

JESUS, KING OF PEACE

JESUS, KING OF THE NATIONS · ACTS 17:16-34 · DECEMBER 7, 2025 · PASTOR MATT ERICKSON

“For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.” (Acts 17:23)

Peace in a Culture of Longing (Acts 17:16-21)

- Paul’s distress in Athens (17:16)
- Ministry in the synagogue and marketplace (17:17)
- Curiosity and concern about Paul’s message (17:18-21)

The Good News and the Fingerprints of God (Acts 17:22-31)

- The altar to an unknown God: connecting with longing and the religious impulse (17:22-23)
- Listen for the poetry: truths about God and the cultural environment (17:24-28)
- The message of Jesus: responding to His life, death, and resurrection (17:29-31)

The Good News of Peace (Acts 17:32-34)

- Mixed response
- The fledgling church of Athens

Living with Jesus, the King of Peace

- Filled to overflowing by faith in Jesus the Messiah
- Tracing the fingerprints of God in our environment
- Witnessing to Jesus but entrusting outcomes to God

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. When have you experienced deep peace in your life?
2. This week we continue our sermon series, “Jesus, King of the Nations,” by looking at the story of Paul in Athens in Acts 17:16-34. Whether on your own or with others, begin your study in prayer, asking God to speak to you through His word, and then read that text aloud.

3. Background: This episode occurs after two effective ministry episodes in Thessalonica and Berea, both of which ended in persecution. Paul has been escorted to safety in Athens, where he waits for his ministry partners, Silas and Timothy, to join him.
4. According to verse 16, what does Paul immediately notice about the city of Athens? What do you think he means by this?
5. Paul begins his ministry in Athens in both the synagogue and the marketplace. What happens there according to verses 16-21?
6. Paul is invited to the Areopagus, a council gathered on or at the edge of the acropolis to make decisions and maintain order over the city’s political and religious life. How does Paul’s earlier distress about idols lead him to find a doorway for proclaiming the message about Jesus (verses 22-23)?
7. How would you summarize Paul’s message in verses 24-31? Is there anything you would have added or not said?
8. In his proclamation of the message about Jesus (verses 22-31), how does Paul connect with the context where he is in meaningful ways? How might we do this in our everyday lives?
9. What is the outcome of Paul’s ministry in Athens according to verses 32-34?
10. What is one thing you sense God calling to your attention personally through this week’s study? If you are with a small group, discuss that with one another and then pray about what you shared. If you are on your own, write it down, pray about it, and consider sharing your thoughts with someone this week.

DIG DEEPER:

Exploring Faith

- How have you seen “the fingerprints of God” in our culture and world?
- What evidence for God has most drawn you to pursue exploring Christianity?

Growing in Faith

- Is there a movie or book or show or current event that you think could be a bridge for meaningfully communicating about God in general or the message of Jesus in particular?
- Who could you watch or discuss this with in the next week or two?

Centered in Faith

- How would you characterize the “environment” in which we live and minister right now? What might be 3-5 key characteristics of our society that are important to understand when sharing our faith so that we can address issues people are thinking about?
- How might you share with others about Jesus this week in a way that brings a connection between the culture and the story of God in Christ?