

Date: July 5th
Speaker: Graham Burnett
Reading: Acts 17:22-34
Subject: Mars Hill

In Acts 9, Paul (known then as Saul of Tarsus) was trying to take Christians to a place of execution. As he went to Damascus, God spoke to him, which is where we get the expression "Damascus Road Experience". In chapter 17, he stood before religious people. What gave him the authority to speak: he knew the sin of his life and the love of God that dealt with that sin.

The speaker remembers as a boy of 12, kneeling beside his bed with his father and asking to Lord to save him from his sin. This gives the authority to preach.

Paul saw the altars in Athens, the evidence of religion, but he pointed out that the people were too religious. Like many, they hid behind the cloak of religion. It was the equivalent of people who hide behind church, Bible Reading or prayer as a cloak for their sin.

God looks past the outward appearance and sees that sin still rules in the heart. In view of this, Paul brings the truth of creation to bear. Men say that, for example, two worlds in orbit (where did they come from?) collided and as a result this universe came into existence and eventually animals developed then men. The Bible states simply that God made all things (Gen 1:1). We need to take God at His Word, then we realise that He placed man in the world and that He moves in the world.

From creation, Paul moves to resurrection. The message we tell is about a Man that God has raised from the dead. The Man, Jesus, was born at Bethlehem, lived a sinless life for 33 years and then was crucified. The world thought that that was the last that they would hear of Him. In fact, He is alive and this makes the message important. He died, was buried and rose again (1 Cor 15:3,4). He is now in heaven, waiting to save anyone who comes to Him as a sinner.

There were 3 responses to Paul:-

1. Some mocked. They despised the message, suggesting that Paul could not be serious because they had never heard of anyone being raised from the dead. They understood the first part of Hebrews 9:27, "It is appointed unto man once to die", they did not realise that there was a judgment to face and that all the dead would be raised. Any who dies without Christ will be raised to the final judgment explained in Revelation 20:11-15.
2. Some delayed, "we will hear you again". There are millions in eternal judgment because they delayed when they knew there was a decision to be made. In the local cemetery, there are headstones for babies of 59 minutes to people of 106 years. No one knows when death will come, but it is certain.
3. "Some believed and clave to him". They decided that they must act and took the Lord as Saviour. They did not put it off or mock.

In the eyes of God, there are only two classes: Saved and Lost. Where do you belong? You may fool other people, but you cannot fool God.