

Getting to Know the Unknown God, Part 2

Scripture: Acts 17:25-29

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Now, we are studying in the seventeenth chapter of Acts the familiar portion of the life of Paul, the days that he spent in the city of Athens on his second missionary journey. We're progressing through the Book of Acts in our study. And finding ourselves in seventeen, we find ourselves with Paul alone in Athens. And when he comes to Athens, he is overwhelmed by the idolatry of the city. They worshipped thousands upon thousands of gods. Their artwork is all a matter of their religion. In other words, the gods are the great masterpieces of art. And so, we see a city that is tremendously cultured, but at the same time, greatly idolatrous.

Now, when we think about the word idolatry, I don't know what it conjures up in your mind, but if you're like most people, you think idolatry and immediately you think of a whole lot of savages groveling in some dirt in front of a totem pole or maybe, you think about a cruel faced statue that you saw in a picture of a Hindu temple. Or maybe, you think of whirling dances by the priests of Baal as they skittered around the altar of Elijah. I don't know.

But if you're like most people, idolatry is sort of a

remote, low culture kind of thing. But I think that's wrong. I think that in the terms of the Greek idolatry of the city of Athens, at this time, it was this tremendously sophisticated and cultured society. They were the philosophical and the intellectual class of the world. They were the philosophers. They were the educated people. They were the people who studied. They were way ahead of a lot of other of the people in that part of the world or for that matter in any part of the world. And so, idolatry for them wasn't groveling in the dirt before a totem pole. It was a very classy, a very sophisticated and a very complicated and complex kind of thing. All in the framework of various astute "philosophy".

And I think we have to recognize today that even in America, as in all parts of the world, we are victims of idolatry. In the truest sense, nobody really chooses whether to worship a god or not. You only choose which god you are going to worship. Everybody bows down somewhere. You say, what about the atheist. He bows down to himself, which is the most extreme kind of idolatry, the worship of self. Which is also the most hopeless kind. Incidentally, if you had to look to yourself for the salvation of your soul and the answer to your problems, that's a pretty disastrous view.

But everything apart from God is idolatry. And so, idolatry is a part of the western civilization. Billy Graham asked a student at the University of North Carolina if he believed in God, and he said "yes, I have my own private gods". That's a sophisticated young man. And I think we see this all about us. A few years ago, from 25 years on to the present day, we might say that the dominant idolatry of our country, and of western civilization, was we were three little deities. We still bow down to those deities. One was humanism. That man can solve his own problems. You know, this is the time when science was exploding and we were really being able to conquer all of these problems. That we were going to solve it. We were running a little thin on humanism about now.

The second little deity that everybody worshipped was materialism. And I think that the panic of the energy crisis and the panic of a lot of these things that are going on is the panic that somebody is whittling away our little god called materialism. And we're not going to be able to get all the goodies we want. And life may reduce itself down to the very dull, boring basics. And we won't be able to entertain ourselves. We're a multitude of thieves. And so, little by little somebody is whacking away at, at least a few of our little gods, humanism and materialism.

The third little god that our society worships is sex. I mean, everything from advertising to zoos is propagated through sex. It doesn't matter what it is. Whether it's cars or deodorant or toothpaste or whatever it is. It all comes the same avenue and, of course, films and books now bear your language. Like Billy Graham said "they rival the drippings of a broken sewer." And it's true. We are living in a world where we have our little gods. And then the little god that dominates everything is self. You know, we have "in God we trust" on our coins and "me first" engraved in our hearts. And that's pretty much our little god. And it's interesting to me, I think, that in the time in which we live now, with this kind of a supernaturalism creeping into our society, we've now gone backwards in terms of culture and people are beginning to go to the old things, like they are actually worshipping superstition and the occult and all this. And some people even have physical idols that they worship now. In our society, we're getting back to that.

Western man with all of his culture, with all of his information, with all of his scientific knowledge is in the same satanic trap that governs the life of an aboriginal individual somewhere in the middle of nowhere who's bowing down to a rock. We all have our gods, you see. Everybody bows somewhere. Idolatry is just that. Watch it. Idolatry is worshipping anything but God Himself. That's idolatry. And it comes in all kinds of packages. But you know, the thing about it that is continually brought to light, I think, is the fact that with all of man's little gods and all of his little deities, he never gets any satisfaction. And the reason is this. God has created you and me and every man to know Him. Do you believe that? Of course. That's clear in Scripture. We are made to know God. Not to know God is not to know what you are made for. It's not to know what the meaning of existence is. It's to be totally dis-connected from purpose and significance. And you may try a lot of none gods and you may try to have your little deities and you may bow down, but there never will be any ultimate satisfaction.

Because as Augustine said "you've got a God-shaped vacuum that only He can fill". And a zillion other little deals don't bring satisfaction.

And so we are a world today where all these little gods have failed to satisfy. And so it's a tremendously frustrated world. And of course people are taking drugs and they are getting stoned on alcohol and they're killing themselves at a rate like never in history, and the reason is because they cannot cope with the fact that they can have a multiple of things if they bow down before and no satisfaction. Now, this is precisely the problem in Athens as we look at seventeen. They had all the gods imaginable. Gods all over the place. But in desperation, they had, in verse 23, an altar to the unknown god. And I told you the significance of that is this. With all their gods they had no satisfaction so they knew somewhere out there there's a god we haven't tapped yet who's going to satisfy us. And that, of course, is the ultimate agony of idolatry it never gives satisfaction. Why? Because man was created to know the true God and until he knows the true God, he knows no peace. He knows no satisfaction in the truest sense. And you go back into the Garden, you know, and Adam and Eve were there and God was there and they were having a great time. And they knew God and all was bliss and beautiful. And then they fell and bang. God cut off Himself from them. And they lost the knowledge of God. And since that time men have been born into the world apart from the knowledge of God. And men come into this world and they don't know God. But it's interesting. God has a little two-pronged socket that He plugs in. And every man is plugged into that little two-pronged socket. It may be only about a 5 watt bulb, but anyway, there is a dim light. And the two prongs are creation and conscious, right? In other words, even in a world where the lights are out, in terms of the true knowledge of God, there's at least a little 5 watt glowing and it's conscious and creation. In other words, God has planted within me the knowledge of Himself in my conscious and around me as I look at the world that He has made. And by those two things, I am both surrounded and indwelt by a limited knowledge of God.

Now, some people because they love sin so much have pulled that plug. And then the 5 watts have gone out and they're in blackness. And the Bible says "they love their darkness rather than light" for the simple reason, not that they're philosophical but that they are sinful. They love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. And so, God has put in this world the knowledge of Himself dimly in conscious and creation. And if a man will take that light and follow it, he can know the full light of God.

Now, if you were to ask me, "John MacArthur, I want to know what Grace Community Church exists for", I would tell you, "It exists so that you might know God." That's why we exist. Because that is the purpose for existence. There is no other purpose. For you to live your life apart from the knowledge of God is for you to be a worthless individual.

Okay, what else do you do? You say, well, what if I help my fellow man? That's fine. You're going to die and so is your fellow man. And if all you've done is given him some physical help, you've just

prolonged his death. That isn't consequential ultimately. Oh, it's consequential in terms of momentary comfort, but it's inconsequential in terms of eternal value. A person who doesn't know God has no reason to exist. Because you were made to know Him. You were made for Him as well as by Him. And your purpose is to know God and to spend eternity basking in the blessing of such knowledge.

Now, in Jeremiah, and I'm going to spend some time in some Scriptures, so you are going to need to keep your Bible handy. But in Jeremiah 9:23 "Thus saith the Lord, 'Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; for the one that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me that I am the Lord.'" Now, in this life you might be smart and you might be strong and you might be rich, but you are nothing unless you know God. That's what He said. That is the meaning of existence. That is the purpose of life. God made us for fellowship with Him. That we might know Him. And I'm telling you, when you come into the knowledge of God, all of a sudden the whole key to the universe is un-locked. You know what you're for.

And so, the purpose of man is to know God. That's simply it. Now, God doesn't even want your worship and your religion. He wants you to know Him. You remember in Hosea He said, "I'm not interested in your sacrifices. I want you to know Me." And there's all kinds of religion going on and people who are talking about God but they don't know God. It's one thing to know about God. It's another thing to know God. You see. It's like if it's one thing to know about holiness. It's another thing to be holy. Now, God doesn't tolerate any rivals because the single purpose of man is to know Him. Therefore, any rival violates man's purpose. And listen, beloved. It's not that God is some kind of nasty ogre. It's that God knows what you were made for and He knows that you will never be satisfied until you come to that knowledge. And so God gets really uptight when other gods are introduced that suck men off from their true purpose. And that's why in Exodus 20:3 God said, this is in the Ten Commandments, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." Why? Is that just because God is selfish? No. That isn't the main point. The main point is it is a violation of His creation. You shouldn't be sucked off to worship anything but the true God. Verse 4. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any carved image or any likeness of any-thing that is in heaven above, that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God." Did you get that? "I am a jealous God." God says I tolerate no rivals. You were made to know Me. You are Mine. I made you for that purpose. I tolerate no intruders.

Now, I just want to give you an idea. You say, well, I know a lot of nice people and they don't know God, but they're such nice people. Well, I know a lot of nice people like that, too. But, you know, they're nice people who haven't got any reason to live. Absolutely none. Listen to this. It's just a very provocative verse. I Samuel 2:12. And you've probably never even read it before. But listen to it. It says this: "Now the sons of Eli were worthless men." Now, let's try to get over the hump of the inadequacies of English, because we've overdone it. When you see the word worthless, what does that mean? Just that. They're no good for any purpose. They're strictly useless. The sons of Eli, Eli

was a nice guy, a lousy father. You can read about that. But "the sons of Eli were worthless men." Now, would you like to be a worthless individual? I mean, would you like to say as you come to the end of your life and God writes your epitaph "Here lies worthless. Here lies no value. Here lies pointless." Jesus said of Judas, "Better for him if he had never been" what? "Born." Better if he had never been born.

Okay, what is that worthless, how does a man become worthless? Now, the sons of Eli were worthless men. Listen. They knew not the Lord. Do you know why they were worthless? Why? They knew not the Lord. For a man to exist apart from the knowledge of God is for that man to render himself worthless. Why? Because you were created to know God.

In I Corinthians 15:34 Paul says, "Some of you know not God and I speak it to your shame." Now, God is a jealous God. And, you know, some people say "oh, God is some kind of, how could you say God is jealous? That's a negative factor. That means God has an evil capacity if He can be jealous." No. Jealousy isn't always evil, is it? But when God brought Israel out of Egypt to Sinai, gave them the laws, already He said I am a jealous God. Later on He made a shocking statement to Moses. He said in 34:14 of Exodus, he said this: "The Lord" what? "Whose name is jealous is a jealous God." I mean, He even said not only am I jealous, that's My name. Boy, I mean, that's heavy. You know, they used to name people commensurate with the kind of person they were. God says My name is jealous.

You say, God, what are You so uptight about? I mean, there aren't any rivals. Oh, yes, there are. There aren't any rivals who are true rivals, but there sure are a lot of little nothings picking away. God's in effect saying this. "Watch. I made men. Every man that ever was made, I formed him from the womb. Is what He said. I made him. Don't you believe it all happened in an evolutionary process. God made men and He says, I made them and they are Mine. And anybody who takes them apart from the knowledge of Me is an intruder. And God has a right to be jealous.

Now, there's two kinds of jealousy. One kind of jealousy is this kind. I want what you have and because you have an idol, I hate you. Right? That's covetousness gone wild. But there's another kind of jealousy. That kind of jealousy says you are mine and I love you and I don't want anybody to take you from me. Now, that is what I call pure virtue.

Tasker said, and I quote, "Married persons who felt no jealousy at the intrusion of a lover or an adulterer into their home would surely be lacking in moral perception. For the exclusiveness of marriage is the essence of marriage." God has made us for Himself and God gets very, very upset about intruders into His area. In fact, if you're going to read a verse that probably says it as heavily as any it's I. Corinthians 10:22. "Are you going to provoke the Lord to jealousy", it's a question. Do you provoke the Lord to jealousy or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? If you do, then listen to this. "Are we stronger than He?" What does that imply? That implies if you provoke the Lord to jealousy, He's going to do something. And you better be stronger than He is or you're going to get it. God is very,

very possessive about His own. And He has created man in His own image. And man cannot know his meaning until he knows God. And any kind of idolatry, you see, sidetracks from that. Ezekiel I think it's chapter 8 and verse 3, it says there that there is a particular image and it calls this image the image of jealousy which provokes jealousy. Idols make God jealous. And when God gets jealous, that's not good, because God will move to protect His own and He will move vengeance upon the intruder.

So, you see, basic to the life of any man is the knowl-edge of God. And incidentally, in II Thessalonians 1:7, 8, it says that Jesus will return from heaven in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God. So ultimately it's a disaster not to know God. It's not just a question of dying a worthless life, it's a question of spending eternity in hell. To know not God.

Now, you say, well, John, can everybody know God. Yes. Because everybody's got that little 5 watt plugged in with a two-prong conscious and creation, so much so Romans 1 says that there's enough knowledge of God available in you and around you so that you are without excuse. Romans 1:20. Remember that verse? No man is excusable. God has plugged that little light in in every man's life; the knowledge of God is available. And some people choose to see the little light follow the little light and they know God. And they meet Him fully. Now, getting to know God is so important that Paul says now I know you guys have an unknown god and you haven't plugged into Him yet. You've got the little light glower. At least you've got the idea that He's there. Verse 22. Paul stood in the mists of Mars' hill, Areopagus. This is the name of a court. These were the really sharp guys. These were the best of the Athenian society, the court that stood in judgment on many matters. And he said, "You, men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious." You guys are a religious bunch, and that's obvious. You've got stuff everywhere. "For as I passed by as you had your devotions, I found an altar of this inscription to the unknown god." And this is really a shot. You are very religious and I found that among the things you worship is an unknown god, whom therefore you ignorantly worship. If He's unknown and you're worshipping him in ignorance, I would like to declare him unto you. Now, there's his platform. I'm going to tell you who the unknown god is. So, we call this sermon "Getting to know the unknown God".

Now, isn't it again interesting that all of this time with all of these gods there was no satisfaction. There's a verse I love. And I can't even remember the reference off hand. I just know that it says "Happy is the people whose God is the Lord." "Happy is the people whose God is the Lord." You see when your God is the true God, you're happy. There's satisfaction. Apart from that, no satisfac-tion. And it doesn't matter what the circumstances are. To really know God is what life is about. And then circum-stances may come and go. The knowledge of God abides. I always think of those three guys that I like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. And you know, back in the book of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar, who thought himself to be some kind of a hot shot, demanded everybody worship him. And they had this idol built, this big image, and so forth. And everybody's supposed to bow down. So he comes to these three guys, Daniel's three friends, and he says in verse 15, "Now if you

be ready, that at that time that you hear the sound of the horn, the pipe, the lyre, the sackbut, the psaltery, and dulcimer," that's a little combo they used to have in those days, "and all kinds of music to fall down and worship the image which I have made." Okay, in other words when you hear the music, you fall on your worship, okay. If you worship not, you shall be cast the same hour to the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And then he says this, "And who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hand." Boy, did he have an exulted opinion of himself. Ha, do you think that your God is going to get you out of my hand. Listen to this. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we're not careful to answer thee in this matter." In other words, sir, we don't mind just telling the truth. What? "If it be so", if we get thrown in there, "our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the fiery furnace." Now, he didn't say "our God will deliver us", he said our God what? Is able to deliver us. He left the prerogative with God. He's able to deliver us. And He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king, if He so chooses. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we still will not serve thy gods nor worship the golden image which thou set up. Boy, that's terrific, isn't it? Look, if we're going in there, our God may deliver us, but if not, we still won't bow. Why? They knew they had the right God. They feared nothing. Now, that's the confidence, the satisfaction and the blessedness that comes to the life of one who knows the Lord. And no substitute can bring that.

Someone wrote "Lord, it belongs not to my care whether die or live. To love and serve Thee is my share and this my grace must give. If life be long, I will be glad that I may long obey. If short, then why should I be sad, the sword to endless day." That's confidence in the right God. Now, Paul is going to present how they can know God. Now, there's three things involved. We started on these last time. We're not going to get much further than where we started. But anyway, one, is recognize God is. Two, recognize who God is. Three, recognize what God is saying. In order to know God, you've got to start with number one, recognize God is. At the very beginning a person must recognize God is. And isn't it good that they did. They actually had an altar to the unknown God. They didn't know who He is and they didn't know what He was saying. But they at least believed He was there. God is. Hebrews 11:6. What did we say it was last week? "Him that cometh to God must believe that He is." The fool is the guy who denies God is. And there are always people who deny God. They, some of them are atheists. The atheist denies God. That is such a ridiculous position. Atheism. I mean, to me it's like a cactus sitting in the desert telling another cactus that there is no ocean. What does he know? You know. He looks around and he sees the sand and he figures that's the way all is. It's the atheist who stands and says there is no God. You see, he stands on one infinitesimal peanut point in the midst of an endless universe. It doesn't make sense. But there are those who come to that conclusion that there is no God. And it's an accommodation for their sin. They like to do what they want to do and they don't want to live with the prospect of judgment so you get rid of God, you get rid of the potential of judgment, you can live easier. And secondly, there's agnosticism. And agnosticism is the guy who doesn't know, but it's usually not I can't believe, it's I won't believe. He just doesn't want to believe there is a God. Then, there's evolution. And evolution is somebody who thinks oh, there may be some God, maybe some cosmic intelligence, etc. etc., but the whole thing is God has never manifested Himself. Everything is an accident.

Then, there is the polytheist. The polytheist says there are many gods, all over. And that's what's being propagated in America today. It's so vast it's unbelievable. The spirit beings. The demons are propagating stuff that you can't even believe. Listen, I have been reading some books in the last few days that have spun my head around and around. It's amazing. You know, that all the spirits, the books about the spirit world not written by Christians but written by demons, you know, dictated by demons, and it tells about all the hierarchy of the many gods and the prince of Venus and this ruler over here and this ruler over here. And, you know, they've got a whole strategy. They've got even this one thing illustrates they've got a strategy for the rapture, about what they're going to say when the rapture happens. We've often wondered what's Satan going to do when the rapture goes on are people going to immediately believe. The world is going to get dominated and it's fast getting dominated by this whole meditation bit. Right? The Eastern religion. And they're trying to get everybody to get to a higher level of consciousness. Raise everybody out of the third dimension to the higher level of consciousness. Meditate. Transcend. Transcend. Transcendental meditation. Get out of this thing. And when the rapture happens, the announcement by all the demons is going to be well, these people were holding back the whole world from transcending and so we eliminated them. Now, think about that's pretty smart. Pretty smart. Because you see, you've already got the whole world to believe that meditation is where it's at and Christians are the hang-up, and so, we just got rid of them. And then they're going to rule in the tribulation. And, boy, the world's going to be ready to buy that whole bag aren't they? And so, you see, course there are there are many gods everywhere spirit, and you're a god and everybody's a god. A guy was in my house the other night and he told me that he went to one of these, one of these meditation teachers. That after several lessons why she told him "you are Jesus Christ". And he said, "I'm not". And now he's a Christian. He said, "I knew one thing. I knew I wasn't Jesus Christ."

So polytheism is being propagated tremendously today and this is a position that, you see, there's no god. There's just gods all over everywhere. And then there's one called pantheism. Pantheism is a different kind of atheism. Instead of saying there is no God, it says everything is God and that's just like there is not God. If everything is God, then God isn't anything. Another view that's kind of atheistic is deism. You know what deism is? That's the view that God there is a God somewhere and He wound up the world, made it. It was kind of a little fun thing for Him. So He made it wound it up and He went away and let it run down. And He's totally uninvolved. All those are forms of the denial of the true God. To begin to come to God you must believe that God is, and that God is knowable. You see? That God is and that He is knowable. You see, well, John, what's the evidence for that? Well, I told you conscious. That's written in your mind. A man who becomes an atheist or denies God has to reason against his own nature. Not only there, it's in creation. You look around and the Psalmist said "the heavens declare" what? "The glory of God."

Oh, listen, you could look, you could get your science book out and you read about the macrocosm, the unbelievable intricacy of space and the stars. And, you know, I could talk for an hour just on

science and its phenomenon, and that's what people always say when they don't know anything right off the top of his a . . . but anyway. But there's so much material available just in the span of your mind to understand the fantastic intricacies of space. And to say that it all just happened, it just hap, it just doesn't happen that way. So there's science, I mean, so there's conscious and so there's creation that are testimony to God. But let me just say this. That's fine, but I think the greatest testimony to God is right here in this Book. I think this is the testimony to God. And the Bible in Deuteronomy 6:4 stated it. "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord." That's it. There's no other. That's all. God is God. There is no other beside Him. Now there are many Scriptures on this and I want to take a minute to show them to you because this is the heart of Christianity. Listen. Deuteronomy 4:35. "Unto thee it

was shown that thou mightest know that the Lord He is God;" listen, "there is none else beside Him." Don't you like that? There is none beside Him. He is God. Now, Isaiah has some of the greatest statements regarding God's character and nature in the 40th chapter and following chapters. But in chapter 42, verse 8, listen. "I am the Lord: that is My name." Boy, do I like that. That's authoritative kind of thing. "And My glory will I not give to another, neither My praise to carved images." That's all in relation to idols. He alone is God.

Listen to 44:6, Isaiah 44:6. "Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and His Redeemer the Lord of hosts." Two persons of the Trinity joining together, you hear. "I am the first, and I am the last; and apart from me there is no God." Do you get that? Boy, that is powerful. There is no God. And hear verse 8. "Fear not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? Ye are even my witnesses." Listen. "Is there a God beside Me? Yea, there is no God; I know not any." And believe me, if God doesn't know of any, there aren't any. Now, some people don't realize that there's only one God. Boy, there's all kinds of people caught up in the occult. They think there's all kinds of gods. All kinds of spirit beings. And they're right, but they're not gods, they're demons. Believe me, there are all kinds of gods, Some people just don't understand. I Corinthians 8:6, Paul says, "To us there is but one God the Father." That's all just one God. "From whom are all things, and we in Him, and there is one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom all things, and we by Him. However, there is not in every man that knowledge." You see. Now, every-body knows that. But you can't even begin to come to God until you believe He is. That's the start there and if you want to know get into this Book and you'll see that He is.

Illustration that I think is just powerful. Mark 12:28. "And one of the scribes came and having heard them reasoning together [that is Jesus and the Sadducees], he perceived and he answered them, Woo." He was, he was really amazed at Jesus' answers to the Sadducees. They were giving Him all that stuff about whose wife and all that would she be in heaven. And he said to the scribes and the Sadducees, "Which is the first commandment of all? Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, with all thy strength, this is the first

commandment." When you knock that one of you can go on to number two. Right? "The second is this, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There's no other commandment greater than these.' And the scribes said unto Him, 'Well, Master, Thou hast said the truth.'" Jesus didn't need him to commend Him. Jesus knew He said the truth. But the man recognized Him. He said, "For there is one God and there is no other but He." Now, here was a man who believed the testimony of the Old Testament described. You're right, he said to Jesus. There is only one God. And you're right again. Verse 33. You love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself. This is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

Now, watch this. -When Jesus saw that he answered so discretely, so intelligently, He said unto him, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." Now, wait a minute. Stop right there. You say, what does He mean "you're not far from the kingdom of God", because he's only taken step one. Go to verse 32. Back up. "Well, Master, Thou hast said the truth for there is one God. There is no other than He." Now, that is where it began. He was not far from the kingdom of God, because he believed God is. And God alone is God. Right? That's where it starts.

Now, I say to you this morning, "you're not far from the kingdom of God" either, if you believe there is one God. If you believe that God is.

Second thing--in knowing the unknown God, back to Acts 17,

in knowing the unknown God we must believe that God is. Secondly, we must believe who God is. It is not enough to say oh, I believe in God, you know. That's too vague. It's got to be identified. Who is God? Now, verse 24 to 29 gives us this information. Paul then starts on and tells them who God is. Verse 24. Watch. "God who made the world and all things in it." Now, God is first of all creator. We'll give you five of these when we're done. Not all of them today. But five of them beginning with creator. God is creator. He created everything. I get to thinking about God's creative power. I can't handle it. Job 26. This is just absolutely unbelievable. Talking about God as creator. Beginning at verse 5. And he's going to get into God's creative power expressed even in Sheol or in the grave. Verse 5. "Dead things tremble from under the waters." This probably should be tremble rather than are formed. "Sheol is naked before Him and destruction hath no covering." In other words, God's power extends to even Sheol, the place of death, Hades. And His creative powers are ex-pressed in the heavens. Fantastic. "He stretcheth out the heavens [or the north which means the heaven here] over the empty place." In other words, over nothing, over chaos God stretched heaven. Creative power. "And He held up the earth upon nothing." How fantastic! Think about it. Every-thing hangs on something. The earth hangs on nothing, on nothing. There is as much pressure exerted in every direction on the earth as in any direction. It is suspended.

God just somehow said let it be and it all spun out and there it is. He even took chaos or nothingness and swung the heavens over it. He bindeth up the waters in His thick clouds. Now, there's a miracle. That water stays in those clouds. What holds that water there? And the cloud is not torn under them. Amazing. The cloud remains while it is full of water. He holdeth back the face of His throne and spreadeth His cloud upon it. Circular bounds regarding the waters. Verse 10. He has encompassed the water with a boundary until the day and the night come to an end. The horizon, He's talking about. The pillars of heaven tremble, and are at His reproof. He divideth the sea with His power, by His understanding He smiteth through its pride. God controls the sea. By His spirit He garnished the heavens. His hand hath formed a crooked serpent. This probably refers to the course of the stars. Lo, these are parts of His ways, but how little a portion is heard than the thunder of His power, who can understand. When you are studying about creation, I know, of course, there's no way to think of it but just imagine. Now watch this one. Just get this in your head. God can easier create a universe than you can think a thought. Got that? God can easier create a universe than you can think a thought. Whoo--fantastic. He is so powerful. You imagine. First of all, He created everything out of nothing. Do you want to hear what's amazing? He did it without any advice. And He did it without any assistance. Isaiah 44:24. You ought to read through Isaiah 40 to 48 or so and get that information about God there. But 44:24, "Thus saith the Lord the Redeemer and He formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord who maketh all things, who stretcheth forth the heavens alone, who spreadeth abroad the earth by Myself." Don't you like that? I was reading this book written by these demons and they were claiming to be the creators. God did it alone. They didn't create anything. He didn't have any engine but His Word. He didn't have any pattern but His mind. And He could have easily created a world easier created a world than you could think a thought. He created the universe by projecting His own thought into existence. And this is in Jeremiah. Jeremiah 32:17. This is how the verse starts out. "Ah, Lord God! Behold, Thou hath made the heaven and the earth by Thy great power and outstretched arm and there is nothing too hard for Thee." God made everything. He made it out of nothing.

The second thing that's fantastic about His creative power and that is that He made it by a word. For example, "and God said let there be light". And what? There was light. Ho ho, that's something. I don't know how you handle that. Have you ever read Romans 4:17? It says this. Don't look it up. It says this. Just listen. "He calleth those things which are not as if they were." Whoo--calls and they're in existence. Exist. Psalm 33:6. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made and all the hosts of them by the breath of His mouth." One day He stood in the middle of nothing and said, "heavens". Pppkkk! There they were. Psalm 148:5 says "for He commanded and they were created". Not only the things that exist obey Him, the things that don't do. And you know what's so in-teresting about it? You know, if you and I are at a you know, we put in a good days work and we're pooped. God never gets tired. He never gets, you know, you say where do you get that, John? Isaiah 40:28. "The God, the Lord Creator of the ends of the earth faints not neither is weary." You know, He did the whole thing and never diminished His energy one bit. You, you, you say, well the Lord must be weary of all . . . The Lord doesn't get weary. He is abso-lute energy that has no capacity to dissipate. And He's just as active now upholding what He made. That's the second point. He's not only Creator; He's ruler.

That's point two in verse 24. He is Lord of heaven and earth. He holds it all together. Remember Hebrews 1. "He upholds all things by the word of His power." It's His power that made it. It's His power that hangs it together. The earth is the Lord's, don't forget it. Psalm 24:1. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." And everybody who dwells on it. And so He holds it in that tremendous power. Well, His power is unbelievable. We could talk about a lot of different verses. But let me just give you a couple of insights. Isaiah 40 talks about His upholding power. He is the God who holds it together. And I'll tell you, you know, all the little nations that think they run the world. Listen to this. Isaiah 40:12. Think about God in terms of these. "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and measured out order with a span, and measured the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?" Oh, God has everything ordered and set in right perspective and balance. And then I like 13. "Who all directed the spirit of the Lord or being His counselor taught Him?" What school did God go to? "With whom took He counsel?" Who instructed Him and taught Him in the path of justice and taught Him knowledge and showed Him the way of understanding? Nobody. "Behold, the nations are like a drop of a bucket and are counted as the small dust of the balance. Behold, He taketh up the coast [is a very little thing] and Lebanon is not sufficient to burn." In other words, most real big strong nations aren't even good for kindling to start a sacrifice. They're nothing. Verse 13. "All nations before Him are as nothing." They are counted less than nothing. That's not much. Nothing is not much. Less than nothing is not much at all. And they are counted vanity. The point being this. When you start comparing things with God, you come out with less than nothing. He's ruling the universe. It's His. In verse 22. Here's a beautiful thought. It is He who sits on the circle of the earth. Oh, man, is that a fantastic statement. That's the Hebrew word clue. Do you know what that word means? Sphere. Did you know that Isaiah knew that the Earth was a sphere when people thought it was flat? Hundreds of years before they did. Boy, you better watch and read your Bible. It's right on. "The inhabitants they are like grasshoppers. He stretcheth out the heavens like a curtain, spreads it out like a tent to dwell in it." God runs the universe. He brings the princes to nothing. He takes the best of world's judges and their vanity. Verse 25. "To whom then will ye liken Me or shall I be equal saith the Holy One?" You going to start comparing Me with anything? "Lift up your eyes on high and behold who hath created these things." Down to verse 28. "Hath thou not known. Hath thou not heard that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not neither is weary. There is no searching of His understanding." There He is. He not only made it; He holds it together.

You know, it's fantastic to see Him in action. You know, we send off our little men in these tin cans and fly them around in space for all these days and then we shoot them back and they land where we expect. Why? Because the universe is constant. And the laws, can you imagine if all the laws were just diminishing, if the world was decaying and somebody wasn't holding it together and then just a fraction of an inch, or whatever, a small minute point was just reducing all the time, we couldn't calculate anything. Everything is held together. Everything is consistent. That's God.

Well, you know, that kind of a God, just, you know, you just can't go bow down to a little rock and worship Him. Verse 24. "He dwelleth not in temples made with hands." That kind of God is way too big. Solomon built the temple in I Kings 8:27, and he says God, I've got a problem. You'll never fit in my temple. And he was right. He was so right. God couldn't get in his temple. Far too infinite. Ha. God said, "My throne is heaven and earth is My footstool."

Third thing. God is giver. This is fabulous. God is giver. Not only Creator and the one who upholds or rules, but giver. Look at verse 25. This is so good. "Neither is worship with men's hands" as though He needed anything. Isn't that terrific? Well, I'm doing this because God needs it. Wait a minute. He's the one who gives to all life and breath and all things. We talk a lot about how much God needs us. I'm not sure that's Biblical. In a sense it is. It's alright to say that God needs us to be faithful to the call He has called us to. But in terms of Him being dependent on us for something He doesn't have--no. You know.

Job 22:2 says, "Can a man be profitable unto God?" We think God's going to benefit by you. God can't benefit. He has no capacity. He's as good as He could possibly be. He can't get any better. And the pagans, you know, they didn't see this. They were always bringing food and putting it down and were thinking that gods would consume it. The Hindus still do that today. They think that gods consume the food. They really don't know what those guys in the back room, you know. There's always been that kind of thing. Serving the gods and enhancing the gods and all this kind of thing. God says I don't need your, I don't you piddling around with little shrines. I don't need your fancied up diddly stuff. I don't need your routines. I'm the one who gives you everything. I don't need anything out of you.

One Psalm I just love. Listen to this. Just listen to it. Don't try to turn to it. I won't tell you where it is until I'm done. Listen. "I will take no bullock out of thy house nor he-goats out of thy folds." Do you know why? They thought they were doing God a favor. Well, let's go give God a few animals. God will like that if we do that. He says I'll take no bullocks out of your house, no he-goats out of your folds, for every beast of the forest is Mine and the cattle on a thousand hills." Do you think I need yours? Guess again. I know all the fowls of the mountains and the wild beasts of the field are Mine. Now, listen. If I were hungry, I won't tell you. The world is Mine and the fullness thereof. Do you think God needs you to bring a little offering of porridge and put it before some altar. I know, He'd never need that. God says if I get hungry, I can handle it. That's Psalm 50:9-12. The point He's making here is, you see, He's shooting down their idolatry. Isn't He? He's just knocking the props out of their whole system. In effect, you see, He's saying God does not need you to do all this little routine. You need God, because it is God, watch it in verse 25, who gives to all life and breath and all things. Those three things are important. Life, that's being born. God is the one who brought you into the world. Breath, that's the sustaining of your life. And all things, that's every-thing that comes to you while you live. Everything is of God.

Psalm 104. The psalmist says if you get food, you got it from God. If you don't get food, that's 'cause God didn't give it to you. Everything. Everything is from God. God is the giver. He doesn't need us to give to Him. I like Romans 11:36. "For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things to Him the glory forever. Amen." He is the giver of everything. James said "every good and perfect gift cometh down from the Father above." He is the one, the Father of lights, in whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turn. Listen to I Timothy 6:17. "Charge them that are rich in this age that they be not high-minded." You know, the rich would say, well, I have a lot of, lot of this and that and I am very wealthy. Tell them not to trust in his uncertain riches but better trust in the living God who giveth as richly in all things to enjoy. Whatever he's got, he got it from God.

You say, you mean God actually gives things to un-believers? Yes, God makes the rain to fall on the just and what? And the unjust. Whatever you have, it came from God. You need to recognize that it did. So God is Creator, ruler, giver.

Lastly, for this morning, He is controller. This is a fantastic thought. Verse 26. We'll stop with this verse. "He hath made of one blood all nations." Now, that alone would have been a shoot to those Athenians. They believed the world was made up of two kinds of people, the Greeks and the what? The barbarians. And they were the Greeks and everybody else was the barbarian. And they prided themselves; we have sprung from the native soul of Arctics. You know, they were really the, they were the international hot-shots. They were the, they were the super race. And so he says, "God hath made of one blood all nations and men to dwell off the face of the earth." Every nation is God's ordaining. And God even determined the times before and the bounds of their habitation. What does that mean? That means that God is controlling history and destiny of men and nation. I'm telling you, beloved, you couldn't live in this (lay and see what God is doing in Israel and Russia and Egypt and the Common Market and all of these things without believing God is controlling history, could you? History is His story. He is in control. Now, when it says the appointed time, it refers to the seasonal times as well as historical times. God has appointed the times of winter and summer and all of that as well as the his-torical times when certain nations exist. And then it says "the bounds of their habitation". That's continental. In other words, God set a certain kingdom in a certain location. And it's also empirical. How far they reach cut in conquering others. And so God is controller. Well, this is some God. History is on schedule and God is running it. And it's going to culminate in the coming of Jesus Christ.

The fifth thing, God is revealer. And we'll take that next week. I'll tell you, when I start to think about God, I can't handle it. But then you know, I always get this second thought. I think about God and I go further and further and further and think about God and then I stop somewhere out in there and I always come back and say to myself, but the thing that amazes me most is that He lives in me. That I actually know God. You say, John, how do you get to know God? Jesus said "no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." There's no knowledge of God apart from Jesus Christ. He is the one who

introduces you to God. You can know God. I trust and pray no one will go from this place not knowing God. Let's pray.

Father, we're thankful this morning that You're knowable. Beyond that we don't have to search for You. You came searching for us. It's not a question of whether we can find You or not. It's a question of whether we respond when You find us. Father, I pray that each of us this morning who does know You would be more able to give You Praise because of our study today. And Lord, for those who may not know You, that this might be that day when they come to know You, when they come to know the eternal life that Jesus gives. And this is life eternal that we may know You the only true God. May it be so, Father. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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