

ONE NATION, UNDER GODS **“American Idols”**

Anyone who has studied America's heritage knows that our great nation was founded for religious freedom. In England, the people could not worship God as they chose, and so they set sail for the land of the free. Once here, they established our rules and foundations on the supreme authority in their lives, the word of God. Today, our nation is slipping farther and farther from the truths that we were founded upon. We are no longer one nation under God, but yet we have become one nation under many gods. We have become a nation of tolerance and acceptance. As Americans, we are urged that there is not one true way, but many ways to get to heaven. In our society, it's okay to worship Buddha, Muhammad, or Ghandi. We even have other gods that are suitable to worship, such as our careers or our money. And we cannot forget that many people worship Hollywood stars, athletes, or other successful individuals. Unfortunately, for our country, all of these ways are not suitable to get to Heaven. The only way to have eternal life is to accept a relationship with Jesus Christ. As Christians, we must bring this fact to the minds of those who have been blinded. We must not settle for tolerance of others' religions, but must stand firm, as our God is the one and only TRUE God.

The belief in many gods has been around for numerous years. In Athens, as Paul traveled and shared the gospel, he encountered this religious pluralism. As today in America, Athens was full of idols and people worshipped the idol of their choosing. Paul proclaimed to the Athenians, just as we must claim today, that there is only one true God and He is the only one who can offer salvation.

THEIR DEITIES

In the times of Acts, Athens was a center of cultural importance. It was a great metropolitan area that was flourishing with people and prestige. When Paul went to visit and speak in Athens, he realized that the people there served numerous idols and deities. In verse 16 it says that the "city was full of idols." Paul took this opportunity to share his faith and the differences between his God and the gods that they served. He argued with the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. The Epicureans were practically atheists and thought that the gods did not want to deal with humanity. The Stoics believed in a god as the World-Soul. These philosophers wanted others to hear of Paul's God and took him to the Areopagus to speak to the others who came to hear new ideas. Paul would explain the differences between his true God and their false gods. He knew that the Athenians were very religious, as they even had a god designated to an "unknown god" so that they would not miss worshipping anyone.

THE DIFFERENCE

Paul realized from their allegiance to numerous gods that these Athenian people were very religious. However, they had religion, but they did not know the one

true God. He spoke to them about the differences between their gods and the abilities and characteristics of his God. He told them that “what you worship is in ignorance.” The true God was nothing like those whom they gave their devotion and commitment to. The God that Paul served made the world and everything in it. (vs. 24) He determines everything about our lives and guards our steps and boundaries. (vs. 26) He is a God that is personal with each individual and wants a relationship with them all. He is not far away, but can be reached and known. (vs. 27) With Him we have life and can exist. (vs. 28) Our God is so wonderful and so magnificent, that there is no way we can explain or describe the attributes of our God. (vs. 29) The characteristics that separate our God from the false gods of now and then are that our God demands repentance and raised Jesus from the dead. (vs. 30-31) No other god is able to claim that. No other god was raised from the dead and that is what mainly separates our God from others. Our God is still alive and wants an active relationship with His people.

THEIR DECISIONS

Once Paul began to describe his God to the Athenians, they had a choice to make. They could either choose to believe in Paul’s new ideas and in the real God, or they could turn their backs on this truth and follow the false gods that they had always worshipped. As we see in verse 32, some people began to ridicule Paul for the faith he believed in. Others in verse 34, joined and believed in this new truth and in the one true God. Today we have the same decision to make as the Athenians did. We can choose to hear the word of the Lord and to honor the truth that we have heard or we can follow the false gods of our age. False gods are all around us and many people are led to serve them, but we must make a decision as to who we should follow. Once we have made the decision to believe in the supreme God, we should not allow others to sway us by their talk or beliefs. We must have assurance in our hearts as to what we believe and stand firm in those beliefs.

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