

Just after high school I had the very great pleasure to work as a waiter at Farrell's Ice Cream Parlor. Part of our training was that we had to memorize, in its entirety, the menu. We then were tested on it. If you missed more than 3 questions, you didn't get the job. I remember that I missed one, I couldn't remember the copyright date that was on the back of the menu, in very small print. One of the items on the food portion of the menu, as opposed to the ice cream part, was something called the Epicurean Delight, a wonderfully tasty deli type sandwich. What always struck me as odd is that the sandwich took its name from a philosopher, Epicurus, born in Samos, an ancient province of Greece, in 341 BC. He began teaching in Asia Minor and afterwards, in Athens, until his death in 270 BC. Really, I mean how in the world did a sandwich become named after a Greek philosopher from what, the third century BC? The answer to that lies in what Epicurus taught, what his philosophy was and also in what his name has come to mean. The word epicurean, is defined as...

1. Fond of or adapted to luxury or indulgence in sensual pleasures; having luxurious tastes or habits, especially in eating and drinking.
2. Fit for an epicure: *epicurean delicacies*.

In contrast to what many of the great Greek philosophers of his day were teaching, Epicurus declined to pursue knowledge for knowledge sake, whether it be philosophical or science in nature and focused on...

## 2 ***What is the aim of life and how to attain it?***

His thoughts on ethics are at the root of his teaching; whatever brings pleasure is good and is to be pursued. The free thinkers of the 60's and 70's thought they were so smart and had come up with the world changing philosophy of, "If it feels Good Do It". Epicurus had promulgated that very way of life 2000 years prior.

Note this quote from a letter Epicurus wrote to someone named Menoeceus...

3 ***The aim and end of life for every man is his own happiness, and happiness is primarily defined as pleasure. "Wherefore we call pleasure the Alpha and Omega of a blessed life. Pleasure is our first and kindred good. It is the starting-point of every choice and of every aversion, and to it we come back, inasmuch as we make feeling the rule by which to judge every good thing".***

The Stoics were somewhat akin to the Epicureans in their way of thinking. They believed and taught that nature was God. Their ethical precept, "Follow Nature," was borrowed from the Socratic school of Antisthenes, the Cynics. But the Stoics followed the earlier philosopher Heraclitus in defining the law of Nature as reason (logos), which was defined as the principle of intelligence in man, and the divine or godly reason immanent in the world.

Basically the Epicureans used the physical things of the world to seek after pleasure and thought this life was all that man had and the Stoics believed that nature was in control as God and that after this life man returned to nature.

Therein lies the major difference between the two philosophies, the Epicureans did not believe in a Divine or Godly being and the Stoics did, even if that God was nature.

X With this background in mind, lets look at...

***Acts 17:16-21***

**READ**

16 Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was beholding 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. And 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; we want to know therefore 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.)

In **Acts 17** we find Paul having a difficult time keeping quiet. He could hardly contain himself in the face of the idolatry, the self serving intellectual philosophy, and the pure and simple ignorance of the great Grecian philosophies that would have such a great influence on the world.

So, as we continue our reading...

**Acts 17:22-23**

**4**

**22** And 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.' What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.

The Greeks took great pride in their acceptance of philosophies of every nature, whether they agreed or not. As we have already seen the Epicureans and the Stoics differed in their belief on deity, yet they accepted the fact that they differed and the difference didn't matter. Sound familiar, isn't this what the bulk of the religious world today would have us believe. We don't need to agree with what God says, let alone what the various and sundry groups say, as long as we profess a love for God and have a half way decent moral nature. That is why Paul was seeing idols to so many different so-called gods. Names like Diana, Zeus, Pluto, and the gods that were associated with the realm of nature, things like thunder, mischief, or love. While we understand these things to be a part of physical nature and man's psyche, the Greeks made them into gods. They were so concerned to make sure that they had their bases covered, they even built an idol to the "Unknown God".

**5** This is what we want to talk about for a bit, gods, not the gods that the Greeks had built idols to and worshipped, but the gods that man worships today. It would be impossible for me to even try to enumerate the numbers of different things that man uses as his gods today, so we are going to utilize God's breakdown found in...

**1 John 2:15-17**

**6**

**15** Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **16** For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. **17** And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever.

To help us have an understanding of what God is saying, turn over to...

**Matt 4:1-4**

**7**

**1** Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. **2** And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. **3** And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become

bread." **4** But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'"

So let's begin this discussion by looking at...

**8**

1) Lust of the Flesh

A. "Command that these stones become bread"

1. Fornication
2. Pornography
3. Drug Abuse
4. Alcohol

**Matt 4:8-10**

**9**

**8** Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory; **9** and he said to Him, "All these things will I give You, if You fall down and worship me." **10** Then Jesus said to him, "Begone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'"

**10**

2) Lust of the eye

Isn't this fascinating? Christ is the Word, and all that was created was created by Him, John 1:1-4. And yet here is Satan, he is offering Christ His own creation. The point is that Satan is not offering Christ this world, rather he is offering the souls of mankind. A removal of the free-will choice that God gave to man, that's what is Satan is offering when he says...

### ***"All the Kingdoms of the World and the Glory of Them"***

Satan is trying to play on Christ's greed, His human nature, the human lusts for the things of this world, the things that the Epicureans had made gods.

Now, as we continue our discussion...

**Matt 4:4-7**

**11**

**5** Then the devil took Him into the holy city; and he had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, **6** and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'He will give His angels charge concerning You'; and 'On their hands they will bear You up, Lest You strike Your foot against a stone.'" **7** Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

**12**

3) Pride of Life

Satan tries to play on the human pride that Jesus had when he says to Him...

### ***"If Thou art the Son of God"***

This is a danger to all of us. We take pride in our careers, authority we might have attained, notoriety amongst the world. These are all things that have always held an allure to man. So much of history has been molded by those who were searching for fame or power. The point is that...

**1 Peter 5:5**

**13**

**5** You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for **GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.**

God has no patience for the man who puts his trust in his own intellect and or ability to secure his own salvation without God. These are the prideful, the haughty...

**Prov 6:16-17**

**14**

**16** There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: **17** Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, And hands that shed innocent blood,

Paul, in his discourse in Acts 17, does a masterful job of leading the Greeks to the topic he really wants to discuss, the one and only God in heaven.

**Acts 17:23**

**15**

**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.' What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.

In vs 23 through 31 Paul introduces the Greeks to this Unknown God, the god that in their ignorance and haughtiness they wanted to make sure they didn't leave out.

**Acts 17:24-31**

**16**

**24** "The God who made the world and all things in it,

The God that is the manifestation of Power, Authority, Intellect, and since He is the Lord of heaven and earth, and does not dwell in temples made with hands;

**17**

D. He is above man and man's ways

E. Does not live Temples made by hands

**18**

**25** neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything

F. Has no needs that man could supply, He is not served by hands

Because

G. He gives to man everything man needs

**19**

**26** and He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation,

H. Controls all, puts nations into place and removes them in His time

Notice the reason

**20** **27** that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;

I. That man might find Him

J. He is not far FROM us

What a wonderful thought, that God is close...

**21** **28** for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His offspring.'

K. We are the image of God, God is manifested in us because we are His offspring

**22** **29** "Being then the offspring 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.

Man's very existence is ample proof that God is and that His Divinity can not be represented in gold or silver, an image made by the hands of man.

**23** **30** "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent,

Paul's conclusion is simple; It is ignorance on the part of man to think that the one and only true God of heaven, man's creator, could possibly be represented by any image that man could create. The natural extension of that statement is that anything man puts into his heart to seek after, follow, or obey, whether it be pleasures of the world, or the arrogance of thinking that we are sufficient unto our own ends, becomes, for us, a god, a god that controls our lives, our thoughts, our actions. The one true God has determined that the time for His patience is over and he calls out to all men, us included, to quit being foolish and to turn from our ignorance to come back to Him. The problem that comes from that is what Paul finishes his sermon with...

**24** **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. "

God is going to judge you and I based upon the wisdom, or foolishness, that we choose to live our lives by, and the proof of that is in the wonder of the resurrection of His Son, Jesus the Christ, from the dead.

So, foolish or wise, do we choose to be like the Epicureans and make pleasure our god, or maybe like the Stoics, where god is nothing more than nature, both of this world and from within us, or do we seek after the one true God.