



Links Players

THE GOD NOBODY KNOWS

When I arrived here the other day, I was fascinated with all the shrines I came across. And then I found one inscribed, to the god nobody knows. I'm here to introduce you to this God so you can worship intelligently, know who you're dealing with. (Acts 17:16-29, The Message)

In a four-hour round of golf there is opportunity for a lot of conversation. Topics generally include: the state of the course, golf play, mutual friends, sports, and politics. If you happen to be riding in the same cart with a friend, it's not uncommon to eventually hear about personal struggles. In these situations what interest me the most is the source of people's strength when things get difficult. I listen for their go-to-thinking when divorce is inevitable, a child is in trouble, or when business or health fails.

Human beings historically have turned to the gods for help when crisis comes. The Greeks and Hindus had/have their pantheon of gods who supposedly reward the devoted with health and prosperity. The Aztecs relied on hundreds of gods that assured victory in war as well as provision. In the ancient near east (Biblical times), altars for sacrifice were common for help with crops and fertility. Remember Elijah and the prophets of Baal? (1 Kings 18:1-40)

When the apostle Paul enters Athens in 51AD he finds this same universal human instinct at work among the Greeks. Alters to multitudes of gods are commonplace in the city-center. In his speech at the Areopagus Paul affirms the Greek's instinct to look to higher powers for help. He then strategically exploits one alter with an inscription that reads: "TO THE GOD NOBODY KNOWS". Paul exhorts the crowd to reach out to the "GOD NOBODY KNOWS" because He is the one living God and has made himself known in the person of Jesus.

Paul makes revolutionary and clarifying claims about this unknown God. He explains that God has made the world and doesn't need anything from anyone! Forget the gifts, sacrifices, and payoffs! God provides everything for everyone in the world down to the first and last breath of each man and woman's life. The GOD NOBODY KNOWS wants everyone to find him and as proof has raised his emissary, Jesus Christ, from the dead. Paul implores the crowd to leave behind their superstitious beliefs and behaviors and discover resurrection-life in Jesus Christ.

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America is not much different from Athens in 51AD. We have our go-to-gods when things get tough—spending, unhealthy relationships, pleasure, compulsive behaviors, a karmic perspective on injustice. We place our sacrifices (time) on multiple altars. We look to the markets to secure our lives; our work for our identity; and moral performance for salvation. We often embrace the prosperity preachers and self-help gurus for quick fixes while ignoring our Creator. Our worship is often far less than intelligent.

Author and Pastor Tim Keller offers a full proof plan for modern day idol worship: “The only way to free ourselves from the destructive influence of counterfeit gods is to turn back to the true one, the living God....he’s the only one who if you find him, can truly fulfill you, and if you fail him, can truly forgive you.”

Know who you’re dealing with. Worship intelligently. Turn back to the true one, the living God for fulfillment and forgiveness. That’s the believers go-to-thinking. The Lord is our strength and our shield.

Prayer - Heavenly Father thank you for revealing yourself to me through Jesus. Thank you for every breath. Be near me and provide the strength I need as I face today’s challenges.

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