

# “THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

## To An Unknown God

By Jim McDonald

The Berean Jews in Acts 17:11 were a rare exception to those Paul ordinarily spoke with on his journeys. He always went first to Jewish synagogues as he traveled and spoke to them for such was God's commands: ***“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”*** (Rom. 1:16). Then, of course, he spoke to them first because they were of his people. The general reaction Paul received from his nation was that a few would accept his teaching, but the greater majority would reject and persecute him for his teaching. The Bereans were an exception to this. They ***“received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the scriptures daily whether these things were true”*** (Acts 17:11). The result of this attitude was that ***“many of them therefore believed, also of the Greek women of honorable estate and of the men not a few”*** (Acts 17:12).

Yet despite the warm reception he had received of the Bereans, Paul was not spared from persecution. The Jews from Thessalonica, having heard he was in Berea, went there and stirred up and troubled the multitude and once more it became necessary that Paul move on. However, in this case, Paul traveled alone. Silas and Timothy remained behind. Brethren conducted Paul safely to Athens and when they were returning to Berea, Paul told them to send Silas and Timothy to him with all haste (Acts 17:15).

Athens, in Paul's day, was a great cultural center and regarded as the center and height of wisdom and learning. It had world-renowned teachers and some of the world's greatest philosophers. Yet in their wisdom which they gloried in, they proved themselves to be fools because they were addicted to idolatry.

When Paul wrote the Roman church he spoke of Gentiles in general, but he could have spoken of the Athenians in particular, when he said, ***“For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity, that they may be without excuse, because that knowing God, they glorified him not as God neither gave thanks: but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things”*** (Rom. 1:20-23).

As Paul traveled the streets of Athens ***“his spirit was stirred within him as he found the city full of idols”*** (Acts 17:16). One cynic spoke of the age saying it ***“was easier to find an idol in Athens than a man.”*** Apparently the city authorities were so fearful that they would leave out and therefore offend some minor deity that they erected an altar with the inscription, ***“To an Unknown God.”*** Paul saw that altar and when he was called upon by men there to explain ***“this new teaching”*** he had been heard to preach, he began by referencing that ***“unknown God”*** which they ignorantly worshiped. Paul told his listeners he wanted tell them about that ***“unknown God.”*** Paul affirmed that ***“unknown God”*** actually was the One who had made the world and everything in it. That God did not need anything from man because He was the provider of all the needs of the Athenians. He was also a God that did not dwell in temples made with human hands. He told them that one of their own prophets had said that man was himself the offspring of that ***“unknown God.”*** He assured them that it was in God that they lived, moved, and had their very being. Furthermore, since man is the offspring of that God, He was not to be likened to gold, silver, stone, or an image graven by the art and device of man. Man isn't; neither is He of whom man is the ***“offspring.”***

Paul then told them that the times of such ignorance God had once overlooked, but now He commanded all men that they should repent of such superstition, ignorance, and folly. God will hold man accountable because

***“He has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He has ordained and has given assurance to all men of the certainty of all this in that he hath raised that Man from the dead” (Acts 17:24-31).***

Most of the learned men scoffed at Paul’s assurance that there will be a resurrection from the dead. I suspect that were there men to speak truthfully today on the same subject, the majority of them would also deny that a resurrection will occur. But a majority proves nothing.

Like the Athenians, let us be reminded that God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world by Jesus. The Athenians will all be there. I will be there. You will be there. Books will be opened and the Athenians, I, and you will be judged according to the things written in that Book. The God that so few people recognize and bow before will pass His unalterable sentence on each of us according to our deeds. What will your sentence be? ■

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## **Top Ten Things You Never Hear in Church...**

By unknown author

10. Hey! It’s my turn to sit in the front pew.
9. I was so enthralled I never noticed your sermon went 25 minutes over time.
8. Personally, I find teaching others about Christ much more enjoyable than golf.
7. I’ve decided to contribute the \$500 a month I used to spend on my hobbies.
6. I volunteer to be the permanent teacher for the Junior High Bible class.
5. Forget the minimum salary, let’s pay our preacher so he can live like we do.
4. I love it when we sing hymns I’ve never heard before!
3. Since we’re all here, let’s start the service early.
2. Preacher, we’d like to send you to this lectureship in Hawaii.
1. Nothing inspires me and strengthens my commitment like good old-fashioned sermon on giving! ■

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## **Do You Know Everything?**

By James Hahn

This is a question I am often asked when I raise questions concerning some doctrine or practice. The implication of this question is that one must know everything to be certain about anything.

Each time I hear this view expressed I think of the story of the blind man healed by Jesus. The story is recorded in the ninth chapter of the book of John. The Jews were intent upon condemning Jesus and did all they could to discredit the miracle performed by Jesus. Seeing the blind man now able to see they first questioned as to whether he was the same man. After his parents confirmed his identity and the fact that he was born blind they again question the man and tried to pressure him by saying, ***“Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner”*** (John 9:24). The man replied, ***“Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see”*** (John 9:25). ■

**Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM**

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