



WOW: Word Of the Week

Ethnos

July 1, 2020

Text: Acts 17:24-27

You perhaps do not recognize this week's "Word Of the Week." This Greek word means nation. For example, in Matthew 28:19, Jesus told his disciples to "disciple all the nations." An interesting use of the word is in Acts 17:24-27.

²⁴ **God** --

the one having made the world and all things in it,

he, being lord of heaven and earth does not live in hand-made temples,

²⁵ Nor having any additional need to be served by the hands of human beings,

He himself giving to all life and breath and all things --

²⁶ **He (God)** made from one blood every ethnos / nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth,

Having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of the places where they live, ²⁷ *for them* to seek God if they might touch and verify him and find him.

God, the one being not far from each one of us.

Paul's sermon on the Areopagus in Athens presents powerful truths – about God, about us as human beings. My translation is not the smoothest, but I want to show the construction of the text. Three times Paul mentions God. First, **God** is described by four participles – having made the world, being lord of heaven and earth, not having any need for human help, giving life and breath to all. Then, Paul states what God has done. The main verb is in v. 26, followed by two more participles. **God** made every ethnos (nation) from one blood, determining their times and places so they would seek him, verify his existence, and find him – **God**, the one being not far from us.

The primary focus of the passage is on God and his creative action. God created all things. God created all the nation groups that live on the earth from one blood. The ethnos (ethnic groups) have the same source, one blood. God have given order to the ethnos, determining times and places with one goal in mind – to encourage human beings to seek him, verify his existence, and find him. God makes the discovery easier – he exists not far away from his human creation.

Time is short. What the text says summarized in five points.

- God made the ethnos, the nations, the ethnic groups.
- God used the same "stuff," one blood, to make the nations. Blood types are not ethnic specific.
- God determined the times and places where ethnic groups would live.
- God wants every ethnos to look for him and find him. God did not leave himself without a witness – he can be "verified by contact." Contact with a spiritual God is not accomplished by physical touch.
- God facilitates the discovery – he makes himself accessible, he is near, he is not far away.

Four biblical principles are stated in these verses.

- All humanity is created in the image and likeness of God, Gen. 1:26-27.
- When the Bible says all have sinned, the word "all" includes every ethnic group, Rom. 3:23.
- All people are equal at the foot of the cross, with equal access to God restored through Christ, through one Spirit, Eph. 2:14-18.
- The gospel is for all. God's presence in this world is to be preached to all nations, urging the search, praying for the finding, making him known, Matt. 28:18-20.

The fulfillment of God's eternal plan for the ethnos / nations will only come to pass as all peoples seek God and find God. Paul continues his sermon in Acts 17 by saying that God's plan for all humanity is fulfilled in repentance, becoming participants in the resurrection of Jesus.

Will you pray with me today for the nations? A simple prayer will do – may it be! May it be! Amen!