



The Maker & Us

Acts 17:22-28



While in Athens, Paul was brought before the Council of Areopagus, and they asked him, “What is this new teaching you’re giving us?” (*Acts 17:19, NIV*) Read Acts 17:22-28.

God is the Maker

- ❑ Paul began, “The God who made the world¹ and everything in it ...” (*17:24*). Thus Paul presented two fundamental teachings of Christianity: 1) God exists; and 2) God made the universe. By implication, God is distinct from his creation.
- ❑ Though Paul’s audience might agree with some of his words, his teaching on creation conflicted with other philosophies.² Of course, this is still true today.³

The Maker is Lord

- ❑ The God who made the universe is the Lord of the universe. It is His, and He is in charge! God does not need anything because He already owns everything. God does not need us, but we certainly need God! He is the source of “life and breath and everything else.” (*17:24-25*)
- ❑ God “does not live in temples built by human hands” (*17:24*).⁴ The Greek gods were represented by sculptures that were placed in temples. However, the Greek gods were much “smaller” than the Maker of the Universe!



Who Made Whom?

Paul proclaimed that the Maker of the Universe is also the maker of the human race. The Greek gods, who were like humans in many ways, were obviously the creation of humans.⁵ However, the God of the Bible is very different from Greek gods! (*Isaiah 40; Psalm 104*)

1. If God really is our Maker, how should we respond? What can we do, as finite humans, to know this God who is infinite and beyond human understanding?⁶

¹ ‘world’ – (Gr. *kosmos*) – universe. Genesis 1:1 says, ‘In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.’

² ‘[Epicurus] held that the universe originated in a swarm of atoms [which] began a series of collisions and interactions which eventually produced the more or less orderly world in which we live.’ (Christopher Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994], p. 42. In Stoic teaching, ‘The universe ... had its origin in fire ... embodied [by] a controlling principle [Reason]’ (Stead, pp. 46-47).

³ Some people object to ‘creation’ because they accept ‘evolution.’ However, the basic conflict is not between creation and evolution, but between theistic and naturalistic worldviews. Neo-Darwinian evolution, as typically defined, is entirely naturalistic (blind, purposeless) – thus essentially atheistic. Once the existence of God is accepted (or even allowed), the idea of creation is no longer ruled out as an explanation. At that point, the student is ready to consider the relationship between the biblical and scientific data. See Jay’s *Doesn’t Evolution Contradict Genesis?*

⁴ The tabernacle and temple were considered dwelling places for God (*Exodus 29:42-46; 1 Kings 8:13*). However, these structures did not contain God! Rather they were meeting places where God revealed himself in special ways. After Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem, he said, ‘But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!’ (*1 Kings 8:27, NIV*)

⁵ Some people think the Christian God is also an invention of humans. However, if any supreme God exists, the God of the Bible is the right One to believe in! See Jay’s *Can an Intelligent Person Believe in God?*

⁶ God’s ‘revelation’ is required. God reveals himself in nature, history, and human consciousness (natural science is a study of general revelation). However, more is needed. God has revealed himself in various special ways in human history, ultimately in the person of Jesus Christ. The Bible is the record of, and is, the essential special revelation today. Understanding God’s revelation is not merely an intellectual endeavor; it is also spiritual.

Who Are We? & Why Were We Made?

“From one man [God] made all the nations” (*Acts 17:26a, NIV*). One man, Adam, is the father of the human race. In this sense, we are all part of one race – the human race.

2. Why were we made? What reasons⁷ does Paul give? (*17:26-27*)⁸ Based on these verses, what does our Maker (God) want for us?

Where is God?

- ☐ God wants us to seek him. But where is he? Is he really there? Read Romans 1:20-21.⁹
- ☐ To make his point, Paul used two quotations from Greek poets. Read Acts 17:28.¹⁰

3. What was Paul communicating by using these quotations?

We are personal beings made to reflect the one personal Creator who is Spirit. Thus it is very foolish for us to make images of him – “images made by human design and skill” (*17:29*).¹¹

Seeking God

- 📖 “Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near” (*Isaiah 55:6, NIV*).
- 📖 “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart” (*Jeremiah 29:13, NIV*).

4. What do you think is involved in truly seeking God?¹² What should we do?



Reflection/Application

- To seek God is our choice. Are you seeking God? If not, why not? If you are seeking God, what steps are you taking? What questions do you have? Seek the Truth with all your heart.
- “Seeking” does not end when one becomes a Christian. We should continue to seek a more intimate knowledge of Him (*Philippians 3:7-11*). In what specific ways are you seeking God?

⁷ These reasons are not the whole reason God made us, but they served Paul’s purpose in this speech.

⁸ Paul said, ‘that [we] should inhabit the whole earth:’ and ‘that [we] would seek [God] and perhaps reach out for him and find him’ (*17:26-27*). The phrase ‘reach out for’ (from Greek *psēlaphaō*) conveys the idea of people feeling or searching around in the darkness attempting to find something they are looking for. Paul’s statement about God’s involvement in human existence conflicted with Epicurean philosophy which stated that gods (if they exist) have no interest in the affairs of humans. Atheists would agree with the Epicureans because they believe God does not exist. Though ‘deists’ believe God made the earth, they believe he takes no further part in controlling it. So they too would agree with the Epicureans. Paul’s statement reflects Deuteronomy 32:8 and Psalm 74:17.

⁹ The ‘knowledge’ in Romans 1:21 was limited but adequate to know something about God through ‘what has been made’ (‘general revelation’). A true knowledge of God is personal, and is found only in Christ (*Galatians 4:8-9*). The darkening in verse 21 had its origins in ‘the fall of mankind’ recorded in Genesis 3. See *The Fall of Man* on the ICF website. Also see Ephesians 4:18 and John 1:9-10 (along with John 8:12 and 2 Corinthians 4:4).

¹⁰ The first quotation is supposedly taken from a poem written by Epimenides (c. 600 BC). The second quotation is taken from the fifth line of *Phainomena*, by Aratus (c. 310-240 BC). Paul disagreed with the philosophies underlying these poems which were Stoic and referred to Zeus rather than the one, true God. However, he could quote these lines because they showed that even their own poets spoke of man’s dependence on ‘God’ for existence and life. All humans are God’s ‘offspring’ in the sense that God made us as personal, spiritual beings, ‘in his image.’ However, the Bible does not teach that all humans are in the same family in a spiritual sense. If we want to enter God’s family, we must become his children. We become his children through faith in Christ (*see John 1:12-13*).

¹¹ This refers to physical images, but can also apply to mental images, or anything else that displaces the true God.

¹² This includes genuine humility, willingness to be changed, and responsiveness to God’s revelation and rule.