

3b. Theology Proper - Who Is God?

Read Acts 17:16-34

Paul's crash course in basic Christian theism helps us to understand who God is.

1. What are some common misconceptions people have about God?



2. Read Acts 17:16-34. Why would the synagogue and the marketplace (Acts 17:16-17) be logical places for discussions about God?

3. Epicureans believed that pleasure is the chief end of life. Stoics emphasized that we should be rational and self-sufficient. How did these philosophers respond to Paul's preaching (Acts 17:18-21)?

Why do you think they responded this way?

4. Paul stands up in the meeting of the Areopagus and makes known the "unknown god" (Acts 17:22-23). What facts does he stress about God (Acts 17:24-29)?

5. How might Paul's statements have challenged the Athenians' views about the gods?

6. How might Paul's statements challenge modern misconceptions about God?

7. What has God done so that people might seek him (Acts 17:26-28)?

How would these things encourage people to reach out and find him?

8. How does Acts 17:30-31 help us understand Paul's distress about idolatry (Acts 17:16) and his motivation to proclaim the true God?

9. God commands people everywhere to repent of their ignorant ideas about him (Acts 17:30). In what areas do you feel you might have an inadequate concept of God?

10. Ask God to enlarge your vision of him as you study his Word in the next weeks.

Section Glossary

Casuistry -

Charaktocracy – (kare-uhk-TAW-kruh-see); A term I made up to discuss rule by those with the best character. Ideally this is the goal of church government.

Derasha – a discourse, sermon or oration, usually delivered by a rabbi or darshan.

Ei Ch'aim – the God of Life; Deuteronomy 5:26; Joshua 3:10; 1 Samuel 17:26, 36; 2 Kings 19:16; Psalm 42:2; 84:2; Isaiah 37:4, 17; Jeremiah 10:10; 23:36; Daniel 6:20, 26; Hosea 1:10

Highlander – Highlanders choose to follow in the footsteps of their spiritual ancestor Abram who forsook the valley life of Sodom and chose to follow God to the high city whose maker and builder is God (Hebrews 11:10). Highlanders are free citizens of that high city (Galatians 4:26; Philippians 3:20; Revelation 21:2ff). Our city is like no earthly city for she was designed and built by the Master Carpenter (John 14:2-3; Hebrews 11:10; 12:22-24). Highlanders do not get too excited about the things of this earth but instead consider themselves mere foreign nomads, temporary residents here at best (Hebrews 11:9, 13). Having said that, our King demands that we pray for the authorities of our host countries (1 Timothy 2:1); obey the laws of the land (Romans 13:1-2; Titus 3:1); pay our taxes (Matthew 22:18-21; Romans 13:7); pay our debts (Romans 13:7-8); and live quiet lives (1 Timothy 2:2) marked by hard work (Ephesians 4:28), frugal living and care for the poor (Proverbs 19:17; Galatians 2:9). Highlanders should thus be considered model citizens by their host countries, even while placing their first loyalty and patriotism in heaven. Where “Adonism” and “Cultural Christianity” are used in the context of theological systems, “Lowlander” and “Highlander” are usually used in the context of culture. (see Lowlander)

Lowlander – In Genesis 13 Lot, while standing on the high ridge with his uncle Abram, looked down into the valley of Sodom and chose its delights to his eventual destruction. A Lowlander is thus someone who is not heavenly minded; an unbeliever; a pagan; someone who has chosen to continue his citizenship in this world. A Lowlander considers collecting the baubles of this world to be a priority. A Lowlander stands agape at the shenanigans of movie stars and singers. Their view is horizontal, earthly, and sensuous. In contrast, a Highlander, like Abram who forsook the Sodom valley life and pursued a “high city” (Hebrews 11:10), chooses God’s King and Kingdom – the High Land. Where “Adonism” and “Cultural Christianity” are used in the context of theological systems, “Lowlander” and “Highlander” are usually used in the context of culture. (see Highlander)

Polemics -

Rabbi (pl. Rabbanim) – Also sometimes addressed or referred to as “Rav”. Rabbi is a general term used for a scriptural scholar and/or teacher. A rabbi is a teacher of “hanhagoth yesharoth” (Rules of right conduct) and sometimes acts as a religious judge. A rabbi is usually (though not always) considered the spiritual head of the community. We say “not always” because we believe that the rabbi should be chosen from among the zaquenim of the congregation and that the rabbi is one of a plurality of zaquenim. The rabbi is thus answerable to both the zaquenim on a daily basis and to the congregation more generally.

He is thus the servant of the congregation and not its king.

Ruach' ha Kodesh – The Holy Spirit; the third member of the Trinity.

Sophistry -

Yahweh Kadosh – Holy God; Leviticus 19:2; Joshua 24:19; Isaiah 5:16; 40:25