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Ministry Leader, Michigan

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Do You Dare Use The Bible Authoritatively In The Capitol? Part II



SEVERAL WEEKS AGO (Feb. 9, 2015) I issued a Bible study titled, “Do You Dare Use The Bible Authoritatively In The Capitol?” In that lengthy study, I said the reason we often lose the moral high ground in our policy arguments is that we fail to quote the source of our moral high ground: The Bible

I also pointed out that many Christian advocacy groups instruct believers in office not to quote Scripture “because we live in a post-Christian world.” As I stated in my first study, you need to reject such thinking. It is flawed, and I will further show you why in this study. And in answer to those groups, I ask, “Are we winning?” Has America become more biblical since we quit arguing from Scripture?

This week I would like to challenge you to rethink the meaning of Acts 17 — a portion of Scripture often misused by our Christian brethren. Acts 17 is Luke’s account of Paul’s address at Mars Hill where Paul quotes two secular sources when addressing unbelievers. Is this license for us to do the same? Using this passage, have our friends persuaded you to not use the Bible regarding moral matters? But do our friends — and you — really understand what Paul is saying here? Could it be just the opposite meaning? Read on, Beloved

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Weekly Bible Study During Session

SENATE: Dirksen Basement: 8:00 AM Tuesdays. *Hot Breakfast Served.*

CONGRESS: Capitol Building Family Room H324: 8:00 AM Thursdays. *Hot Breakfast Served.*



It is difficult to think of Paul possessing integrity or believability if what he principally states in one place is not incorporated into his sermons elsewhere.

I. INTRODUCTION

In Acts chapter 17 Dr. Luke records the Apostle Paul's sermon designed to communicate the biblical composite of kerygmatic truth (*Kerygma*: The original Christian gospel preached by the Apostles) to the Athenians and by extension, to the Greek philosophers past and present. This sermon is profoundly important because it provides an exemplar and a thesis for building one's foundational understanding of how to (properly in a biblical sense) defend (1Pet 3:15) and proclaim (Col 1:28) the Christian faith — and more generally biblical truths — to non-believers. Through an in-depth study of its contents, this sermon yields definitive guidelines for communicating the gospel — and more generally, biblical truth — to the unregenerate today.

It is my conviction that this sermon utilizes a presuppositional apologetical (*apologia*: To give a defense) approach. That is to say this: Paul presupposes the authority of the Scriptures relative to epistemology (the study of the method and grounds of knowledge especially with reference to its limits and validity) for *all* argumentation, as contrasted to an evidentialist approach. The evidential approach to apologetics attempts to reason with the audience based on the listeners' preconceived notions of truth and on their existing beliefs.

If the former is the technique utilized by Paul, then it follows that believers today should use the Scriptures in a like manner — as their starting point and final authority in their heralding and defense of truth. The case for Paul's sermon in Acts chapter 17 presupposing the preeminence of biblical authority is supported by the following six headings relative to the thorough exposition of this passage.

II. THE ANALOGY OF SCRIPTURE

One of the basic principles of the grammatical, historical, normative approach to properly interpreting Scripture (see my earlier studies on Hermeneutics) is a discipline called the analogy of Scripture. This discipline necessitates that the Bible not contradict itself. In other words if God is truthful and immutable in character, and if "All Scripture is God-breathed" (2Tim

3:16) then it follows that God's Book cannot and does not internally contradict itself. All sixty-six books of the Bible, if inspired by God, maintain an independent and interdependent integrity; such is the underlying basis of this inviolate hermeneutical principle. And, when an author seemingly does contradict himself, the benefit of the doubt lies with an interpretation of two seemingly opposing passages that aptly gives explanation for congruity. More specifically in relation to this study, Paul states in Romans chapter one that men "know" of God, and that God is "evident within them." Nonetheless they "suppress" this knowledge in their rebellion against Him due to their sin nature (cf. Rom. 1:18-20; John 3:19 resp.).

Given the aforementioned hermeneutical principle, it follows that Paul's sermons in historical, chronological, narrative sections of the Bible (such as here in the Book of Acts) do not in any way contradict Paul's writings by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit such as his epistle to the Romans. Rather, narrative portions serve to *illustrate such theological portions of Scripture*. *In fact*, it is difficult to think of Paul possessing integrity or believability if what he principally states in one place is not incorporated into his sermons elsewhere. Specifically and to the point, one must apply the discipline of the analogy of Scripture when deciphering the authorial intent of Paul's Acts 17 sermon; what Paul means by his use of words in Acts 17 should be consistent with his similar statements elsewhere. All authors, especially the authors of the Bible, should be deemed innocent of self-contradiction unless there is empirical evidence to the contrary.

This principle should be utilized to understand Acts 17:22-23 where Paul states that the Athenians are both **religious** and **ignorant**. The language and parallelism is similar both in content and meaning to Romans 1:18-19 where (as previously mentioned) he states: Men **know** of God (that is they are religious) but that they **suppress** this knowledge (that is, they are culpably ignorant). In passages of parallel meaning interpretive rules necessitate that the easier-to-understand passage helps aid the clarification of the harder-to-understand passage, so as to synthesize and establish congruity versus contradiction and incongruity of thought. We



should be gracious when reading another, always giving the author the benefit of being considered a congruous thinker and writer.

Accordingly, Paul's sermon in Acts 17 must be interpreted in the context of what he taught to the Church in Rome in Romans 1:16-22 and the Church in Corinth in 1 Corinthians 1:17-25. All that to say Acts 17 should be prejudged and interpreted by other Pauline writings. We should assume his integrity of thought and belief from one book to another.

Acts 17 therefore needs to be interpreted with the predisposition of Presuppositionalism as taught by Paul in Romans chapter one. One commentator on this sermon has aptly summarized, "its doctrine is a reworking of thought in Romans transformed into missionary impulse." (Bahnsen, *Always Ready*, p. 238.)

III. THE IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING CONTEXT OF THE PASSAGE

In the earlier geographic settings of the Acts of the Apostles, specifically Paul in chapter 17, one finds him in Thessalonica and Berea respectively — before herein arriving at Athens. It is noteworthy that in each of these two prior locations, Paul singularly utilized the OT Scriptures to present the gospel (as he did throughout all of his teaching). Notice Acts 17:2, relative to his proclamation in Thessalonica . . .

And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures.

This passage evidences the fact that **reasoning . . . from the Scriptures** was something Paul was **accustomed** to doing just prior to his arrival at Mars Hill. In fact such was **according to Paul's custom**. The word Luke uses here for **custom** *etho* means "to be accustomed to, or to be a part of." The word is used elsewhere to describe Jesus' habit of going to the synagogue on the Sabbath to read (cf. Luke 4:16); still elsewhere it is used to describe His habit of teaching His followers (cf. Mark 10:1). To the point, Paul's habit, his conviction, his **custom** was to always **reason from the Scriptures**. There is no preceding contextual evidence suggesting his **custom** was to reason from secular

sources in order to make his point.

Later in Acts 17, but prior to his arrival at Mars Hill in Athens, Paul is brought to Berea where it is said of the Jews that from Paul (vs. 11) . . .

. . . they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.

This passage clearly implies that Paul utilized the **Scriptures** as the basis for his declarations. It was not said of the Bereans that "they received Paul's philosophy" or "his thoughts" or "his quotes from secular sources." Utilizing those kinds of "authorities" was not his **custom**.

Upon arrival in Athens from Berea, Paul was on somewhat of a missionary furlough as he waited for Silas and Timothy to catch up and to come join him (v.15, 16). During this time he was provoked by all of the idolatry in the city. His response was to **preach Jesus and the resurrection** (v. 18). As with Peter's sermon on the same subject in Acts 2, Paul undoubtedly spoke not about Christianity's relation to Greek philosophy but about Christ's victory over death and sin (cf. Acts 15:36; 16:17, 31, 32). This is yet another important insight from the immediately preceding context of our passage under study.

Nowhere in this chapter prior to the Athenian sermon is there even a trace of evidence to indicate or support the idea that Paul sought a relationship and/or a quasi-acceptance to or of the presuppositions of his listeners in order to relate with them and reason from that point forward, toward the way of Christ. One must be quick to add that his forthright, heralding demeanor was nonetheless loving in its tone, not akin to a "noisy gong or a clanging cymbal" (cf. 1 Cor. 13:1) as is often the case today with immature believers seeking to defend the faith. It is important to surface these contextual distinctions prior to interpreting the sermon — which at first reading may seem unclear given the English translation of his words.

IV. PAUL'S INTRODUCTORY WORDS

Athens was the cultural center of the Greek world. It was home to the historical purveyors of

CAPITOL MINISTRIES UPDATE

DR. DEAN MATHIS

Ministry Leader, Michigan

DR. DEAN MATHIS was presented with a challenge when he attempted to launch a discipleship and Bible study ministry to members of the Michigan Legislature two years ago.



Because the majority of Public Servants live in the lower third of the state, they are able to drive to and from the Capitol every day which made finding a time to present a Bible study in the building difficult.

After prayer with his wife, Betty Sue, the answer came to put the Bible studies on CDs so that Public Servants may listen to them during their drive time. That remedy has proven to be ideal.

"At the beginning of the year, I revisited those who receive the CDs to get their feedback," Dr. Mathis said. "What I've learned is that this has worked very well. Those who have been on the receiving end expect it and appreciate it. They listen in varying degrees of consistency, but the feedback is they do listen and do benefit from the Bible studies."

Dr. Mathis was encouraged recently by a note that a Public Servant sent to him that read, in part: "Dear Dr. Dean, You are a blessing to me. I appreciate the regular Capitol Ministry tapes (CDs) with your messages..You reach one soul at a time. Know, I will be reminded to pray for you and your ministry each time I hear one of your messages. You are a blessing..."

Currently, Dr. Mathis distributes between 17 and 20 CDs to Public Servants. His goal is to continue to expand the ministry and put the Bible studies into as many hands as possible.

Continued on page 7



the Apostle was not entering into small talk, trying to establish some kind of common ground. Instead, he was immediately going on the offense.



The Areopagus (Mars Hill) as viewed from the Acropolis.

Rather than build up slowly from some supposed common foundations between Greek philosophy and Christianity, Paul launches with pointed words that uncover the listener's philosophical and theological impotence.

Greek philosophy including Socrates, Aristotle and Plato. In fact, Athens then was like DC and NY are today — Athens, along with Rome were the most influential cities in the world. Therefore, this passage in Acts represents a confrontation between Christian doctrine and Greek philosophy, as argued by the former's greatest spokesmen ever! In essence the setting is similar to two archrivals in the sports world going at it in the final game! But in this case, the stage is set for a philosophical clash of titans: Christianity vs. the current heavyweight champion of the world: Hellenist Philosophy! (You can hear the ring announcer . . . “And in this corner . . . the reigning heavyweight champion of the world . . . weighing in at 300 pounds . . . Hel-l-l-l . . . Len-n-n . . . Ism!”)

Paul's sermon to the Hellenists on Mars Hill is our model for arguing moral issues with nonbelievers. Thus, it is important to determine whether Paul utilized Greek thought as a launching point of common understanding or whether he segued into his presentation of biblical truth in some other fashion. Acts 17:22 is the start of the sermon. After being hauled before the Council of the Areopagus (those who “controlled” Greek Philosophy) Paul begins:

Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, “TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.” Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.

At first glance Paul's opening remarks could be understood as his attempt to reach for common ground with his audience, as in making bridge-building statements and acknowledging the worthiness of some of their beliefs. But on closer investigation this is not the case at all. Why? The Greek word for very religious *deisidaimonia* can also be interpreted as “somewhat superstitious.” Rather than this being an attempt to achieve camaraderie, it was the beginning of an indictment for **suppressing** that which they already knew to be true. This understanding of *deisidaimonia* seems the most likely intent of Paul because of the contextual tone evident later in the passage; he goes on to say that they worship an **unknown god . . . in**

ignorance. Practically speaking, these last two words when taken together are hardly endearing when used at any time in any conversation at any point in history — similar to calling someone superstitious.

To further add to the argument, Paul is immediately emphasizing that the Greeks attested to some sort of theism as evidenced by their inscriptions on an altar, “**TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.**” Yet while they sense a presence of a deity, Paul says they choose to **ignore** him. In light of Romans 1:18-20 is not the connotation here one of culpability? Notice how Paul uses the same word in Ephesians 4:18:

Being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart.

In both passages **ignorance** *agnoia* refers not to an intellectual deficiency, but rather to culpability as Paul summarizes the Gentile mindset. To illustrate this important distinction, it is akin to a highway patrolman stopping someone on the highway and asking, “Did you know you were speeding?” To honestly believe you were not speeding (i.e., if your speedometer was defective) would indicate ignorance based on intellectual deficiency. But if you actually knew deep down in your heart that you were going much too fast, while studiously **ignoring** your speedometer, that is a different matter. Therein illustrated is culpable **ignorance.** To say to the patrolman while in possession of a good speedometer, “The fact that I was speeding was **unknown** to me” is the kind of **ignorance** that Paul is stating the Athenians possessed: A blameworthy **ignorance**; they were **suppressing** the truth, intentionally looking away from what their hearts attested to as true. If this is the meaning of what is being said, then from the very outset of his sermon Paul's word choice reveals that the Apostle was not entering into small talk, trying to establish some kind of common ground. Instead, he was immediately going on the offense. Ernest Best, who has conducted intensive word studies on most every Greek word used by Paul in Ephesians, states in his *International Critical Commentary, Ephesians* the following: “**Ignorance** seems to have a unique place [in contrast to] knowledge of



God...**ignorance**, sin and unbelief are closely linked [by the author of Ephesians].” Best goes on to say, “[the interpretation of **ignorance**] expresses the same thought in another way as hardening of the heart.” (p. 420.) Again, if this is Paul’s meaning of **ignorance** then his order of delivery is hardly calculated to achieve audience receptivity. To the contrary, this passage displays the boldness and courage of the great Apostle in daring to use straightforward biblical authority in combating false ideologies.

When Paul quoted back to them their inscription, “**TO AN UNKNOWN GOD**” he had already diagnosed the condition of their heart — a condition parallel to what he diagnosed and taught in Romans, chapter one. At the risk of belaboring the point, Paul’s keen spiritual maturity afforded him the discernment to ascertain this: that what they had posted amounted to nothing more than a lie. Herein illustrated is the heart condition of man throughout the ages: a **suppressor** of inherently known truth about God. Wise and discerning ambassadors for Christ view such placard statements as illustrations of hardened hearts. Acts 17:22-23 therefore parallels Romans 1:19-20:

Because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them . . . so that they are without excuse.

The beginning of this sermon is crucial and revelatory as it relates to the Public Servant utilizing the Word of God as authoritative, because the sermon displays no evidence that Paul elevated human reasoning to equal Scripture, nor even that he saw it as a worthy opponent. Paul’s sermon eschews secular empirical arguments as a means to establish the listener’s belief in Christ. Stated metaphorically, Athens has nothing to offer Jerusalem. Accordingly, Paul begins his sermon by pulling the rug out from underneath Greek philosophy and epistemology! Stunningly and in contrast to most believers’ presentations to unbelievers today, within moments of beginning his address, Paul has stated to his audience, (my amplification):

“Therefore since you worship in culpable ignorance and from a hardened heart, I authoritatively proclaim to you the following . . .”

Rather than build up slowly from some supposed common foundations between Greek philosophy and Christianity, Paul launches with pointed words that uncover the listener’s philosophical and theological impotence. Here then is an immediate argument for and from biblical truth ending with a call to repentance supported singularly by and reasoned from Scripture.

Lastly as it relates to the first two verses, when Paul states, **this I proclaim to you**, the word **proclaim** *kataggello* is the same used elsewhere in the New Testament to refer to the solemn authoritative proclamation of the gospel based on Scripture (e.g. Acts 3:18; 1Cor. 9:14; Gal. 1:11-12). Within these first verses, Paul has set forth an epistemological antithesis between **ignorant**, autonomous and independent Greek philosophy and a God-given authoritative revelation of and from Scripture.

How Is It That Paul — Or We — Could Ever Be So Bold?

Paul knew that it is God who chooses those who would follow Christ. Believers are from and of **His Household**; they are **His ambassadors**. His preaching style and content can be explained only by understanding his resolved convictions relative to these truths. Note Ephesians 1: 4-5 in this regard . . .

Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will.

Paul understood his identity in Christ. He knew what Jesus had said to the disciples, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you..” (John 15:16). Therefore Paul did not have to concern himself so much with winning favor with the Athenians. Paul was not concerned about being popular. Note his words in this regard from Galatians 1:10 . . .

For am I now seeking the favor of men, or

♥ VERSE OF THE WEEK

ACTS 17:2

And according to Paul’s custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures.



The use of Scripture is the dominant, distinguished and preeminent means of communicating truth to another.



The Scriptures are clear that ignorance of God is never really the case.



From the Areopagus where Paul is preaching, one is directly below the Parthenon, the home of the mythological Greek goddess Athena — in a temple made with human hands! Paul undoubtedly motioned with his hand to illustrate his point as he was preaching.

Be sure of this: Paul is not commending Stoic doctrines, nor is he utilizing pagan ideas to round out his sermon with worldly verbosity and secular acceptability.

of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

We need to think this through: Is popularity my real god? Or am I an obedient bond-servant of Christ?

V. USE OF GENERAL REVELATION

Continuing in the same order of argumentation as revealed in Romans 1:18-20, Paul now connects the internal testimony of the conscience to the external testimony of general revelation in 17:24-28a

The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and exist,

Paul is further substantiating to the Athenians that all of mankind, if they are living in denial of Christ, are **without excuse**. Scripturally speaking, it is not as if people just don't know of God's existence. To the contrary, **He is not far from each one of us**. The Scriptures are clear that **ignorance** of God is never really the case. God has made Himself known to everyone through *conscience* and *creation*. If anyone responds to the general revelation God has already granted him or her via conscience and creation, then He will always be faithful to respond by increasing the revelation of Himself to such an individual through special revelation.

Herein then is the answer to the often-posed question, "What about the heathen in Africa?"

Both the conscience of an individual and through what has been made by God attest to the fact of God's *knowableness*. Paul's appeal

to general revelation in this passage serves his purposes well: To further nail down his case for Athenian culpability. It's not as if God is **far from each one of us** and hard to know! Conversely, to the unbiased, unmasked, non-suppressing heart, general revelation creates a desire to **seek God**. Bahnsen (*Always Ready*, p. 259) summarizes this well:

[Man] is responsible because he possesses the truth, but he is guilty for what he does to the truth.

The fact that God has revealed Himself through both internal (the conscience) and external (the creation) media signifies that people can **find Him**. However, the first century Athenians — and people today in the U.S. Capitol — **suppress** that which they know to be true, attempting to divert and dilute the witness of conscience and creation by worshipping gods and idols of their own making, identified in this passage as things that **dwell in temples made with hands**. This is not only pithy metaphoric language as it is read and understood today, but it must have been profoundly sobering when delivered in Athens: You see, from the Areopagus where Paul is preaching, one is directly below the Parthenon, the home of the mythological Greek goddess Athena — in a **temple made with human hands!** Paul undoubtedly motioned with his hand to illustrate his point as he was preaching.

In summary of this section Paul has candidly and in a straightforward indictment refuted the Greeks and their man-made gods. He has mortified and rebuked their ideas of self-made theism.

VI. PAUL'S USE OF SECULAR PHILOSOPHERS

Further on into the body of Paul's sermon are quotations from two secular sources in verses 28-30a:

. . . . as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.' "Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man." Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance . . .



Why does Paul use these secular sources? Does this not negate the earlier premises of this study? This is *not* an attempt to incorporate the common ground of Greek philosophy. Only a shallow exegete could possibly conclude that, given the hermeneutical considerations we have already pondered. May I suggest the reason they are incorporated by Paul into his sermon is because as secular sources they contradict what the temple of the goddess Athena — the Parthenon just above them — depicts: Obviously whoever constructed that thing believed that the Greek gods **dwelt in temples made with human hands!** But the Cretan poets Epimenes and Aratus, whom the Greeks regarded, and whom Paul quotes, disagree! The Poets say **we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man.** This glaring contradiction drives home Paul's point — that the Greeks are playing mind games, willfully **suppressing** their own finding of God! So who's right then? The purveyors of the Parthenon, or the poets? Paul is saying you Grecians can't have it both ways! Stonehouse adds to this point in his book, *Paul Before The Areopagus*, "... the pagan poets in the very act of suppressing and perverting the truth presupposed a measure of awareness of it" (p. 30). And so the poets serve two purposes for Paul, illustrating both incongruity of Greek thinking and imperfect ability to **suppress** that of which they have a conscientious awareness.

Paul's importation of these quotes is meant to illustrate the doctrinal truth of Romans 1:19 and 21, that: **that which is known about God is evident within them** and that, **For even though they knew [about] God, [through their conscience and creation] they did not honor Him as God.**

This understanding of this portion of his sermon is further supported by Paul's return in verse 30 to his earlier thought about blameworthy **ignorance**. Thus, between the bookends bespeaking of culpable **ignorance** are these utilitarian quotations which illustrate the very point of Paul's argument.

The contrary idea, that Paul, to help validate his thesis, would quote two sources who represent by their lack of conversion "the wisdom of the

world" does not comport with — and is totally incongruous to — his statements in 1 Corinthians 1:20: **Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?** and 1 Corinthians 3:19: **For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God.** Be sure of this: Paul is not commending Stoic doctrines, nor is he utilizing pagan ideas to round out his sermon with worldly verbosity and secular acceptability. To do so would contradict his theology elsewhere. Therefore this portion of the sermon cannot be taken as acquiescence or an attempt to identify with a pagan audience — although many a commentator has incorrectly interpreted their inclusion to mean just that! For sure, Acts 17 cannot be used as a pressure release valve in an attempt to discount the necessity of arguing from Scripture alone and at all times when it comes to debating moral issues on the Hill.

VII. PAUL'S CLOSING CALL TO REPENTANCE AND WARNING OF JUDGMENT

The last section of Paul's address (17:30-31) is a call to repentance and a warning of coming judgment

Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.

Wow! What a haymaker! Conclusively, this sermon is anything but an attempt to find common ground with the Greek philosophers. Here is the antithetical apex to secular thinking — both then and now! Here is a bold call for sinners to abandon their false ideologies that have no basis and are contradictory. Here is an immediate call to **repent**. States Bahnsen, (*Always Ready*, P. 268):

Paul wanted the philosophers to not simply refine their thinking a bit further and add some missing information to it; but rather to abandon their presuppositions and have a complete change of mind, submitting to the clear and authoritative revelation of God.

Dr. Dean Mathis *continued from page 3*

Also a valuable ministry tool, Dr. Mathis supplies the CDs to donors. "A lot of my supporters are out west where people have a lot of windshield time," he said. "I can mail the CDs that they can use for their own edification."

The weekly delivery of CDs to Public Servants' offices has also provided opportunities for personal visits between the scheduled appointments that Dr. Mathis makes and the meetings that Lawmakers request to ask for prayer or to discuss specific issues from biblical perspectives.

Delivery visits also provide openings for timely discussions. Recently, a Public Servant was grappling with a land issue, but in talking about it with Dr. Mathis, a spiritual issue emerged.

"The question was which world view are you going to take, the world view that says animals are as sacred as man, or are you going to take the biblical world view that human beings are special and have a special place of stewardship and oversight in God's world?" Dr. Mathis said. "It was a very interesting conversation. We talked about Scripture and the moral fight that is in the legislative process as an aspect of spiritual warfare. There are many opportunities for dialogue like that, and I meet a lot of Christians among staff."

"This has been a very rewarding way to minister to them one at a time, but in a large group too." **cm**



Do You Dare Use The Bible Authoritatively In The Capitol? Part II

CAPITOL MINISTRIES is a ministry organization that provides Bible studies, evangelism and discipleship to political leaders. Capitol Ministries was founded in 1996 and has started ministries in over 37 US State Capitols. **cm**

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The proclamation of this sermon meant both then and now that one must live responsibly without the covering of supposed **ignorance**. A failure to **repent** equates to a declaration of rebellion against God and an arrogant clinging to self-centered pride wherein one is the final arbiter in the pursuit of all things. Paul says such people will undergo the **judgment** of God. How many people do you know — or perhaps this describes you? — who “create God in their own image,” who believe they are “the final arbiter of all faith and practice” who make “god with **their human hands**?” These folks need to **repent** and come to Christ lest they face the **judge of the world** on not so good terms.

VIII. SUMMARY

These six facets of Paul’s Acts 17 sermon represent congruous, parallel narrative principles to his theological construct so vividly and perspicuously elucidated in Romans 1:18-20. That his Acts 17 sermon is a profound portrayal and presentation of the Public Servant’s mandate to use the Bible authoritatively in the Capitol when it comes to debating issues of morality is evidenced by The Analogy of Scripture; The Immediately Preceding Context of the Passage; Paul’s Introductory Words; Paul’s Use of Gen-

eral Revelation; Paul’s Quotation of Secular Philosophers; and Paul’s Closing Call to Repentance and Warning of Judgment.

In his book, *The Justification of Knowledge*, Robert Reymond summarizes best the ministry philosophy of Paul depicted by this sermon (p. 38):

A cursory reading of Acts will disclose that Peter, Stephen, Philip and Paul, in their missionary sermons to the nations . . . imply in their argumentation that their hearers may legitimately question the existence of the Christian God, [or] the truth of Scripture.

Given God’s wiring of the conscience of each individual He has created, every human being is in actuality *illegitimate* in his questioning of the existence of God and the truth of Scripture.

Conclusive of this study of Paul’s Acts 17 sermon then is this: The use of Scripture is the dominant, distinguished and preeminent means of communicating truth to another — therefore it follows that we should use it as our supreme and final authority. **cm**

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✓ ENDORSEMENT



“I SUPPORT CAPITOL MINISTRIES because I see that there is a void. Too often we look at missions as the outer most part of the world, yet in the Great Commission we are exhorted by the Lord that we will witness in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria—the local areas. I fear in our pursuit for grandeur and great and being ‘out there,’ we’ve overshot. What is closer than Public Servants serving in DC, the Capitols of every state, as well as those in city and county governments? These mission fields are local and they are ready.”

—Pastor Mike Shreve, *Ministry Leader, California State Capitol*