

Jesus and the Resurrection

G. Davison

July/Aug 1967

When the apostle Paul arrived in Athens, waiting for Silas and Timotheus to come to him, we read that he was stirred in his spirit as he beheld the city to be "full of idols," Acts 17: 16 (margin). While waiting there he disputed with the Jews in the synagogue and with devout persons (whoever they may have been), and daily in the market place. These public discourses brought him into touch with the leading philosophers of what appeared to be the university city of the Greek world, Some were known as Epicureans, others as Stoics; all were determined to put Paul on trial, apparently hoping to expose him as an imposter. We may well enquire, Who were these people and what did they teach?

History shows that these two schools of learning were poles apart in their teaching. The Epicureans were convinced that the wisest way to live was by taking advantage of every pleasure available to them. The Stoics, who were pantheists (having many Gods) — and were doubtless responsible for the many idols in the city — believed in self-denial. None of these heathen philosophers could have discovered the knowledge of "the true God" by means which were but the product of their own carnal minds. We read "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," Romans 8: 7.

These philosophers may have thought they knew everything worth knowing, but the two outstanding items in the teaching of Paul — "Jesus and the Resurrection" — they did not know.

It would probably be the Epicureans who referred to him as a "babbler," a word which in the original language means "a seed picker." They judged him to be a base fellow who had managed to pick up a word here and there and was putting them out as though he himself was some great one. They would be confident that, by putting him on trial at Areopagus, they would expose him as an ignorant and unlearned man. What a surprise his able defence must have been to them! Perhaps it was the Stoics who accused him of being a "setter forth of strange Gods," or "foreign demons" (J.N.D.). With all their boasted wisdom they were exposed as being completely ignorant concerning the knowledge of the one true God. Without going into detail as to the able defence of Paul, we would pass on a word of encouragement concerning the two features of the gospel which Paul preached at Athens, quite assured that those who read these remarks will not regard the great apostle Paul as being either a "seed picker" or "a setter forth of strange demons."

How thankful we are to have been blessed with the true light concerning "Jesus and the Resurrection." In Jesus we have blessing for our souls today, and in connection with the resurrection we have blessing in the world to come, for His resurrection has opened up a completely new order of things beyond the power of death. We know Jesus our Lord today as our Saviour, He who in love gave Himself for us when He died upon the cross. We have accepted Him as Saviour, owned Him as Lord, and have the sure knowledge that every question between our souls and God, as far as our sins are concerned, has been settled forever.

Not only do we experience the blessing which is ours through our Lord Jesus Christ but we know the blesser — Jesus. This too is the fruit of His resurrection, for how could we know Him if He were not raised from among the dead? We may have known about Him, but the fact is we know Him as enshrined in our affections, the abiding proof that He is risen again. We have the light and power by the Spirit of a spiritual, heavenly and eternal sphere of blessing into which every saint will enter at Christ's

coming again. While we await our actual entry into this realm, the enjoyment of it is in our souls today as having turned in "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," Acts 20: 21. What a favoured people we are!

We can well afford to turn our backs upon the wisdom of this world which knows not God, and seek grace to continue in the blessing which is ours as having believed in both "Jesus and the Resurrection."