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The Wooley Springs Helper

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Knowing the “Unknown God”

22 Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; 23 for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you” (Acts 17:22-23, NKJV).

On Mars Hill, not far from the Athenian Acropolis where the Parthenon stands above the city (the temple dedicated to Athena, the patron goddess of Athens), the apostle Paul proclaimed the true God to Greek philosophers – the elites of his day. Despite their daily intellectual adventures of telling or hearing some new thing, they worshiped in ignorance; They did not know the One true God. Trusting human wisdom, intellectualism, and eloquence results in spiritual failure. Salvation in Christ does not depend on scholarship and academic prowess for relevance, but on the power of the gospel (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:18-25). Honoring the true God calls for utter humility on our part. Without shame, Paul proclaimed the One God who could save them from their misguided speculations. Today the same God offers the same salvation from foolish, frail philosophies (1 Cor. 2:1-5). The question is, will we be wise enough to believe and follow God and His word instead of men (Col. 2:3, 8-9, 18-23)?

24 God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. 25 Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He

needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things (Acts 17:24-25, NKJV).

The God who was unknown to the Athenians and their philosophers – the God whom Paul proclaimed – is a creative God. Unlike the Greek pantheon borne of mythology, He is Ruler of heaven and earth. His invisible attributes (eternal power and deity) are clearly seen, witnessed by the heavens and the earth (Rom. 1:20; Heb. 11:3). Consequently, it is futile to think God inhabits temples made with human hands. Nor is God sustained by the works of men.

We do not give God anything that sustains His existence. He is the source of our life, our breath and all that we are and possess. Idolatry is built on the arrogance, futility, and folly of men who believe they can invent a god from their own imagination, carve an image of it, fall down before it, then gain benefit from the god they created (Isa. 44:9-20; Jer. 10:1-16). The true and living God is superior to His creation; Not dependent upon it for His existence and perpetuation. Be sure you honor the true God and not a god you have imagined in your heart. The Bible shows the difference between the two.

26 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, (Acts 17:26, NKJV)

The true and living God does not evaluate humans on the basis of race or ethnic origin. Neither should we since we are all of “one blood,” descended from Adam and Eve but created by God (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:7). The origin of nations was by the hand of God, confusing men’s languages to scatter them upon the face of the earth (Gen. 11:9). The governance of the nations is overruled by the Sovereign God who executes His will upon the earth. While nations rise in power, extend their rule, and then decline into the ash heap of history, it is the Most High God who “rules in the kingdoms of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses” (Daniel 4:32). There is no legitimate place in this world for bias that grows out of the arrogance of supposing one race or ethnicity has superiority over others. In Christ, every vestige of such bias is eliminated, for “there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor

uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free; but Christ is all and in all” (Col. 3:11).

27 so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring’ (Acts 17:27–28, NKJV).

The God who was unknown to the Athenian philosophers (and to many still) is a purposeful God. He rules this world, not to oppress but to bless, so that we will seek Him and find Him. We have been created for this very purpose. Solomon said our duty (and the fulfilled life it brings) is summed up in this: to fear God and keep His commandments (Eccl. 12:13). God is not inaccessible. He is as near as the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat. Proof of His presence is everywhere in this world. Indeed, He is as near as His inspired word that records His will for us (2 Tim. 3:16-17). His Scriptures teach us how to seek Him and find Him through His Son, Jesus Christ (Matt. 11:28-30). Truly, “He has put eternity” in our hearts (Eccl. 3:11). The desire to know God compels us to find Him where He may be found, not in the images of art that depict mythical gods. This is self-evident, since “we are also His offspring.”

Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man’s devising. (Acts 17:29, NKJV)

God created male and female in His own image and gave human beings charge over all the creatures He made (Gen. 1:26-28). Above all these – the fish, the birds, the reptiles, amphibians and mammals – God is mindful of us (Psalm 8:3-8). Yet, as people refused to honor God and be thankful to Him for their very existence, they made idols by their own artful deliberations. “Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man – and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things” (Rom. 1:22-23). Deity is not defined by human beings. Hollywood makes God in its own image. (These cinematic perversions of God include the George Burns caricature of God in 1977 and the more recent blasphemous rendition of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in “The Shack.”) God will not be found inside ourselves or in what we →

want Him to be. He will be found through His Son Jesus Christ, whose word teaches us of God and His will for our lives (Heb. 1:2). Come to Jesus and learn from Him to know the true God (Matt. 11:28-30; John 6:44-45). “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24).

30 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, 31 because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead (Acts 17:30-31, NKJV).

This passage does not excuse or encourage sins committed out of ignorance. Indeed, it plainly says that God “now commands all men everywhere to repent” of their sins – including sins of ignorance. This verse does acknowledge the forbearance of God, who mercifully gives sinners time to repent before interposing His just penalty against their sins (see Acts 14:16-17). Ignorance will not be an acceptable defense to free us from our sins and their wages (which is death, Rom. 6:23). God’s command to repent is merciful, since it seeks to prepare us for the coming day of judgment. Additionally, God has assured us of the future judgment by raising from the dead His appointed judge: Jesus Christ. Escaping eternal punishment on Judgment Day is a compelling motive to repent of our sins. God has been very clear. He will impose His punishment “on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 1:8). Are you ready for the Judgment Day? Now is the day of salvation in Christ (2 Cor. 6:2; Acts 4:12).

– Joe R. Price

Teresa Faulk passed away on Friday. Visitation will take place at Ardmore Funeral Home on Tuesday at 1:00 with a graveside service at 2:00. Keep Larry, Gail, and the rest of the family in your prayers.

Continue to pray for **Wesley Abernathy, Jesse McCune, David and Adams, Ruth Fisk, Teresa Broadway, Chessie Harwell, Richard Clapp, Jane Belew, and Linda Faulk.**