

## **The Apostle's Creed I Believe in God**

**Acts 17:22-28**

**By [Dr. Derek Thomas](#)**

Turn with me not to Acts 17, and we will begin reading in verse 22. Let's hear the word of God.

So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "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. "(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, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.'"

*Let's pray together. Our Father in heaven, we ask now for Your blessing, conscious that without You we can do nothing. For Jesus' sake, Amen.*

We continue this morning a series on the Apostles' Creed. I've been tempted all week to say, "I believe in God and move on." It's a little strange, isn't it? At First Presbyterian Church we are a Bible-believing church. We believe the Bible to be the inspired, inerrant, word of God; it's fundamental, it's Christianity 101. We believe in God.

Of course ,you want to know the next question because it's more interesting: "What kind of God do you believe in?" and you're going to have to wait until next week for that.

This morning I want us to take some clues from Acts 17, and also from something Paul says in the first chapter of Romans when he addresses this very issue. Paul has been pilloried, hounded and troubled everywhere he's been. His friends think he needs a cruise. You can identify with that. They take him on a

300-kilometer journey to one of the greatest cities of the ancient world—Athens. What does he find in Athens? Well, not atheism. He finds the opposite; he finds gods on every street corner and he even finds an altar to the unknown god—just in case.

What Paul does when he preaches to the Athenians, and it's a similar thing that he says to the Romans in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans, is to say that God has surrounded you and invaded you with His revelation. Do you see what he is not doing in this sermon? He doesn't try to prove the existence of God. In fact, Paul jumps in and talks about God, creation, accountability, resurrection, and the day of judgment. In fact what Paul says to these Athenians is that all of your religions are evidence enough of the existence of God because you've taken the revelation of God and you've screwed it up. And because of your sinful hearts, you've made idols that you fall down and worship.

Let me take you to two statements that Paul makes in Romans 1:19 & 20. In verse 19 Paul says, "What can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them." And the next verse goes on to say that "the invisible attributes—namely, His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly perceived." Do you see what Paul is saying? There is clear revelation of the being and existence of God. It's like radiation that comes from outer space, you know, that everybody is talking about because of the greenhouse gases. You may not understand the physics but you understand that there is radiation coming twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week; it never stops. And the revelation of God is like that. Paul says what can be known is more than just vagueness, to be sure, because there is more to God than He has revealed. You understand that. But what He has revealed is clear, plain and substantial—His eternal power and deity. That's a lot of revelation. It's objective, it's received and it's also understood. It's objective. The revelation of God is objective; it's what Francis Schaeffer calls *true truth*—it's true whether you believe it or not.

You see, God exists whether you believe it or not because God doesn't believe in Atheists. Don't you love that title? It's a title of a book by John Blanchard *God Doesn't Believe in Atheists*. Don't you love that? Because He reveals Himself to them and that revelation of Him is received and it is also understood. They get it. Men and women actually *get* it. Do you see the point? God doesn't believe in atheists; every person has a sense of God. In fact, there is no one in this world so sinful, so stupefied that somehow somehow that knowledge of God gets eradicated.

Richard Dawkins—you all know Richard Dawkins--the media's *favorite* atheist. If they want to interview somebody with a nice quote, a quip or two, they go to Richard Dawkins. He says that "faith in God is blind trust in the absence of evidence, in the teeth of evidence." Of course the Psalmist knew people like Richard Dawkins, when he said, "The fool says in his heart that there is no God." We could engage now in a Christian diatribe about apologetics and about the

existence of God; for your sake and mine, and I don't have time.

Let me just ask this. Why do I believe in God? The answer is very simple. It's not because, thirty years ago at the University, studying physics—it's a past life long since gone—but I remember lectures on the “big bang.” Yes, I ended up asking the obvious question. I didn't ask out loud because I thought it was a dumb question but I did ask the question, “What bang?” If all matter and all existence and everything that is comes from a big bang, well, what banged? What was there before the bang? Are you not allowed to ask that question? Physics, of course, didn't answer that question because it cannot answer that question.

It's not because ripples in radio waves in the far distant regions of the universe somehow or other, scientists now tell us, disproved the existence of God—go figure. It's not even that I was suddenly impressed by the so-called arguments for the existence of God even though some of them have great merit.

I'm always impressed by C.S. Lewis' argument in *Mere Christianity*, that even to argue the case that there is no God you have to assume some standard of reference, of morality, some basis upon which the very statement “God does not exist” makes sense. If everything is nonsense, if everything is chaos, then even the statement that God does not exist doesn't make any sense. That's a powerful argument, but it didn't actually convince me of God's existence.

Are you asking me why I believe in God? It wasn't even the beauty of a sonnet by Shakespeare, or a symphony by Mahler, or a cantata by Bach, or a painting by Titian or Rembrandt. And none of those can be explained to me as just a product of chance. There is causality and even mathematicians in chaos theory are arguing for some kind of causality, but it wasn't any of that.

You're asking me why I believe in God. I believe in God because of Jesus. I believe in God because 31 years ago I came across the reality of the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth. This person went about saying things like, “Before Abraham was, I am.” This person went about saying, “I am the light of the world.” He said, “I am the bread of life.” He said, “I and my Father are one.” And they got it. Even if people today don't get it, the people who heard Him saying those things got it because they heard Him saying that He was God.

There were two things that spoke to me. One was a little incidental. It was the very first verse in the epistle of James. James, you all know James well; we've been studying his epistle. James, the brother, or technically, the half brother of our Lord. You know James shared the same bedroom as Jesus, and grew up with Him, played with Him, went outside and did all those things that children do outside. Yes, Jesus did some of those things I'm sure. But when James writes his epistle, do you know what his opening sentence is? He says, “James a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.” And the grammar seems to be that he is saying “God and the Lord Jesus Christ are one and the same being.” I don't know

about your brothers or siblings, but they don't say those things about me. But James told the whole world that his brother, *his brother*, was none other than God Himself.

And then there was the resurrection. What do you do with the resurrection? You know that there is more evidence for a factual, physical resurrection than there is for all the gookey things that people believe in today. All of you lawyers do a case study on the evidence for the resurrection; it's compelling! That this man who walked the sands of Palestine, rose from the dead, ate breakfast with disciples on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, and appeared to 5,000 all at once. Genetics doesn't explain that. Chance doesn't explain that. Evolution doesn't explain that. Atheism doesn't explain that.

Why do I believe in God? Because the evidence of Jesus demands a verdict and it says there is a God; He's real, He's historical, He exists in the person of Jesus Christ. Now, there is more to God than Jesus Christ, but Jesus Christ convinces me that there is a God. Let's pray together.

*Our Father in heaven, we thank You for Your Word. We ask now for Your blessing upon it and as we turn now to the table, we pray for Your presence. In Jesus name, Amen.*

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