

The Christian's Attitude Toward the World **Acts 17:15-21**

Introduction:

1. There is currently a satanic world system that is established and operating on this earth right now. The Bible many times simply calls it "*the world.*"
 - It is decidedly anti-God, anti-Bible, anti-morality, and at its foundation are pride, rebelliousness, lawlessness, and immorality.
2. In John 17:14-16, Jesus gives us some very important principles regarding the Christian and his relationship to the world:
 - Christians are not **of** the world.
 - Christians are **in** the world.
 - God's kingdom and Satan's kingdom (the world) are diametrically opposed.
3. The spirit of the world once worked in all of us (Ephesians 2:2). But the moment we trusted Christ as our Savior, we received another Spirit – the Spirit of Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 2:12
4. As believers, we now belong to the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Yet we are physically on the earth in the midst of Satan's kingdom. We no longer belong to this evil world system, yet we must function and live in it every day.
5. How can we do that victoriously, and what should our attitude be toward the world? How can we make an impact in this world system that we reside in?
6. The apostle Paul traveled to the great city of Athens and, as we examine our text, we will receive answers to those questions.

Every believer must possess the right attitudes toward this world system.

1. Because of persecution, Paul had fled the city of Berea and ended up in the most well-known city of Greece, Athens. Paul was by himself, waiting on his comrades. vs. 15-16a
 - Athens was the cultural, intellectual, and artistic capital of the world. It is rated as one of the principal cities of mankind.
 - Centuries before this, Athens had won world renown for her cultivation of the liberal arts.
 - The most celebrated poets and philosophers had either been born there or had flourished there.
 - The outstanding models of statuary and architecture were to be found there.
 - Practically every religion was represented there.
2. Athens illustrates to what great heights of achievement man can ascend and still be ignorant of God.
3. What was Paul's attitude toward the best glitz and glamour the world had to offer?

Initially, Paul was provoked to righteous anger. vs. 16; cf. Ephesians 4:26; Matthew 21:12-13

- The thousands of statues and the magnificent temples that were built to house their idols' statues did not impress Paul. He saw how dishonoring all of this was to God, and it angered every ounce of spiritual fiber within him.
- A person who walks with God will not be taken in by all the window dressing of paganism. He will not be blinded to the vileness and blasphemy of paganism, because it hides behind intellectualism, art, entertainment, or religion.
- A godly believer will not view the paganism of this world calmly. It will provoke his soul to righteous anger. Our God has a holy hatred for idolatry and paganism. We do too, as we walk with God. Romans 1:18, 12:9
- How would most believers respond today if they were Paul? Most people would have admired the works of art (even though it was all attached to paganism). They would have taken a sightseeing tour of Athens without being stirred in the slightest about the great dishonor towards God that all the art, temples, and entertainment represented.
- May God give us people of God who are quickly and deeply stirred up against sin. If we are not upset greatly by sin, it will destroy us.

Next, Paul spoke against the paganism of the world. vs. 17; cf. Ephesians 5:11

- When a person is truly stirred in his heart against evil, it will show! He will oppose it.
- Some **say** they oppose evil, but Paul **showed** it. He looked around, saw all the paganism, and couldn't keep silent. Everywhere he went in Athens, he was speaking out for the truth against evil.
- Most Christians are not **stirred** up by evil, so they obviously won't **speak** up either. Their lips are sealed shut in protest of most evil. Such people never want to take a stand. They are afraid that taking a stand against evil will cost them too much. They just sightsee in Athens without a word of protest. Ephesians 5:11

Finally, Paul boldly proclaimed Jesus as the only answer to this evil world. vs. 18

- Notice the end of verse 18. Paul unashamedly preached Jesus Christ. Romans 1:16; 2 Timothy 1:8
- Paul was not ashamed of the gospel whether he was preaching to the ruling Romans, the religious Jews, or the cultured Athenians.
- He knew he would be scorned, but he also knew that the gospel of Christ was the real answer to man's spiritual needs. Paul not only spoke out against the evil of Athens, but gave them the positive answer to the problem.
- Of course, the world doesn't want to hear this, by and large. They think it is archaic and unsophisticated. They think that money and education will cure all of our social ills.

In Conclusion:

1. As believers, we will not reform the world system of Satan. God has not called us to reform it. This world system is heading towards a collision course with God Almighty and is doomed for eternal destruction.
2. God has called us, rather, to be lights in a darkened world, shining the light of Jesus. Our job is to impact individuals that are taken captive by Satan's world system and let them know that they can be rescued out of it and saved by God's grace.
3. Our message is Galatians 1:3-4. What a message we have! May we not have our influence nullified by allowing Satan to dupe us into blending into this world system! Philipians 2:15

Come back tonight to see the world's attitude toward Paul and the gospel.