

An ancient story tells about six blind men who were brought to see an elephant: "It's very like a wall," said the first man as he touched the side of the elephant.

"It's very like a spear," said the second man as he stroked the elephant's tusk.

And the third man taking the elephant's squirming trunk in hand said) "It's very like a snake."

"Nonsense!" the fourth man shouted. Stretching his arms about one of the legs, he concluded "this wondrous beast is very like a tree."

The fifth man, touching the elephant's ear, cried, "even the blindest man can see that this animal is very like a fan."

And the sixth, grabbing the tail, assured his friends that "the elephant is really very like a rope."

People from different religions make all sorts of claims about gods.

But the gods they describe are as different as the blind men and the elephant.

Sadly some conclude that - just like the blind men of the parable -

everybody's right, they just have a hold of different parts of the same God.

And, since everybody is "right" then their different faiths must all lead to the same place - Heaven.

I am sure you have heard the lie, "*All Roads Lead To Heaven.*"

"According to our text from Acts today, it certainly matters what we believe!

Centuries ago, in a city called Athens, they were under the false idea that all roads lead to heaven

Athens was a very religious city. There were over 30,000 idols.

One scholar noted it was easier to find an idol in Athens than to find a person.

And yet, while highly religious, these people were confused about which god to worship... and so they worshipped them all.

AND in fact, just in case they missed a god – they erected an altar to an "Unknown God."

Athens was a centre of learning.

Many of the world's great early philosophers and thinkers lived there.

Athens had one of the greatest universities of the ancient world.

It was a centre of philosophy, literature, science and art.

This was a city dedicated to truth... dedicated to wisdom.

And yet, in the midst of all this pursuit of "truth" and "wisdom" - there was confusion.

Because when it came to God they did not know WHAT TRUTH to embrace

They believed all were somehow equal. Sounds somewhat like today in our culture.

Max Lucado has a video program based on his book 3:16 called "Stories of Hope",

In one session called, "All roads lead to heaven".

There's an imaginary discussion with a travel agent. "

You tell him you need a flight to Rome, Italy.

So he looks on his screen, and he offers, "Well, there's a flight to Sydney, Australia, at 6:00 a.m."

"Does it go to Rome from Sydney?" you ask.

"No, but it offers great food and movies."

"But I need to go to Rome," you say.

He says, "Well, let me suggest Southwest Airlines."

"Do Southwest Airlines fly to Rome?"

"No, but they win awards for arriving on time."

You're getting frustrated, so you reiterate "I need one airline, to carry me to one place—Rome."

The agent appears offended: "Sir, all flights go to Rome."

That's just like our world.

People give all sorts of advice about how to get to heaven, that are just not based on truth.

According to Jesus it's a matter of life or death what you believe."

Last week we heard Jesus say, in John's gospel: "I am the way and the truth and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6

Peter declared: "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to us by which we must be saved." Acts 4:12

And here in Acts 17 Paul is telling the people of Athens the very same thing: (vs. 22-31)

Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said:

"People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious.

For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.

Now... what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.

"The God who made the world and everything in it - is the Lord of heaven and earth - and does not live in temples built by hands.

And he is not served by human hands (as if he needed anything) because he himself gives all people life and breath and everything else.

He created people, the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.

God did this so that people would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

'For in him we live and move and have our being.'

" Therefore, since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone— an image made by peoples design and skill.

In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.

For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice, by the one he has appointed, Jesus. He has given proof by raising him from the dead."

Jesus, Peter and now Paul are all telling us that God has no intention of being tolerant anymore.

In the past God overlooked such ignorance – but not anymore.
Now, God calls for repentance - not open-mindedness.

This is all in the bible. I am not making it up

People will not get into heaven by being good, or using crystals or budda statues in their garden.

notice the heart of Paul's argument –

God's calling for us to repent, because there WILL BE a day of judgment.

Many people are fond of telling people that no one has the right to tell someone else that what they believe is wrong...

What Paul is declaring is – it is life or death what you believe and judgment's coming.

How will people know unless Gods people stand up and share Jesus?

Most people have no idea that Jesus said he is the only way, the life and the truth.

In many serious fields of knowledge – there is truth.

For example: water is composed of two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen.

The slightest deviation from the formula – not allowed, or it is not water.

The solution of a mathematical problem is either right or it is wrong (there is no tolerance).

On the athletic field. The game is to be played according to the rules.

God sets the rules and Jesus is the truth and He will judge.

But – how do we know that what we believe is "Right"

Paul tells us in verse 31

"For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice, by the man he has appointed - Jesus.

He has given proof of this to all people by raising him from the dead."

I have found over the years people can try and challenge our faith with side issues.

If a sceptic can get you side-tracked into arguing about those things – it takes up time and energy and you lose the focus of Jesus.

The proof in this passage is Jesus' death and resurrection, an historical fact.

That's what Paul meant when he wrote: "...I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 1 Corinthians 2:2

There is much written about the historical evidence of Jesus death and resurrection for anyone who really wants to investigate.

Of course, it's important to know the answers to questions

BUT we don't really need to defend the Bible. What we need to do is proclaim Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote: "we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power and the wisdom of God.

Now I want you to notice – Paul didn't win a debate here.

No mad rush of converts came rushing to the stage.

In fact, the crowd's response was mixed.

Acts 17:32 "When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, *but others said*, "We want to hear you again on this subject."

Those who are focused on numbers may say that Paul's preaching at Athens was a failure because it was so poorly received.

Only a few became followers and believed. Acts 17:34

Its important to note ***it is not our job to convince people about the death and resurrection of Jesus.***

But it is everyone's job to share Jesus

Conclusion: Author Lee Strobel was an atheist.

For those who really want to investigate the authenticity of Jesus' death and resurrection, read his book "Case for Christ" or watch the DVD available at our office

He comments: "After my wife became a Christian, I began to see positive changes in her character and values."

He observed a marked difference in the way she treated people and cared for others.

He decided it was time to put his professional investigative skills to work in his personal life, so he began to research the life of Christ.

He further comments:

"As someone trained to deal with facts and logic, I wasn't willing to put my faith in wishful thinking or make-believe.

I needed solid evidence that Jesus is, indeed, the unique Son of God," he said.

"Based on scientific evidence, I became convinced that there's a Creator of the universe; and based on historical data, I became confident in Jesus' claim to be the Son of God. He backed up that claim by returning from the dead."

Strobel officially became a Christian in 1981, certain the gospel was true.

After years of trying to win his own father's love, he realized he didn't have to earn the love of Christ—it was freely given.

"Christianity is the only world religion that is built on grace rather than a system in which people try to work their way to God," he said.

"God's grace is an inexhaustible topic that has so many implications for our life and eternity."

As Jesus said. - One way to heaven - Jesus.