

Series: God Who Creates – Acts 17:22-34

I believe in God the Father, Creator of heaven and earth...



“Acropolis in Athens” by Leo von Klenze 1846, Paul stands in the sunlight on the Areopagus indicating the dawn of Christianity

“Dressing God According To our Imagination”

Isaiah 40:18-20 & Genesis 11:4-6

Paul on Mar’s Hill challenges the Athenians. He began his message by indicating their religiousness and their various concepts of God. But in the final part of his presentation he brings their idolatry home to them. The real issue is that they want to make God in their image so that they can excuse their bad behavior. The Greek gods were as bad as any humans in their lechery, dishonesty, adultery and gluttony. Their anger and revenge was celebrated. And they were easy to bribe. There is no way that they could be considered “righteous”.



Bronze statue covered in Gold from Megiddo, 1400-1200 BC

Acts 17:28-31 [ESV]

28 ...for "In him we live and move and have our being"; *[quote from Epimenes (6-5th century BC)]* as even some of your own poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring." *[quote from Aratus (310-240)]* 29 **Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.** 30 **The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent,** 31 **because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."**

“Dressing God According To our Imagination”

Isaiah 40:18-20 & Genesis 11:4-6

Paul quotes from 2 famous Greek odes to the Greek god Zeus the first quote comes from the poet Epimmenides (6th-5th Century BC) it is a poem Paul quotes twice in the New Testament. He quotes another line “Cretans are always liars” to Titus. The poem is an attack on the cult of the “dying Zeus” celebrated on the island of Crete. The other poet Arastus (310-240 BC) is making a statement of the importance of Zeus in Greek culture.



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Paul uses a clever rhetorical device by applying the attributes mentioned to God but pointing out the failure of Zeus to meet the poet’s standards.

He points out if we exist by his grace and we are his creations what makes us think we can contain Him in the creations of our imaginations. The only reason to do so is to attempt to make God in our image, so we can excuse our own bad behavior. His message was not lost on his audience.



Bronze statue covered in Gold from Megiddo, 1400-1200 BC. This is believed to represent El the creator god of the Canaanite pantheon.

Isaiah 40:18-20 [ESV]

18 To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him?

19 An idol! A craftsman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and casts for it silver chains.

20 He who is too impoverished for an offering chooses wood that will not rot; he seeks out a skillful craftsman to set up an idol that will not move.

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All ties, cravats, neck-ties and bow-ties, were developed from the neck ribbons used to hold the shirt collars closed on the uniform of Croatian mercenary soldiers during the 30 Years War (1618-48)



Isaiah tells us that we often try to “dress God up in our clothes. We fashion him according to our social station and make him say what we want him to say. The Croatian mercenaries were considered the most dapper soldiers of the 30 Years War but they were also the most vicious and lawless.

Judges 17:1-6 [ESV]

1 There was a man of the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Micah. 2 And he said to his mother, "The 1,100 pieces of silver that were taken from you, about which you uttered a curse, and also spoke it in my ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it." And his mother said, "Blessed be my son by the LORD." 3 And he restored the 1,100 pieces of silver to his mother. And his mother said, "I dedicate the silver to the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a carved image and a metal image. Now therefore I will restore it to you." 4 So when he restored the money to his mother, his mother took 200 pieces of silver and gave it to the silversmith, who made it into a carved image and a metal image. And it was in the house of Micah.

5 And the man Micah had a shrine, and he made an ephod and household gods, and ordained one of his sons, who became his priest.

6 In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

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Micah and his mother fashioned a group of gods who excused their bad behavior and allowed them to excuse other's bad behavior for a healthy profit. It was only when the tribe of Dan decided to steal Micah's gods and his Levite that Micah came up against the reality of his own idolatry. When we fashion God into our own image we can not control the results of our imagination.



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Psalm 115:1-4 & 8-9 [NKJV]

1 Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, But to Your name give glory, Because of Your mercy, Because of Your truth. 2 Why should the Gentiles say, “So where *is* their God?” 3 But our God *is* in heaven; He does whatever He pleases. 4 Their idols *are* silver and gold, The work of men’s hands.

....

8 Those who make them are like them; *So is* everyone who trusts in them. 9 O Israel, trust in the LORD; He *is* their help and their shield.

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“Prague Defenestration, 1618” copper plate engraving by Johann Abelan, 1635. In 1618 Bohemian Stat members threw King Ferdinand’s governor, his advisor and secretary out the window.

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The Estates members were angry with the burning of their Protestant churches in Bohemia in 1618 by order of King Ferdinand so they threw his governor and associates out the castle windows – it was a 50’ drop. They survived due to a dung pile. This began the 30 Years War.

Romans 1:22-23 [ESV]

22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools,

23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

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Cravat (Croatian) soldiers wearing the mercenary uniform of the 30 Years War [1618-1648]. It is from their neck ware we get our modern varieties of ties.

The 30 Years War was really a war about power, trade and politics. But it was clothed in religious conflict between Roman Catholics and Protestants to make it seem “righteous”. The Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand who promoted the Roman Catholic cause had the Croatian mercenaries recruited. They developed a reputation for being dashing, and dapper but they also were seen as among the most ruthless soldiers on the battlefield. The mercenary soldiers did not care about religious issues they only wanted to get paid.

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When they were not paid regularly they robbed and pillaged the countryside. This attitude spread among all the mercenaries on both sides. They left most of the middle portion of Europe decimated. Large numbers of people fled before the armies, only to starve to death. Sickness, starvation and brutality haunted the farmers and merchants of Europe. By the time the war ended in 1648, Bohemia where the war began had gone from a population of 3 million plus to around 800,000. Some small German states lost all their population.

Genesis 11:4-6 [ESV]

4 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth."

5 And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built.

6 And the LORD said, "Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them."

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Isaiah 40:18-20 & Genesis 11:4-6



“Sack of Magdeburg – The Magdeburg maidens”, 1866 painting by Eduard Steinbrück. The 1631 Sack of Magdeburg

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In Genesis chapter 11 God is concerned with the development of human culture. While they know good and evil they choose evil. They have set themselves in a course to develop a civilization that will eventually produce great feats of engineering and technology but also deep wells of evil, brutality and oppression.

“Sack of Magdeburg – The Magdeburg maidens”, 1866 painting by Eduard Steinbrück. The 1631 Sack of Magdeburg. Magdeburg was a major city of 20,000 in the German Principate of Saxony. It was Protestant the siege was carried out primarily by forces led by Cravat mercenary soldiers.

Garrison Church of God

Aug. 27, 2023

Psalm 106:19-23 [ESV]

19 They made a calf in Horeb and worshiped a metal image.

20 They exchanged the glory of God for the image of an ox that eats grass.

21 They forgot God, their Savior, who had done great things in Egypt,

22 wondrous works in the land of Ham, and awesome deeds by the Red Sea.

23 Therefore he said he would destroy them — had not Moses, his chosen one, stood in the breach before him, to turn away his wrath from destroying them.

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In 1631 with the sack of Magdeburg, Saxony by Emperor Ferdinand’s forces the War became unmanageable. No quarter was given to non-combatants on either side. Rape, pillage and gratuitous violence became the norm for both sides. It was not until 1648 when both sides had exhausted their resources that a peace agreement was signed. Over 8 million people had died.

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Paul knew how he had dressed God in his own imagination. He had brutalized innocent people in the name of “honoring” God. But it was really a reflection of himself and his own ambitions that drove him.

It was a type of idolatry. Not unlike the idolatry of of the 30 Years War.

An idolatry that allowed a Pope and Holy Roman Emperor to applaud the pillage and rape of a community.

Aug. 27, 2023

Isaiah 40:12-14 [ESV]

12 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?

13 Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows him his counsel?

14 Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding?

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Idolatry is our attempt to dress God the way we want him to be, and declare our own righteousness. But Jesus is still the Judge, not us.

“Acropolis in Athens” by Leo von Klenze 1846, Paul stands in the sunlight on the Areopagus indicating the dawn of Christianity

28.10-20.