

BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

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Archaeology & Greece (Athens)

See the **House Visual Study Bible** for more discussion of archaeology and the Bible, hvsb.app.



Why the Study of Greece?

See the **House Visual Study Bible** for more discussion of archaeology and the Bible, hvsb.app.

Why Study about the Greece?

In Achaia (Greece) there are several important Christian Churches:

Athens (Acts 17:)

Corinth (Acts 1:5; 1 & 2 Corinthians).

Delphi (Connected to Apollo worship and oracle of Delphi)

Thessalonica (1 and 2 Thessalonians).

Berea (Acts)

Philippi (Philippians)

Lydia (Acts)

Meteroia

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Paul's Trip to Athens

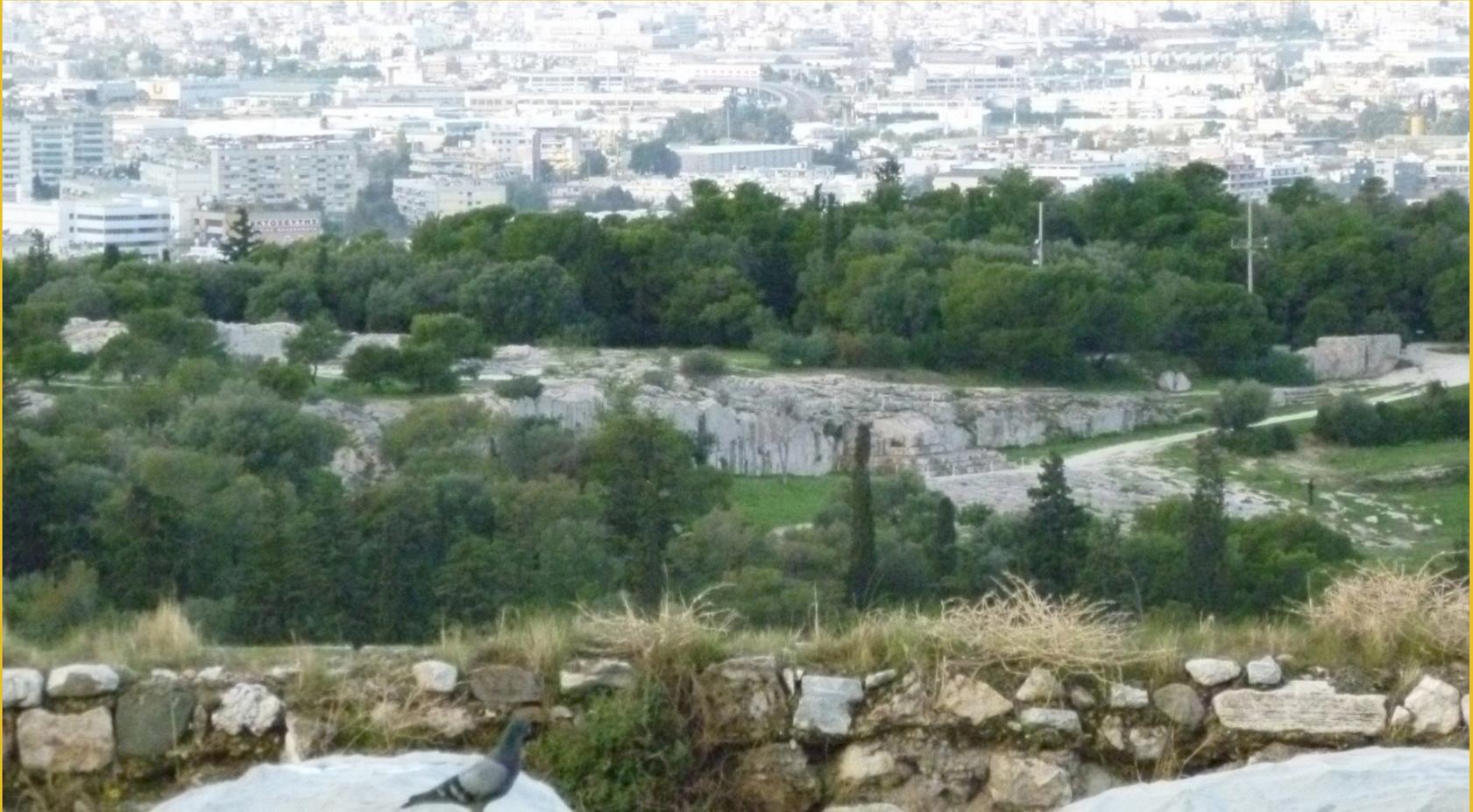
*Temple to
Athena on
the Acropolis*



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**The Beginning of Democracy (demos, people and kratos = power)
δημοκρατία (rule by the people) in the Ancient Mediterranean World**



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Temple to Zeus, Near the Acropolis



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Acts 17 Paul in Athens

17:16 Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols.

“**16, 17.** wholly given to idolatry--"covered with idols"; meaning the city, not the inhabitants. **Petronius**, a contemporary writer at Nero's court, says satirically that it was **easier to find a god at Athens than a man**. This "stirred the spirit" of the apostle. "The **first impression which the masterpieces** of man's taste for art left on the mind of St. Paul was a revolting one, since all this majesty and beauty had placed itself between man and his Creator, and bound him the faster to his gods, who were not God. ”

17 “So he **reasoned** in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.”

Therefore, he set himself to lift up his voice to the idol city, but, as his manner was, he began with the Jews.

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Acts 17 Paul in Athens

We discover in Acts 17, Paul's flexibility in presenting the Gospel, to Jew and Gentile, to religious and irreligious, to scholars and those not so oriented toward scholarship. We also see that he used his time for spreading the gospel in his various contacts; he had a goal in mind. He gave the truth of God revealed in the Bible, even though he spoke to the pagans in Athens biblical truths without quoting Scripture.

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Acts 17 Paul in Athens

When Paul visited Athens, Acts says he was “in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there.” The **Agora of Rome** is probably the marketplace mentioned. As a natural gathering place for the citizens of Athens, who were famous for being intensely interested in the newest gossip or distraction, the **appearance of a foreigner** preaching a new religion would have probably gathered a large crowd there. This agora has been continuously excavated by the American Schools of Classical Studies since the 1931. They discovered evidence of all kinds of merchant activity there including the shops of potters, cobblers, bronzeworkers and sculptors. [\[1\]](#)



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Acts 17 Paul in Athens

The excavators also found a library and numerous temples (including one dedicated to **Hephaistos** – the god of fire and metalwork^[2]) and smaller shrines.^[3] They also discovered the Odeon of Agrippa in the agora compound, city council chambers, magistrates' offices, lawcourts (the Athenians were a notoriously litigious society) and the city mint.



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Acts 17 Paul in Athens

Long stoas (covered porches) sheltered shoppers and other people gathered at the agora. One of these, the **Stoa of Attalos** has been rebuilt and serves as a museum and the headquarters of the excavation team of the Agora.



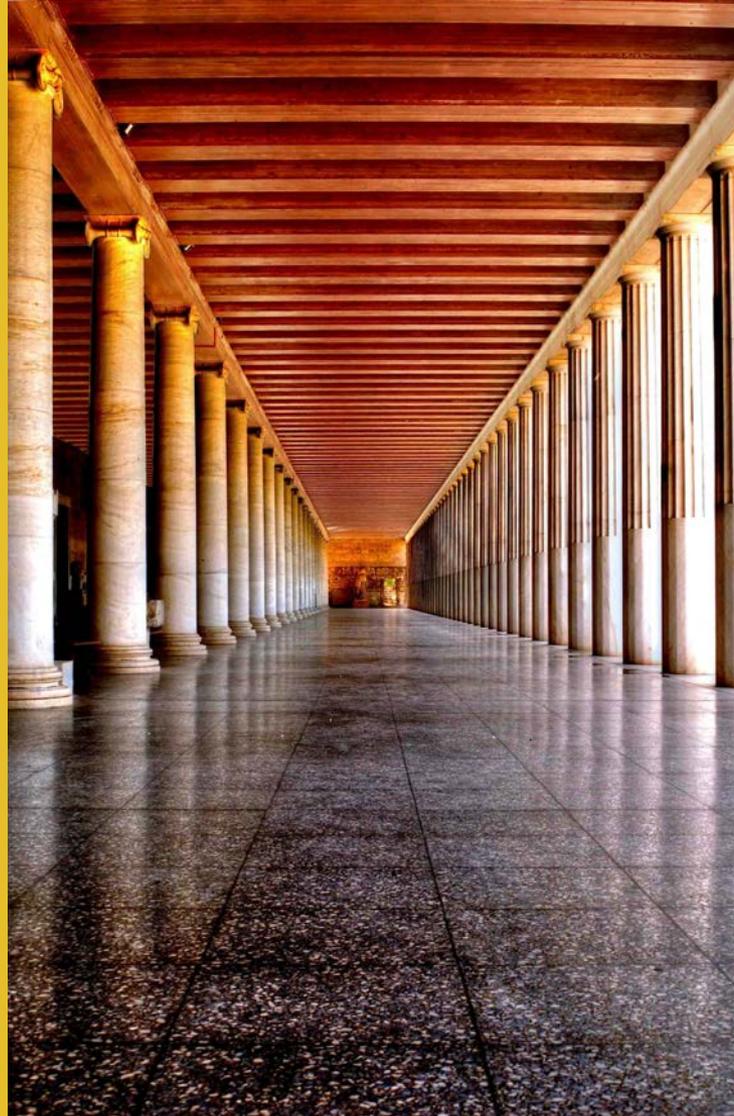
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Paul in Greece – Athens, Acropolis



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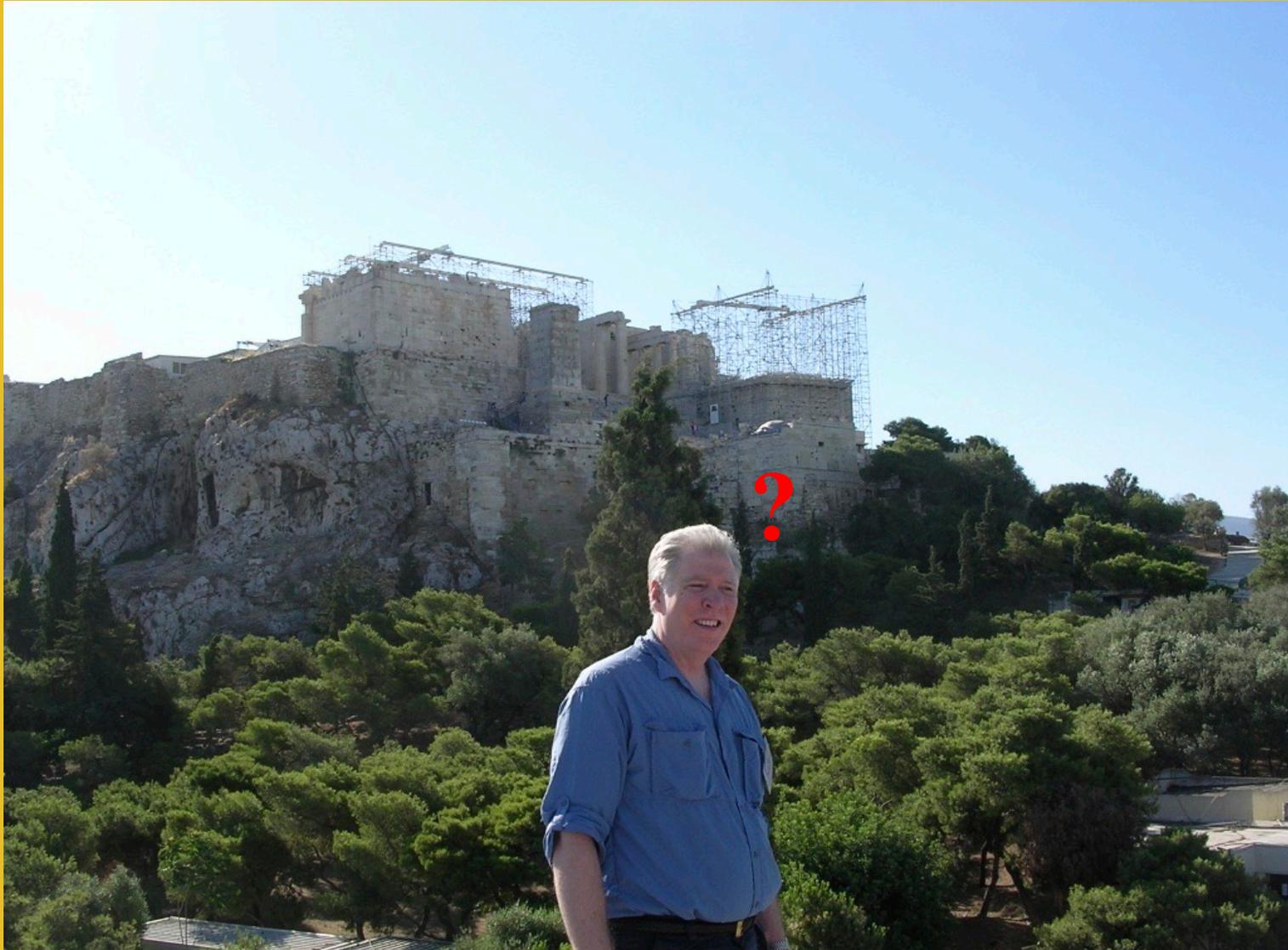
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**Parthenon (virgin, παρθενος) on Acropolis in Athens, and Not
Pantheon (temple to all the gods, πάνθειον, such as the one in Rome)**



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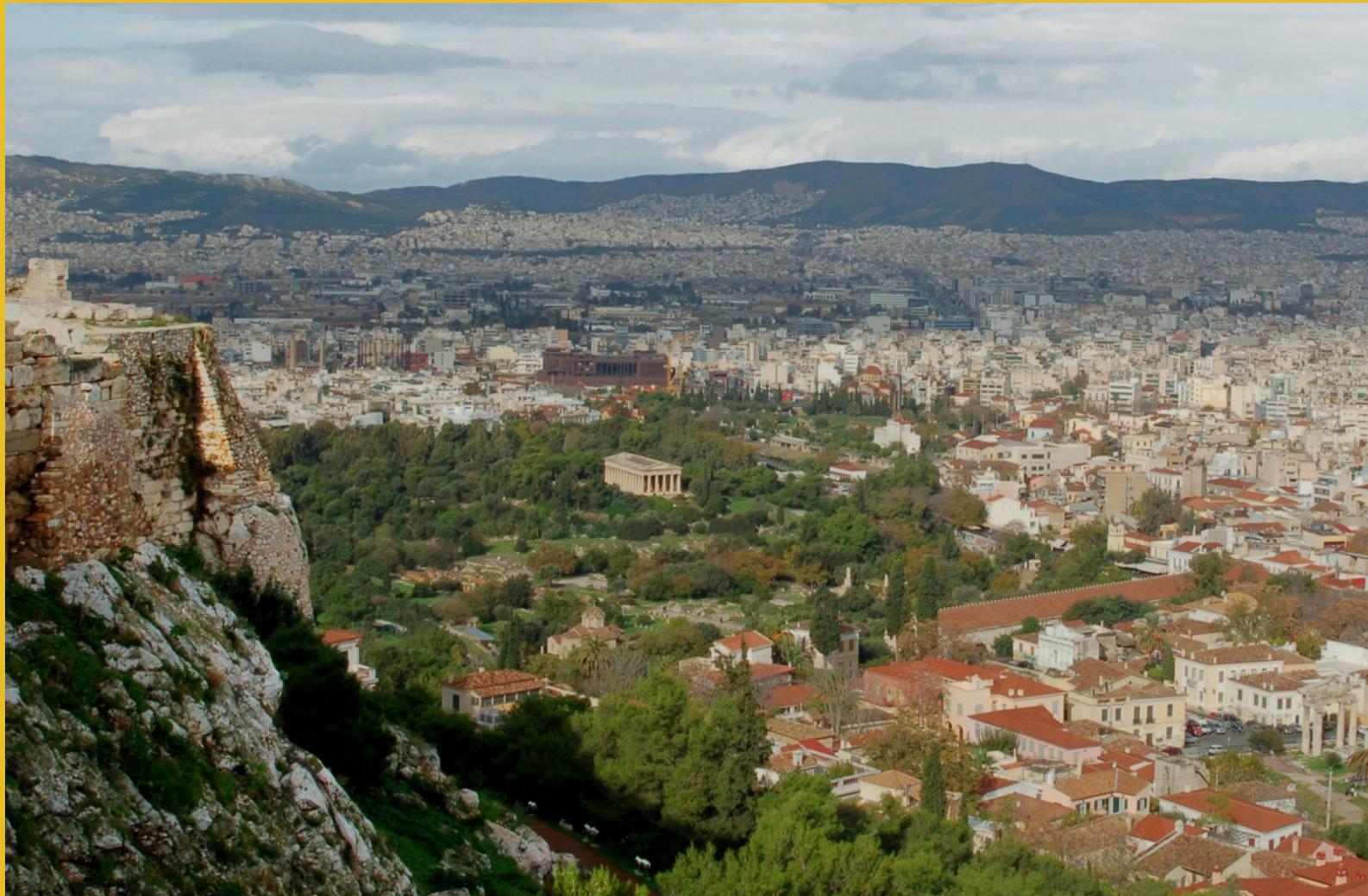
Temple of Athena



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Agora of Rome (civil, town square)



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Modern Athens with Roman Agora in Foreground



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City of Athens with Stoia of the Agora in Prominence



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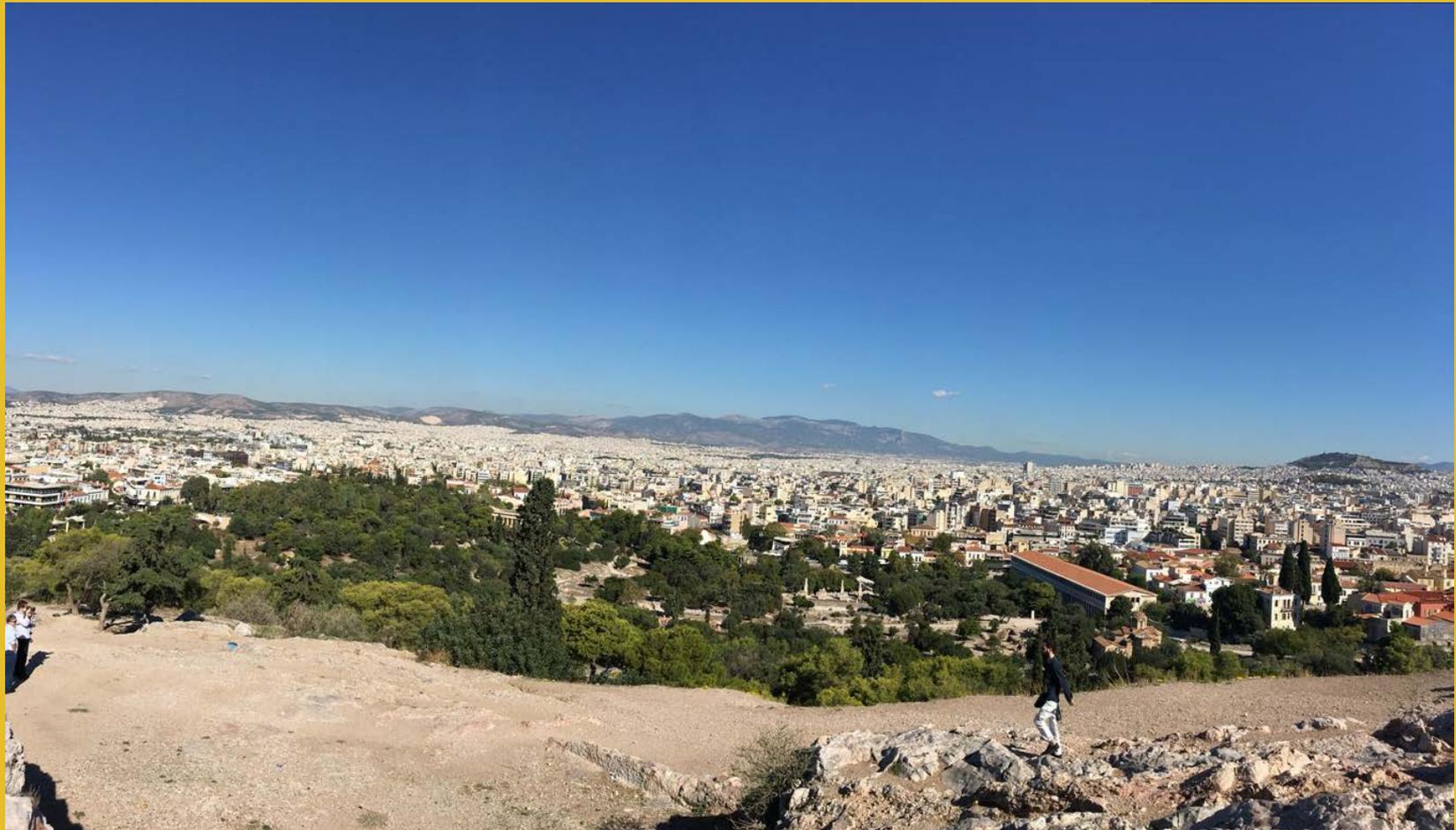
City of Athens with Public Marketplace (Agora) in Foreground



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Large View of City of Athens with Stoia to the Right



Acts 17 Paul in Athens

We discover in Acts 17, Paul's flexibility in presenting the Gospel, to Jew and Gentile, to religious and irreligious, to scholars and those not so oriented toward scholarship. We also see that he used his time for spreading the gospel in his various contacts; he had a goal in mind. He gave the truth of God revealed in the Bible, even though he spoke to the pagans in Athens biblical truths without quoting Scripture.

Acts 17 Paul in Athens

17:18 Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, “What does this babblers [picker of seeds] wish to say?”

The word, which means "a picker-up of seeds," bird-like, is applied to a gatherer and retailer of scraps of knowledge, a prater; a general term of contempt for any pretended teacher.

Others said, “He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities”—because he was preaching Jesus (*Iesous* Ἰησους) and the resurrection. (*Anastasis* ανάστασις)

Acts 17:2 Stoic Philosophers

The Stoics . . . followed the teaching of the Greek **philosopher Zeno (c. 334-c.262 B.C.)** who **came from** Citium, **Cyprus**. Stoics got their name from the **Painted Stoa** (i.e. Porch), the marketplace in Athens **where Zeno taught**. Stoics were **pantheists** who believed that all of humanity and the world were united with **impersonal divinity**, and were thus diametrically **opposed to the Epicureans**. Stoics tried to achieve goodness and peace of mind from living a life of virtue in **harmony with nature**. The **only genuine good is virtue**, which led Stoics to **inculcate indifference to everything but virtue**. Since such **indifference requires an unemotional disposition and high tolerance for pain**, persons even today refer to those who exemplify these personality traits as stoic.

Acts 17:2 Epicurean and Stoic Philosophers

While therefore the Stoical was in itself superior to the Epicurean system, both were alike hostile to the Gospel. "The two enemies it has ever had to contend with are the two ruling principles of the Epicureans and Stoics."

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In general there are three ways to look at the world (with some variation like panentheism and deism): Materialism, Mysticism (Eastern philosophy), Theism (Judaism and Christianity)

Acts 17 Epicureans (Materialism)

18-21. . . certain ... of the Epicureans--a well-known school of atheistic materialists, who taught that pleasure was the chief end of human existence; a principle which the more rational interpreted in a refined sense, while the sensual explained it in its coarser meaning.

Acts 17 Stoics (Mysticism)

. . . and of the Stoics--a celebrated school of severe and lofty pantheists, whose principle was that the universe was under the law of an iron necessity, the spirit of which was what is called the Deity: and that a passionless conformity of the human will to this law, unmoved by all external circumstances and changes, is the perfection of virtue.

Paul's Teaching (Theism)

God is separate from the world and its Creator was taught in Judaism, Christianity and Early Greek philosophers (see next slide from House Visual Study Bible (hvsb.app))

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The Creation of the Universe by God is "Out of Nothing"

Parallels in Ancient Literature | Gen 1:1 | Hershel Wayne House

"There is in truth only one God, who made the heaven, and the wide earth, and the blue depths of the sea, and the force of the winds." SOPHOCLES, *Fragm. apud Grot.*

"A beginning is uncreated; for everything that is created must necessarily be created from a beginning, but a beginning itself from nothing whatever; for if a beginning were created from anything it would not be a beginning." PLAT. *Phadr.* c. 24

"God seems to be a cause of all things, and a certain principle." ARISTOT. *Metaph.* 1.1.c.2.

"One energy is invariably antecedent to another in time, up to that which is primarily and eternally the moving cause." ARISTOT. *Metaph.* 1. viii. c.8.

"Plato calleth the one unmade and eternal God, the father and maker of the world, and of all other things generated." PLUT. *Sympos.* 1. viii. c. 1.

"God, the father and creator of all things that exist, is more ancient than the sun, more ancient than the heavens, more excellent than time, than eternity, than every flowing nature." MAX. TYR. *diss.* 38.

"Thales, the Milesian, said that God was the oldest of all things,

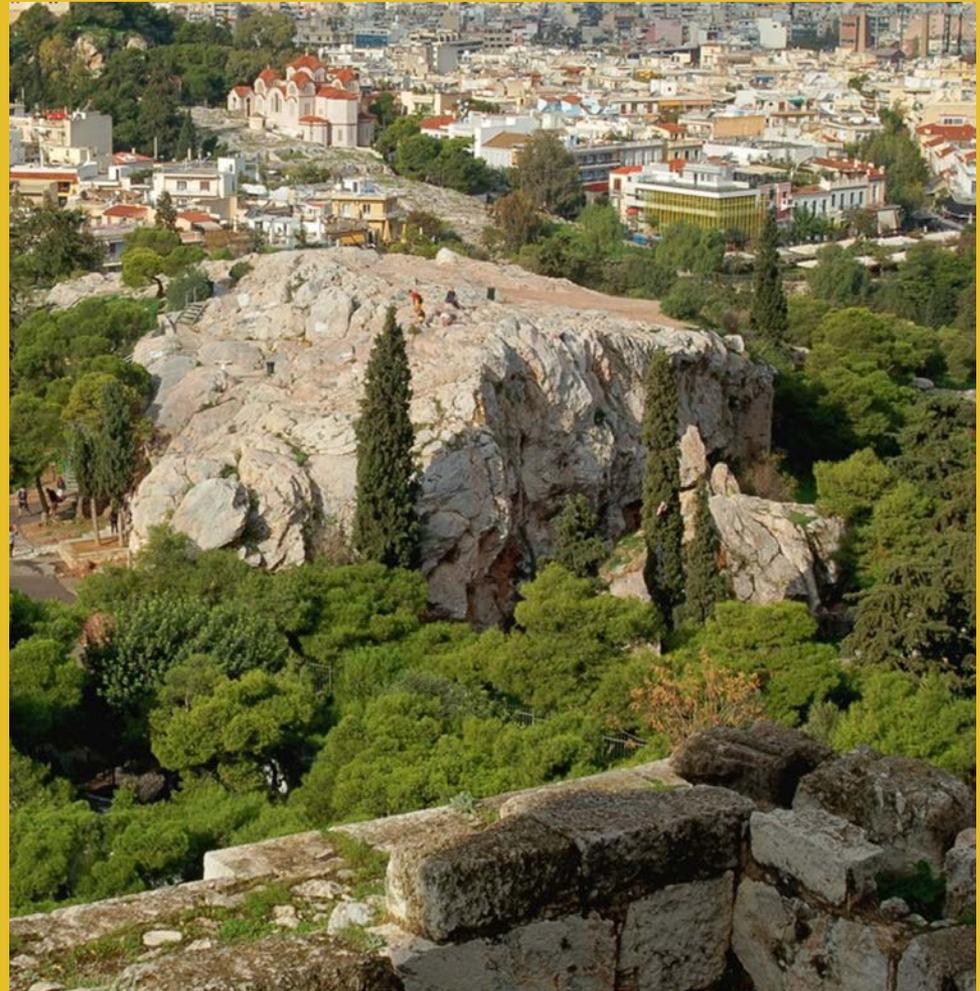
Paul's Jewish and Christian Teaching, as well as Earlier Greek Philosophers

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Acts 17 Paul in Athens

19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? **20** For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean.” **21** Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.



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Paul in Greece – Athens, Areopagus (Mars Hill)



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Acts 17 Paul in the Meeting of City Leaders

22 So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: To the unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.



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Acts 17 Paul Addresses the Areopagus

24 The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, 25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

26 And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, 27 that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for 'In him we live and move and have our being';

27 that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for 'In him we live and move and have our being';

Acts 17 Paul in Athens

This passage demonstrates that Paul was willing and prepared to engage the culture and ideas of his day with the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom 1:16; 2 Tim. 4:2; see also Peter's encouragement in 1 Pet 3:15)