

MEET OUR GOD

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Nov. 25, 2012

Sermon in a sentence: When you meet our God, you are face to face with Jesus Christ.

Scriptures: Acts 17:16-31; Exodus 34:1-9; Heb. 1:1-4; 1 Tim. 3:16; John 3:13-18; Luke 19:10

Believe it or not, there are over 20 million gods in our world that people worship and serve! Many nations and cultures are quite at ease with this pantheon, while three of the major faiths: Islam, Judaism and Christianity, specify there is only one.

As Christians, we not only believe there is one God, but we also believe He wants to relate to us in a personal and individual manner. Today, we would like you to meet our God.

The apostle Paul was visiting Athens one day - a Greek city steeped in the traditions of their mythology and worship that featured a vast host of gods. He saw a particular altar there with the inscription "To The Unknown God", or as Young's Literal Translation renders it "TO UNKNOWN GOD" - (Δ Agno ω st ω qew \diamond : anglicized "agnosto theo"), without either a definite or indefinite article. (These were the original agnostics.) Paul felt compelled to introduce them to the true and living God he knew so well, and Acts 17 gives us the record of this encounter on Mars Hill.

Acts 17:16-31 Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols. 17 So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing *Gentiles*, and in the market place every day with

those who happened to be present. 18 And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, "What would this idle babbler wish to say?" Others, "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities," — because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. 19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming? 20 "For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean." 21 (Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.) 22 So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. 23 "For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. 24 "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; 25 nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things; 26 and He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, 27 that they would seek God, if perhaps 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 exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.' 29 "Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. 30 "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent, 31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed,

having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

For those who may not know much about our God, here’s how Paul described Him:

- He is the creator of the world (v. 24)
- He is Lord of heaven and Earth (v. 24)
- He has no needs – He is self sufficient (v. 25)
- He made all humanity of one blood, and has determined the appointed time for us to live and die (v. 26)
- He is close to us and wants us to seek Him and find Him (v. 27)
- He is the source of our life and existence (v. 28)
- He is real, not an idol (v. 29)
- He declares that all people should repent (v. 30)
- He will judge the world through His appointed Man (Christ Jesus) who died and rose from the dead (v. 31)

In essence Paul was saying: “This is my God, the only true God, the God you worship in ignorance. “I want you to meet my God.”

Approximately 1500 years prior to this incident, another individual, (who already knew God), asked for a deeper relationship and interaction with Him. He actually wanted to see the glory of God! This request was made at a time when his nation had utterly rejected God and had fallen into idolatry and gross moral sin.

Under strictly controlled conditions, God agreed to Moses’ request and allowed him to get a glimpse of Him (Ex. 33:16, 34:6a).

As the appointed leader of Israel, their human deliverer, their intercessor before God, God allowed “His goodness”¹ to pass before Moses and proclaimed His own personal, proper name to him!

Let’s read Moses’ account of this encounter:

(Ex. 34: 6-10 NASB) Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; 7 who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations.” 8 Moses made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship. 9 He said, “ If now I have found favor in Your sight, O Lord, I pray, let the Lord go along in our midst, even though the people are so obstinate, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your own possession.” 10 Then God said, “Behold, I am going to make a covenant. Before all your people I will perform miracles which have not been produced in all the earth nor among any of the nations; and all the people among whom you live will see the working of the LORD, for it is a fearful thing that I am going to perform with you.

Here we have more than Paul’s third party attempt to speak about God to an assembly of philosophers. Now we are dealing with God’s own self-description!

What is it that God chose to say about Himself in this encounter with Moses?

- He is good (Ex. 33:19)

¹ Ex. 33:19

- He has a proper name: $\langle h\hat{I}wh_{\diamond y}>$: YHWH -
anglicized: Yahweh (Ex 33:19; 34:6)
- He is gracious and compassionate (Ex. 33:19; 34:6)
- His gets angry slowly, and abounds in love for His people (Ex. 34:6)
- He abounds in truth (34:6)
- He forgives sin (34:7)
- He is a God of judgment and justice (34:7)
- His love is broadly distributed; His judgment is restricted (34:7)

This is the God we would like you to meet: our God!

God's self-revelation did not stop with Moses.

Heb. 1:1-3 KJV God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; 3 Who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high....

1 Tim. 3:16 KJV And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

John 3:13-18 NASB “ No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man. 14 “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; 15 so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. 16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have

eternal life. 17 “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. 18 “ He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

God’s greatest revelation to humanity is bound up in the God-man: Jesus Christ. So, when we meet God, we are face to face with Jesus Christ.

Human history is filled with the outworking of His divine character and will, and His incredible plan to save us from our sins. All this in spite of our constant covenant breaking.

He loves sinners and forgives them.

He seeks to be known by His children.

He came to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:1-10 – story of Zaccheus of Jericho)

He is reaching out this very day to all who will hear His voice and respond to Him in faith.

Come and meet our God!