

# Meaning and Purpose: From Whom Does it Come?

## INTRODUCTION:

1. Paul's sermon in Acts 17 is different from most sermons in the Book of Acts, because in this one he is preaching to people who do not know the one true God.
2. Read it with me, in Acts 17:22-31.

## BODY:

- I. Let's see now what points we can draw from Paul's sermon.
  - A. So many to choose from, but let's concentrate on five. The wording here may sound a little odd, but bear with me, because there's a contrast we want to present in a few minutes.
    1. God, an intelligent mind, created all things, including humans.
      - a. He "made the world and everything in it" (v. 24).
      - b. "He gives to all (men) life, breath, and all things" (v. 25).
      - c. "He has made from one blood every nation of men" (v. 26).
      - d. "In Him we live and move and have our being" (v. 28).
      - e. Quotes from one of their prophets: "For we are also His offspring" (28).
    2. God created humans with an objective meaning and purpose.
      - a. To "seek" Him, to "grope for Him and find Him" (v. 27).
      - b. Verses 30-31 indicate our purpose is to live according to His righteousness, to follow His ways and not our own.
      - c. Ecclesiastes 12:13 says it more explicitly: "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all.
      - d. All through the N.T. our purpose is said to be to bring praise to His name, to glorify Him and His ways. And of course we do that by completely submitting our will to His.
    3. Because God gives humans objective meaning and purpose, there is right and wrong.
      - a. "Now commands all men everywhere to repent" (v. 30)—implies a right and wrong, because we must turn from what is wrong and do what is right.

4. We are accountable to Him who created us, and who gave us meaning and purpose. We have a responsibility to fulfill the purpose He gave us.
    - a. “Lord of heaven and earth” (v. 24).
    - b. “He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man who He has ordained” (v. 31).
  5. The final end is not the same for all—those who fulfill His purpose, who submit to His righteousness, will be saved; those who don’t will be lost. How one lives now makes a huge difference in the end.
    - a. The fact that He will “judge the world in righteousness” necessarily implies that some will not be judged favorably, something made even clearer in a number of other passages.
- B. Notice the reaction to Paul’s sermon.
1. Read v. 32.
    - a. And some will still mock today.
  2. Remember when Paul appeared before Festus and Agrippa in Acts 26, and Festus accused him of being mad or crazy? Paul’s reply: “I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason” (Acts 26:25).
    - a. I believe He was doing the very same here in Acts 17.
- II. Now, let’s take God completely out of the picture. Let’s see how this works in the mind of the evolutionist.
- A. As you will see, this is quite a contrast to the five points just presented.
1. Humans evolved with no real meaning and purpose, because there was no intelligent mind to design or create purpose.
  2. Humans must therefore decide for themselves their own purpose (subjectively). Any objective meaning to life is an illusion.
  3. Because humans decide for themselves meaning and purpose, there can be no right or wrong.
  4. To whom would we be accountable? And what difference does it make what kind of life we live? When we’re dead we just cease to exist.
  5. The final end is the same for all, regardless of the life they lived. Good or evil makes no difference whatsoever in the end.
    - a. Murderers, rapists, terrorists, sexual predators—there’s nothing different for them in the end than the best person you can possibly imagine.

*[Review the contrast with PowerPoint chart]*

III. Now, what's wrong with the picture on the right? (chart)

A. First, it obviously defies Scripture.

1. For someone who does not believe in the inspiration of Scripture, this is no big deal.
2. But as we've talked about in previous lessons, the existence of God, the authenticity and inspiration of Scripture ultimately rest on the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the evidence for His resurrection is overwhelming.
  - a. Remember what Paul said in his sermon: "He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).
3. Consider, too, all the foreshadowing in the O.T. fulfilled in the N.T., not to mention all the specific prophecies fulfilled.

B. Secondly, it defies what we know from history, from observation, from our own experience—in several ways.

1. For people who evolved from a mindless, purposeless process, we sure do have a lot of intelligence. We can think and reason, certainly on a much higher plane than the rest of creation.
  - a. Elihu in Job 35:11, speaking of God: "Who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth, and makes us wiser than the birds of heaven."
  - b. Sure, some animals are very "smart" in some ways, but let's see them design a smartphone or build a spaceship.
  - c. Sure, some say that's because we're a higher life form, but there is sure is an incredible gap between us and apes—don't you think?
2. And while we're on the subject of the human mind, what about the conscience we all possess—the part of us that either approves or disapproves our actions?
  - a. The Bible speaks of this conscience quite often (29x in N.T.), and yes, as 1 Timothy 4:3 says, it can be "seared," but we certainly cannot deny its existence.
  - b. How is it that we grapple with right and wrong when there's no intelligent mind behind our development?

3. As advanced as our thinking and reasoning may be, history has proven over and over again that when meaning and purpose is determined subjectively, when we become a law unto ourselves, the result is a living, breathing disaster.
  - a. Romans 1:26-31.
  - b. James 3:13-16.
  - c. Jeremiah 10:23: “It is not in man who walks to direct His own steps.”
4. Think about the envy and bitterness, the division we see among citizens of this country. Isn't this the product of having no real standard, of determining everything subjectively?
  - a. By contrast, think about how well we get along here. We do believe in God, and we do believe He has given us meaning and purpose. We believe that His righteousness is our standard, and that ultimately we are accountable to Him and must submit to that standard.
  - b. It's amazing how well people get along when they're “on the same page.”
5. Follow this godless approach and you will soon be swimming in a cesspool, and eventually your head will be below the surface and you'll be drinking in all the filth that is part of this godless world.

#### CONCLUSION:

1. “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, and have done abominable iniquity...” (Psalms 53:1).
2. “O LORD, how great are Your works! Your thoughts are very deep. A **senseless** man does not know, nor does a **fool** understand this” (Psalms 92:5-6).
3. We've heard from the fool, but what does the wise man say?
  - a. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).
  - b. And in reference to the earth: God “gives breath to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk on it” (Isa. 42:5).
  - c. And the wise man understands everything that follows from this, especially this ultimate conclusion: “There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” (Heb. 4:13).
4. If you had to give an account to your Creator today, would you be ready? Why not decide today to begin fulfilling His purpose for your life?
5. Begin by following the One who came to save you from yourself, from everything in your life that is opposed to the One who gave you life. Become a Christian.