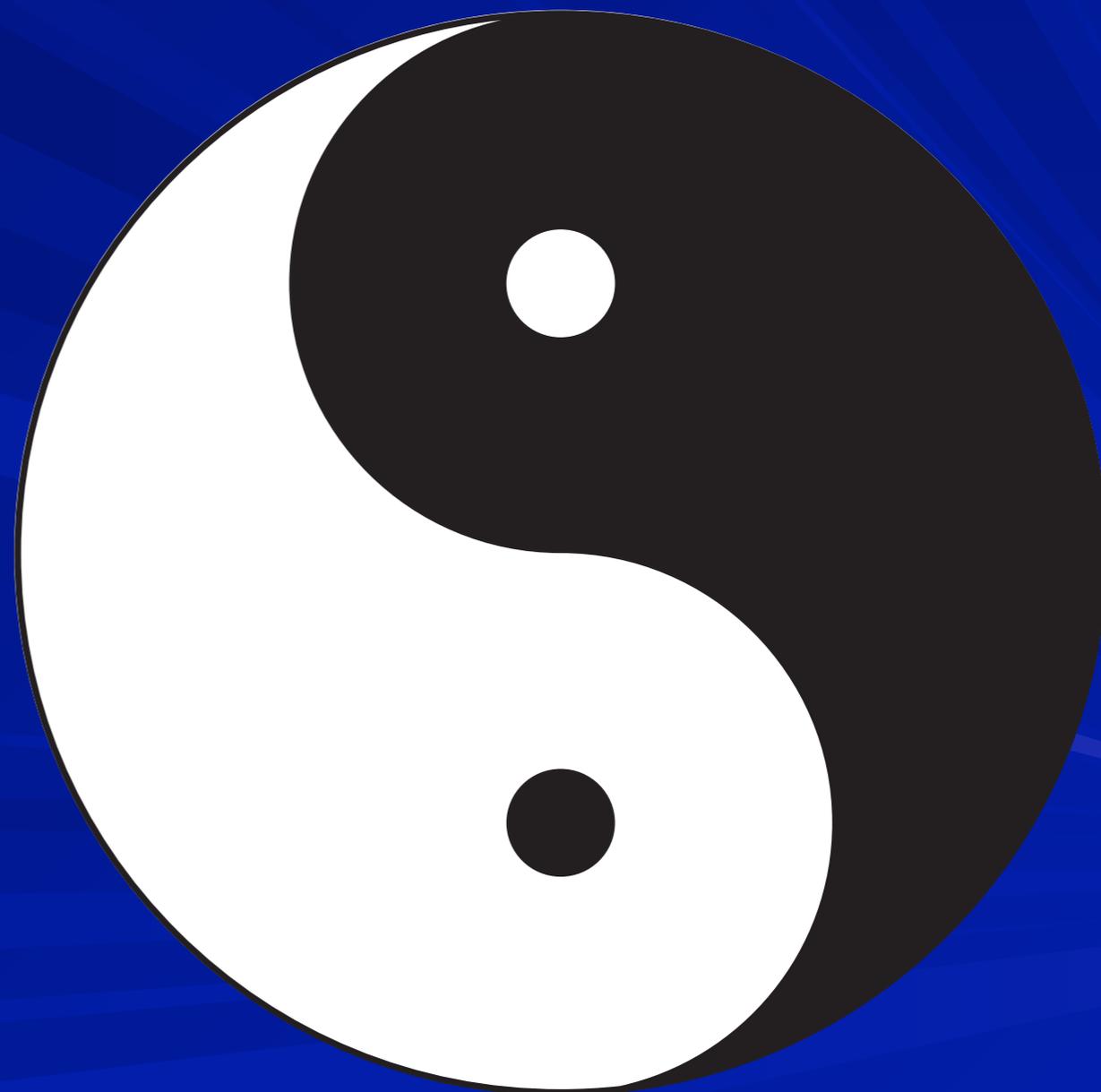
GOD

Personal-Infinite

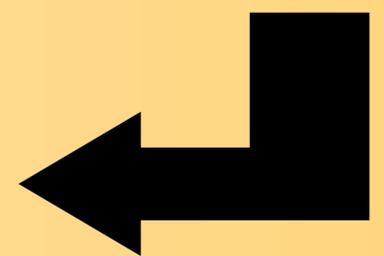
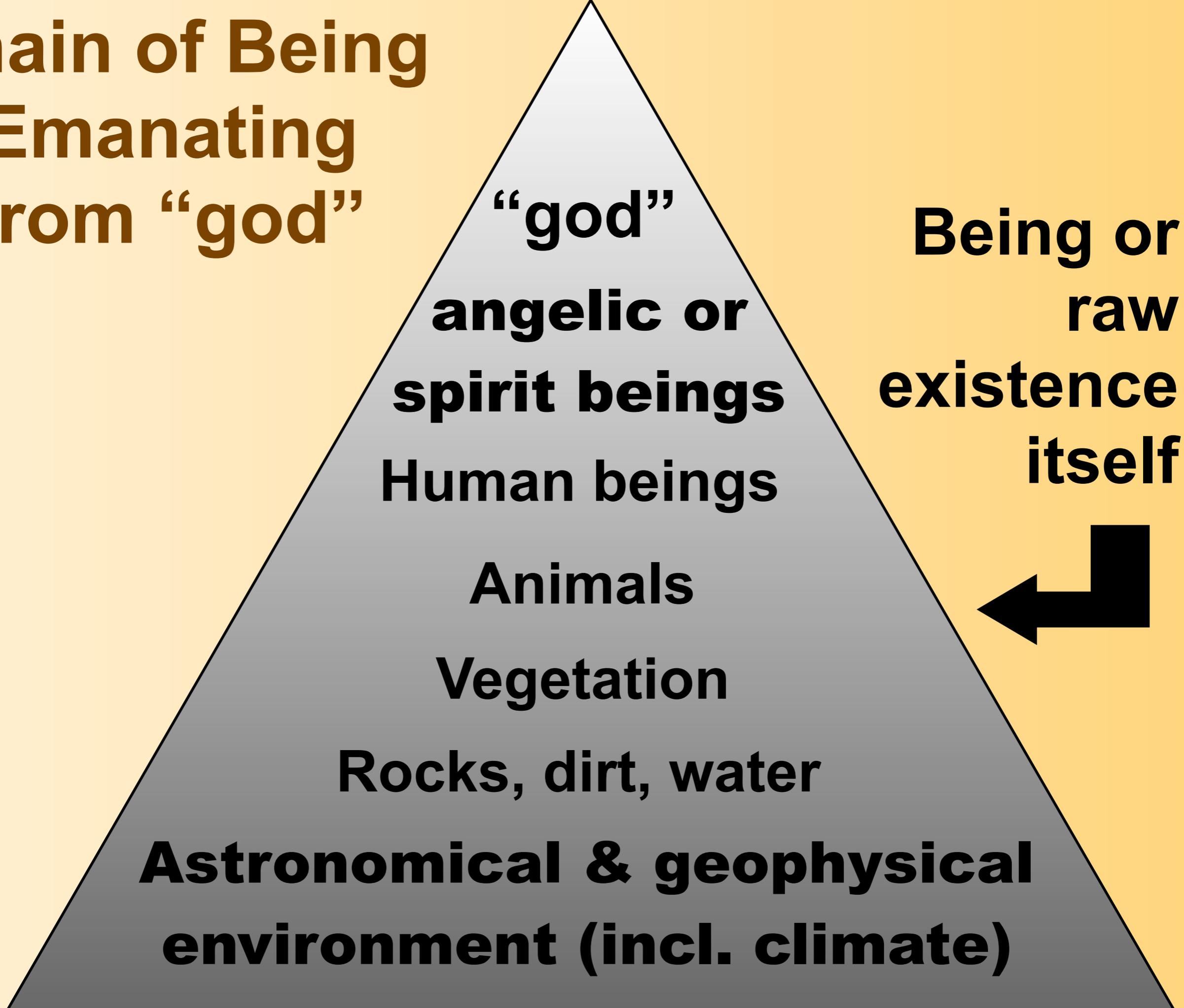
FINITE UNIVERSE

angels
man
animals
vegetation
matter/energy

**INFINITE-
IMPERSONAL
Universe**



**Chain of Being
Emanating
from “god”**



- 1. The “god” they envision is just another of their gods, one in the chain of being. Not a Creator-God who is the Creator of creaturely existence. Just one of many.**

2. Paul isn't validating their "god" or equating him with GOD, but he is pointing out that this idol is evidence of an awareness and knowledge of a god they claim they don't know.

Romans 1:18, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who **suppress the truth in unrighteousness,”**

Romans 1:19, “because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them”

Romans 1:20, “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,”

Romans 1:21, “because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Romans 1:22, “Professing to be wise, they became fools,”

3. Paul also uses certain features of commonly held beliefs as a way of tweaking their God-consciousness.

4. So the “common ground” Paul appeals to isn’t reason or experience, but the suppressed truth of the knowledge of God.

5. Success in evangelism should be determined by several factors: our attitude, our humility, our genuine concern for the salvation of the person, the conversation we have, the accuracy of our explanation of the gospel, and the avoidance of arrogance, getting into a debate, or compromising our beliefs to try to appeal to the unbeliever.

Success isn't measured in terms of conversions.

Acts 17:24, “God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.”

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χειροποίητος *cheiropoiētos*

dat masc plur **hand-made**

1 Kings 8:27, “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!”

Isa. 66:1, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest?’

Isa. 66:2, “ ‘For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist,’ says the LORD. ‘But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.’”

Acts 7:47, “But Solomon built Him a house.

Acts 7:48, “However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says:

Acts 7:49, “ ‘Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me? says the LORD, or what is the place of My rest?

Acts 7:50, “ ‘Has My hand not made all these things?’ ”

Luke 6:35, “But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.”

Acts 17:26, “And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,”

The Divine Institutions

The term “divine institution” has been used by Christians to speak of those absolute social structures established by God and embedded within the social structure of the human race. Thus these are for the entire human race—believers and unbelievers alike. These are unbreakable realities.

Modern paganism views them as by-products of man’s psycho-social evolution, “cultural conventions.”

The Divine Institutions

1. Individual responsibility

PRE-FALL

2. Marriage

3. Family

**Designed to promote
productivity and advance
civilization**

4. Government, judicial

5. Nations

POST-FALL

Designed to restrain evil

Acts 17:27, “so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;”

Deut. 4:7, “For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the LORD our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him?”

Psa. 14:1, “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good.

Psa. 14:2, “The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God.”

Psa. 145:18, “The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth.”

Jer. 23:23, “ ‘Am I a God near at hand,’ says the LORD, ‘And not a God afar off?’

Jer. 23:24, “ ‘Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him?’ says the LORD; ‘Do I not fill heaven and earth?’ says the LORD.”

Acts 17:28, “for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’ ”

Acts 17:29, “Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man’s devising.”

Acts 17:30, “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,

Acts 17:31, “because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”

Acts 14:15, “and saying, ‘Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them,

Acts 14:16, “ ‘who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways.

Acts 14:17, “ ‘Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.’ ”

John 5:26, “For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself,

John 5:27, “and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.”

Acts 17:32, “And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, ‘We will hear you again on this matter.’

Acts 17:33, “So Paul departed from among them.

Acts 17:34, “However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.”