

Acts 17:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

Analysis

God that made the world and all things therein (ὁ θεὸς ὁ ποιήσας τὸν κόσμον)—Paul's Areopagus address begins with divine transcendence. The verb *poiēsas* (made/created) echoes Genesis 1:1 in the Septuagint, establishing the God of Israel as Creator against Stoic pantheism and Epicurean deism. **Lord of heaven and earth** (κύριος ὑπάρχων οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς) asserts absolute sovereignty—the same *kyrios* title applied to Caesar, now claimed for Yahweh alone.

Dwelleth not in temples made with hands (οὐκ ἐν χειροποιήτοις ναοῖς κατοικεῖ)—Paul directly challenges both pagan shrines and Jewish misunderstanding of the temple. The term *cheiropoiētois* (hand-made) appears in Stephen's speech (7:48) and Hebrews 9:11, contrasting human-crafted sanctuaries with God's self-sufficiency. This demolishes the Athenian assumption that deity can be contained or manipulated through architecture—the very idolatry that provoked Paul (v. 16).

Historical Context

Paul spoke at the Areopagus (Mars Hill) circa AD 50, the Athenian council court where philosophy and religion were debated. Athens was filled with temples and shrines to countless deities, including an altar 'to the unknown god' (v. 23). Paul's sermon strategically engages Greek philosophy while subverting it with biblical theology, quoting pagan poets to redirect them to the true Creator.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing God as Creator and Lord challenge modern attempts to domesticate or control Him through religious performance?
2. What 'temples made with hands' might you be relying on instead of encountering the transcendent, self-sufficient God Paul proclaimed?

Interlinear Text

ο	θεὸς	ο	ποιήσας	τὸν	κόσμον	καὶ	πάντα	τὰ	ἐν
G3588	God	G3588	that made	G3588	the world	and	all things	G3588	in
G2316			G4160		G2889	G2532	G3956		G1722
αὐτῷ	οὗτος	οὐρανοῦ	καὶ	γῆς	κύριος	ὑπάρχων	οὐκ		
G846	seeing that he	of heaven	and	earth	Lord	is	not		
	G3778	G3772	G2532	G1093	G2962	G5225			G3756
ἐν	χειροποιήτοις	ναοῖς	κατοικεῖ						
in	made with hands	temples	dwelleth						
G1722	G5499	G3485	G2730						

Additional Cross-References

1 Kings 8:27 (References God): But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?

Deuteronomy 10:14 (References God): Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD'S thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is.

Acts 7:48 (Creation): Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet,

Isaiah 66:1 (References Lord): Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?

2 Chronicles 6:18 (References God): But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!

Matthew 11:25 (References Lord): At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

Psalms 115:16 (References Lord): The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD'S: but the earth hath he given to the children of men.

2 Chronicles 2:6 (Parallel theme): But who is able to build him an house, seeing the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him? who am I then, that I should build him an house, save only to burn sacrifice before him?

Revelation 20:11 (Parallel theme): And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

Acts 4:24 (Creation): And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: