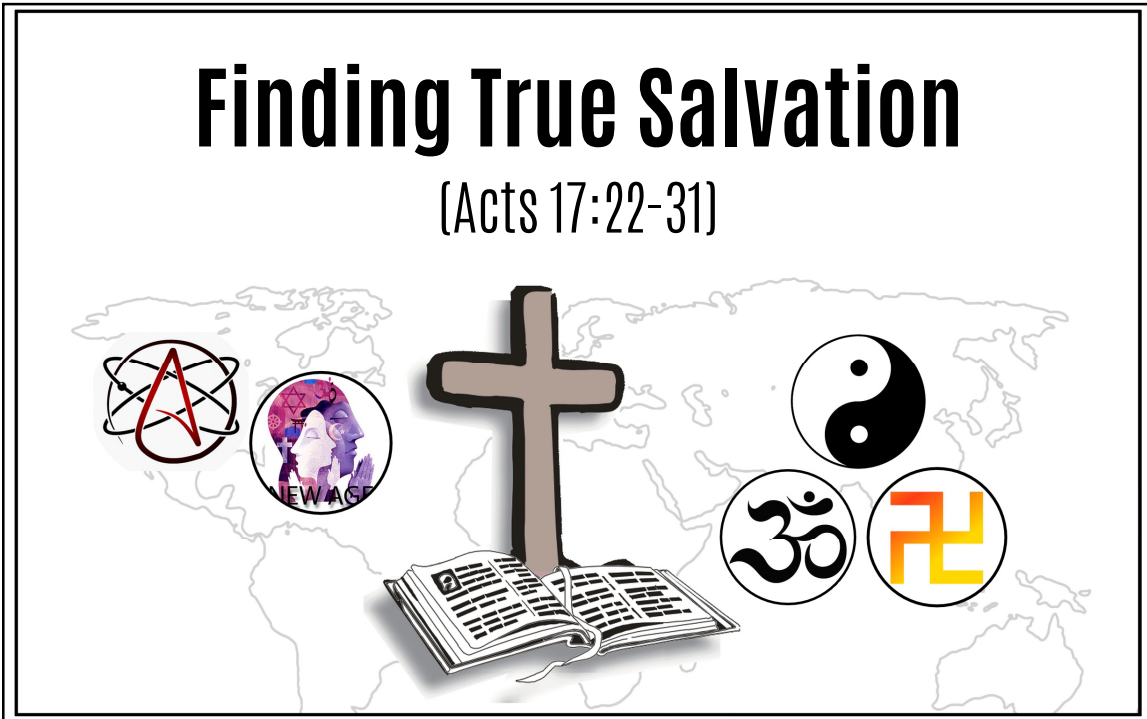


Finding True Salvation

(Acts 17:22-31)



Acts 17:22-26 (CSB)

²² Paul stood in the middle of the Areopagus and said, “People of Athens! I see that you are extremely religious in every respect.

²³ For as I was passing through and observing the objects of your worship, I even found an altar on which was inscribed, ‘To an Unknown God.’ Therefore, what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it—he is Lord of heaven and earth—does not live in shrines made by hands. ²⁵ Neither is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives everyone life and breath and all things. ²⁶ From one man he has made every nationality to live over the whole earth and has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of where they live.

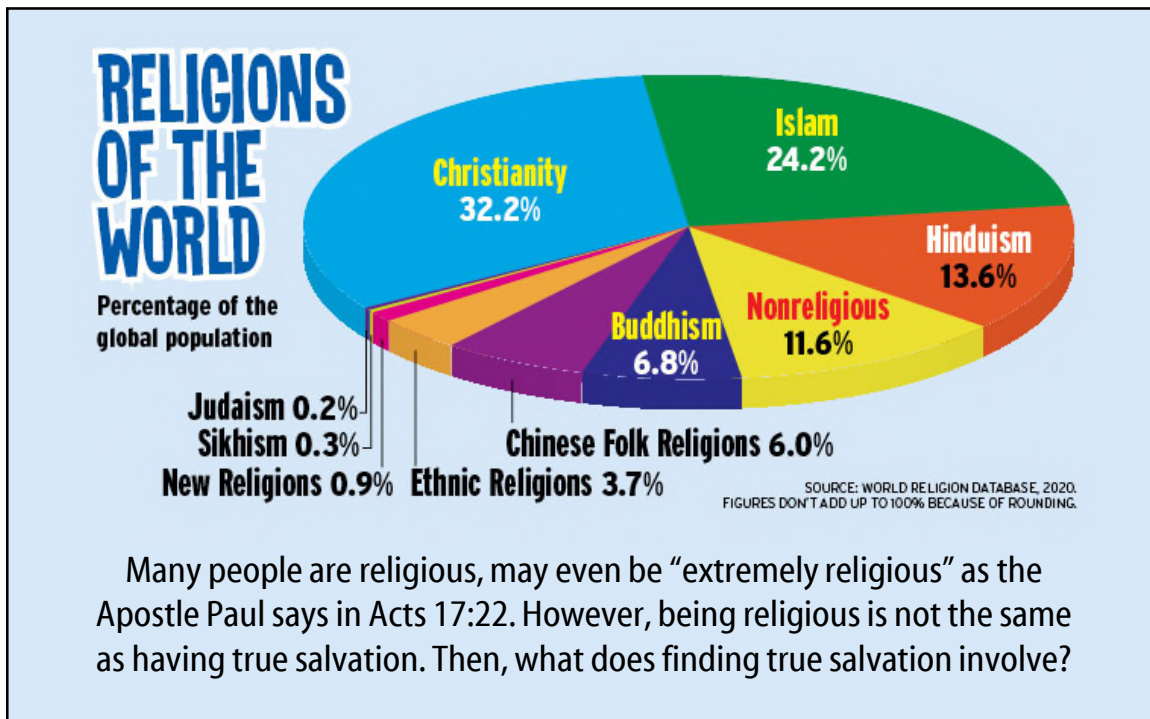
Acts 17:27-31 (CSB)

²⁷ He did this so that they might seek God, and perhaps they might reach out and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

²⁸ For in him we live and move and have our being, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also his offspring.'

²⁹ Since, then, we are God's offspring, we shouldn't think that the divine nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image fashioned by human art and imagination.

³⁰ "Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God now commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has set a day when he is going to judge the world in righteousness by the man he has appointed. He has provided proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead."



What does finding true salvation involve?
It involves turning to the one true God & receiving the one true Savior.

1. Turning to the one true God (17:22-29)

- God is not & cannot be an idol. (22-23, 28-29)
 - Idols are “objects.” (23)
 - Since we are God’s offspring, therefore idols must not be manmade objects. (28-29)
- God is the one Creator of life, specifically, human life. (24-25)
 - God gave us life. He brought us into existence.
 - We can’t give God His life. We don’t bring God into existence.
 - We may try to prove the existence of God. The truth is, we do not decide on God’s existence or not. God exists with or without us! He is our Creator, not vice versa.
- God does not depend on humans. (24-25)
 - God’s existence is not sustained by human care.
 - He doesn’t need any manmade home. He doesn’t need to be served or provided for for His existence. God doesn’t need our care in order to survive, but we need His.

Whether it is a small statue or the biggest one in the world, an idol is still just a manmade object created by human beings and idol worshippers. They know it, yet they still choose to worship their own creation.



An idol does not have the characteristics of God.
God does not have the characteristics of an idol.

1. Turning to the one true God (17:22-29)

- God is not & cannot be an idol. (22-23, 28-29)
- God is the one Creator of life, specifically, human life. (24-25)
- God does not depend on humans. (24-25)
- God found us in order to help us find Him! (26-28a)
 - God is intimately & sovereignly involved in our lives in order to help us find Him and turn to Him.
 - Note: God came to us first. He found us first.
 - How do I know that God found me? — Your encounter of the Bible, biblical teachings, Christians around you, answered prayers, questioning about life, hearing Jesus' name, coming to church, coming to USA, ... etc.
 - Experiencing God is one thing. Turning to Him is another.
How? We turn to God by believing in Jesus Christ.

1. Turning to the one true God (17:22-29)

2. Receiving the one true Savior, not a method (17:30-31)

By God's grace, He has provided for us one salvation from His final judgment through one Savior — the risen Christ.

- Self-initiated (30)
 - by God Himself. He reached out for us, esp. through Jesus Christ.
- Forgiveness of sins (30)
 - Finding true salvation is about turning to God who saves us from His final eternal judgment. It's not about rescuing us from suffering, poverty, bad relationships, Covid, cancer, ... dictators, terrorists, ... These are not what true salvation provides, but salvation from God's judgment.
- Gave us one Savior (31) — Jesus Christ
- Christ died & rose again! (31)
 - Both are critically important for true salvation!
 - Note: Sadly, many gospel tracts miss the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:1-4 (CSB)

¹ Now I want to make clear for you, brothers and sisters, the gospel I preached to you, which you received, on which you have taken your stand ² and by which you are being saved, if you hold to the message I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. ³ For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

Acts 4:12 (CSB)

¹ There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved.”

The major religions that we've looked at in this mini-series are vastly and fundamentally different from the Christian faith. They have all created their own gods for worship, and they all depend on their own human efforts to reach their preferred destiny, NOT true salvation.

(see the blue-highlighted notes in the following slides)

Buddhism's Major Belief

- Each human being is caught in a potentially never-ending cycle of reincarnations — people will return after death as various forms of living beings.
- The goal is to escape from this cycle of reincarnations (suffering).
- To escape, live by the "four noble truths" 四聖諦:
 1. *To live is to suffer.*
 2. *Suffering is caused by attachment to this life.*
 3. *The way to end suffering is by ending attachment to this life.*
 4. *We can end attachment to this life by following the "noble eightfold path." 八正道
(Yet, the eightfold path can only be achieved by a monk or nun.)*

- ***Traditional Buddhism** — **monks** who observe all the principles and achieves enlightenment will upon death enter the state of **nirvana** 涅槃.
 - “nirvana” means “blowing out” or “extinction” — the person loses his individual identity and thereby is liberated from the cycle of suffering.
- **Laypersons will not attain nirvana,**
 - but by accumulating merit through a righteous life and good deeds, they will be reborn into more favorable circumstances in their next lifetime.
- **Many Buddhas** before and after Gautama.
- **Bodhisattvas** 菩薩 — beings who are close to become Buddhas.

Hinduism Major Belief

- No mandatory set of beliefs
- It's virtually impossible to escape reincarnation
- Most Hindus agree on:
 1. *Life is hard and full of suffering*
 2. **Reincarnation** = die and then reborn into someone or something else
 3. **The law of karma** = cause and effect,
your actions in one life will have automatic repercussions in your following lives
- **Hinduism in all its forms attempts to find a way out of the seemingly never-ending cycle of reincarnations and to break the bondage of *karma*. Finding solution in one or more gods.**

- “**Way of knowledge**” = the most important problem of all human beings is that they have forgotten that they are living in an unreal world
- One true reality = **Brahman** (ultimate reality)
- **Self (atman)** — deep within ourselves, identical with Brahman, then escape from reincarnation, thus nirvana
- **Hindu gods — about 300 millions of them**
 - ✓ **Brahma** — the creator of the universe (different from Brahman above)
 - ✓ **Vishnu** — the preserver
 - ✓ **Shiva** — the destroyer of the world
- All have female counterpart
- **Avatars** = incarnations

Key Ideas of New Age

- **All the world’s great religions teach essentially the same truths**
 - God can be experienced through many paths and understood in many ways.
- **Human beings are divine.**
 - The universe came from an ultimate and single source, a divine energy.
 - God is all and all is God. “God” is the principle that is identified with the universe.
 - Emphasize the “*God within*,” our “*God consciousness*,” or the divinity of all humanity
 - They don’t talk about original sin or sins.
 - Rooted in Eastern religion and philosophy
 - e.g. The film “*Out on a Limb*” — Shirley MacLaine, “I Am God.”
- **Human beings have potential to achieve higher consciousness and divine perfection.**
 - This is at the heart of New Age belief.

Key Ideas of New Age

- **Reincarnation and karma provide the best explanation about the past and future of human beings.**
 - Influenced by Eastern religion, particularly Hindu teaching.
 - Emphasizes positive aspects of reincarnation & karma.
- **Psychic claims, channeling, astrology, crystals, and the occult world provides important paths and tools to achieve higher consciousness.**
- **Alternate and holistic medicine is a helpful corrective to the West's obsession with traditional Western medicine.**
 - Modern medicine reduces medicine to mere technology.
 - Accept almost anything in alternative medicine, e.g. acupuncture, reading body aura, talking to a dolphins for emotional health

1. Turning to the one true God (17:22-29)

2. Receiving the one true Savior, not a method (17:30-31)

By God's grace, He has provided for us one salvation from His final judgment through one Savior — the risen Christ.

- For true salvation, God gave us a Savior.
- Not a method, but a Savior — our gift of salvation!
- Not self-help, but Christ who saves us from God's judgment.
- Not dependence on our intelligence, our ability to find God or understand the truth, not on the number of times we pray in a day or how we worship, not on the power to achieve enlightenment or become gods.
- God gave us a Savior — only one Savior, one salvation!

**** Finding true salvation is simply turning to God
by receiving the one Savior — Jesus Christ.**

This is faith.

This is the Christian faith.



Sharing & Praying Together

1. Please share your experience:
How did you come to know Jesus Christ and receive Him as your Savior?
2. Are you sure of your salvation in Christ? Why or why not?