

don. It was then of the utmost importance to the Athenians that they should be well informed of his movements, that they might be able successfully to oppose him. Yet even at such a time they continued filling their ears with idle gossip, and neglecting the very matter which most pressingly concerned them.

And now a stranger appeared among them with news to tell. Every day he was in the market-place, talking with all who would listen. There was something about him very different from the other strangers who thronged the city. He was in deep earnest about the news he brought. It was not with him a mere tale of an hour. He spoke as a man whose spirit was mightily "stirred within him." Verse 16. Notice,

1. *What the news was.*

We are apt to think that the speech on Mars' hill summarizes the preaching of Paul at Athens. In point of fact, it was a defence of the doctrines which he had been preaching, and it was broken off abruptly by the impatience of the hearers. His preaching is really summarized in two words: "Jesus and the resurrection." Ver. 18. That the latter subject occupied a prominent part in his discourses is proved by the fact of many listeners declaring that he was setting forth two new gods for worship—Jesus and Anastasis (or the resurrection).

The city of Athens was the centre of the art and learning of the ancient world. Renowned philosophers had taught under its colonnades and beneath its shady groves, and it was adorned with the works of the finest artists. The "fashion of this world," in its most refined and lofty sense, here attained its completion. And the inhabitants were satisfied to live for the present without one thought of any future to come; some, like the Epicureans, seeking to get the greatest amount of enjoyment possible out of life, and some, like the Stoics, holding themselves proudly superior to surrounding circumstances. Paul came among them with the news of the future. There was to be another life after this. Their splendid sculptures and their systems of philosophy would pass away, but their dead would live again. This life was not all, there was another to come, and for all that was done in this life they must give an account.

In seasons of trouble or perplexity the Athenians were wont to have recourse to the numerous deities to whom they had erected altars. There was no lack of idols, whose aid they had often invoked. Yet none of these could arm them against this strange future, or deliver them from the judgment to come. But Paul brought them news of One who could save. They thought needful to propitiate their own deities in their favour.

But Paul told them of a God who cared for them, of a divine Saviour who was slain for them and rose again. The resurrection, that was for all, none could shirk it; the Saviour, his salvation was for all who received him. Did not this news concern them most deeply?

2. *How they received it.*

Some with contempt. In [the midst of their beautiful city, with all its wonderful productions of human thought, human imagination, human skill, which attracted travellers from all parts, it seemed absurd to talk to them of another life, when all this should have passed away. And what did they, the clever, the intellectual, the teachers of the old world, want with a Saviour, with one, too, whose distinction was that he died a death of shame? So they called Paul a "babbling."

Some with slight opposition. Such teaching was very different from the ordinary "new thing" which gave them a passing pleasure and excitement. It touched their pride, and it threatened their ease. So they began to denounce Paul as "a setter forth of strange gods," a thing contrary to Athenian law.

Yet there was no persecution. When Paul was taken before the great court which took cognizance of matters affecting religion and worship, he was received with courtesy and listened to, while he showed that his teaching was based on principles acknowledged by themselves (ver. 28), and dealt with matters on which they had confessed their need of enlightenment. Ver. 23. But directly the resurrection of Jesus was mentioned, they would hear no more. To some the thing was absurd, to some wearisome. And while a few accepted the glad tidings, Athens as a city gave no heed to "the things which belonged to her peace." Comp. Luke 19. 42. And we never read of Paul visiting Athens again.

Are there no Athenians now, living in the present only, ready to hear news, eager for some new tale, and yet missing the things that most concern them? There is a resurrection for all one day. There is a Saviour for all who will receive him now.

BEREAN METHODS.

Hints for the Teachers' Meeting and the Class.

Draw a map of Athens (see Lesson Commentary, page 71,) and show the location of Areopagus. . . . Then a word picture of Paul and his surroundings. . . . Show the purpose and line of thought in his address to present to the Athenians the true conception of God, as opposed to their idolatrous views. . . . the