

THREE RESPONSES

Text: Acts 17:32-34

INTRO: As Paul preached his sermon to the people of Athens, Greece, as recorded in Acts 17, he pointed out the need for all people everywhere to repent of their sins and prepare for a judgment to come. At the conclusion of his lesson, as is true in many situations, there were three different responses. Some mocked. Some delayed. A few obeyed his teaching.

- I. SOME MOCKED, vs. 32a.
 - A. Some had already mocked him from his earlier teaching in the city, vs. 17-18

1 Cor 1:18-22, For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, & bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world thru wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.
 - B. The 12 apostles had experienced the same thing on Pentecost, Acts 2:13.
 - C. Paul would later experience this same response from Festus in Acts 26:24.
- II. OTHERS SAID, "WE WILL HEAR YOU AGAIN..."
 - A. Many people are impressed with the gospel message but they are not ready to give themselves in obedience to the Lord, Luke 9:59-61.
 - B. When Paul preached to Felix about righteousness, self control and judgment to come, Felix was visibly shaken. "When I have a convenient time I will call for you" (Acts 24:25).

C. Agrippa was also impressed with the gospel—almost persuaded, Acts 26:28.

D. There are at least two dangers involved in delay.

1. The heart may become hardened so that the Spirit no longer “moves” us. Felix heard Paul repeatedly, but there is no evidence he ever came as close to responding properly as he did on that first occasion.

1 Thess 5:19, Do not quench the Spirit.

2. We may not have another opportunity. The people of Athens told Paul, “We will hear you again on this matter”—but they didn’t, vs. 33.

3. Jesus taught the 12 that when their message was rejected, to shake off the dust & move on, Matt. 10:14.

Illustration: Picture this “judgment scene.” All mankind is separated by a great fence. Those on the right side of the fence are being led by the Lord to heaven. Those on the left are being herded by Satan toward hell. There are a few sitting on the fence. Satan calls to them, “Come on, fellows. It’s time to go.” “But we haven’t made up our minds; We’re on the fence,” they reply. Satan responds: “Didn’t you know, I own the fence?”

III. SOME MEN JOINED HIM & BELIEVED, vs. 34.

A. Dionysius the Areopagite—a member of the Areopagus council. According to Wycliffe Bible Encly. that body judged in criminal cases, and also ruled in religious & educational affairs. Dionysius would have been an influential citizen in Athens’ society.

B. A woman named Damaris. Nothing more is known of her, but the fact that she is singled out for mention suggests that she too was probably an influential member of Athens’ society. Women were more active & prominent in Gentile society than in that of the Jews.

Acts 13:50, But the Jews [in Antioch, Pisidia] stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.

Acts 17:12, Therefore many of them [the Bereans] believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.

- C. And others with them. The vast majority of those who have believed & obeyed the gospel down thru the centuries have gone largely unnoticed in history, unnamed in society. But they have one thing in common with the best known & best loved saints of all the ages: their names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Luke 10:17-20, Then the 70 returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." And He said to them... Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents & scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

CONCLUSION: The basic response to gospel preaching today is the same as it was in the days of Jesus & Paul. Some will mock, but their comedy will end in tragedy. Some will delay. Perhaps they will have another chance – but life has no such guarantee. A few worthy souls will hear & heed before it is too late.

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