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*As Revised In 1928*), A BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxxiv (South Africa 1954);  
*A Table of Lessons (authorized by the Episcopal Synod)*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxxiii (CIPBC 1963).

<sup>2</sup> I Kings 12:1-end (KJV).

<sup>3</sup> I Kings 13:1-32 (KJV).

<sup>4</sup> *Wisdom* 7:15—8:1 (KJV).

<sup>5</sup> Acts 17:16-end (KJV).

<sup>6</sup> Acts 17:16 (KJV).

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## SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER The Eighth Sunday after Trinity

### Lessons:<sup>1</sup>

**The First Lesson:** Here beginneth the twelfth Chapter of the First Book of the Kings, commonly called the Third Book of the Kings.<sup>2</sup>

“And Rehoboam [ree-huh-BOW-umm] went to Shechem [SHECK-umm]: for all Israel were come to Shechem [SHECK-umm] to make him king. And it came to pass, when Jeroboam [dgair-uh-BOW-umm] the son of Nebat [KNEE-bat], who was yet in Egypt, heard of it, (for he was fled from the presence of king Solomon, and Jeroboam [dgair-uh-BOW-umm] dwelt in Egypt;) That they sent and called him. And Jeroboam [dgair-uh-BOW-umm] and all the congregation of Israel came, and spake unto Rehoboam [ree-huh-BOW-umm], saying, Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee. And he said unto them, Depart yet for three days, then come again to me. And the people departed.

“And king Rehoboam [ree-huh-BOW-umm] consulted with the old men, that stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, and said, How do ye advise that I may answer this people? And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever. But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, and which stood before him: And he said unto them, What counsel give ye that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us lighter? And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins. And now whereas my father did

lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

“So Jeroboam [dgair-uh-BOW-umm] and all the people came to Rehoboam [ree-huh-BOW-umm] the third day, as the king had appointed, saying, Come to me again the third day. And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men’s counsel that they gave him; And spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the LORD, that he might perform his saying, which the LORD spake by Ahijah [uh-HIGH-dguh] the Shilonite [SHY-low-night] unto Jeroboam [dgair-uh-BOW-umm] the son of Nebat [KNEE-bat].

“So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents. But as for the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam [ree-huh-BOW-umm] reigned over them. Then king Rehoboam [ree-huh-BOW-umm] sent Adoram [uh-DOE-ramm], who was over the tribute; and all Israel stoned him with stones, that he died. Therefore king Rehoboam [ree-huh-BOW-umm] made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem. So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day. And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam [dgair-uh-BOW-umm] was come again, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only.

“And when Rehoboam [ree-huh-BOW-umm] was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, with the tribe of Benjamin, an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam [ree-huh-BOW-umm] the son of Solomon. But the word of God came unto Shemaiah [shih-MAY-

The final outcome of this trial was positive. Paul was found, if not innocent, at least not guilty, and permitted to go his way. Although apparently not many were convicted in their hearts, we’re told one convert was “Dionysius the Aeropagite”. So here we have a man who’s named after one of the Greek gods, who is a member of the Council of the Aeropagus (think of it as the Supreme Court). Even if Paul’s converts were few in number, they were high in quality, and gave hope for the future. Not again would a Christian be brought before the Athenian High Court for his beliefs. And, eventually, the Christian Church became well-established in Athens.

If Paul wrote any Epistles to the Athenians, they have not survived. A shame, as it would have been most instructive for how we should deal with a skeptical academic crowd. We could certainly use such instruction today!

### Conclusion:

In closing, I’d like to make reference to our First Lesson. In it, King Solomon asks God for wisdom, and receives not merely wisdom, but many of the earthly goods one might desire. Let us, like Solomon, ask God for the wisdom to deal with the world, and to help us, like Paul, to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

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St. Michael’s Anglican Catholic Church      September 25, 2011  
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<sup>1</sup> *An Alternative Table of Lessons (The Table of 1922, As Revised in 1928)*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER, WITH THE ADDITIONS AND DEVIATIONS PROPOSED IN 1928 40 (Canterbury Press 2008); *The Table of Lessons (The Table of 1922,*

Perhaps you remember Socrates' end: he was forced to drink hemlock poison for "irreligiosity" for impugning the Greek gods.

Now here comes Paul, teaching about this "new" God about whom the Greeks knew nothing. Had he confined himself to the synagogue, the philosophers and Athenian authorities probably wouldn't have taken notice of him, but his public preaching in the Agora crossed the line. Worse yet, he was talking about human resurrection, which the Greeks "knew" to be wrong (at least on the basis of their philosophies).

Paul was taken to the Aeropagus, where he was to be questioned by the philosophers. Now the Aeropagus was where the Athenian High Court of Justice met. If I recall correctly, convicted traitors were hurled from the rock ledge of the hill to their deaths. So Paul's discourse with the philosophers should most probably be viewed from our perspective as a trial -- one with capital punishment as a possible outcome.

But Paul knew that God had led him to this situation, and would stand by and take care of him in the trial. He had been commanded to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, and here were Gentiles who were clearly heathen idol worshippers who needed to hear the Word.

In this (sometimes known as Paul's Athenian sermon), Paul did not water down the Gospel one iota. He did, however, turn the tables on his accusers (who are somewhat unclear in this description -- were they the Athenian Jews or the philosophers?) by using their own works against them.

He refers them to their own altar dedicated to "The Unknown God", which stood prominently in the Agora. He points out to them that they, themselves, have thereby established the worship of the one, true, and living God, even though they themselves did not know Him, nor understand His hand in creation.

**uh]** the man of God, saying, Speak unto Rehoboam [**ree-huh-BOW-umm**], the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the remnant of the people, saying, Thus saith [**SETH**] the LORD, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is from me. They hearkened therefore to the word of the LORD, and returned to depart, according to the word of the LORD.

"Then Jeroboam [**dgair-uh-BOW-umm**] built Shechem [**SHECK-umm**] in mount Ephraim [**EE-frih-ihm**], and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Penuel [**pih-NYOO-ell**]. And Jeroboam [**dgair-uh-BOW-umm**] said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam [**ree-huh-BOW-umm**] king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam [**ree-huh-BOW-umm**] king of Judah. Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Beth-el, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi [**LEE-vigh**]. And Jeroboam [**dgair-uh-BOW-umm**] ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Beth-el [**BETH-ull**], sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Beth-el [**BETH-ull**] the priests of the high places which he had made. So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Beth-el [**BETH-ull**] the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense."

*Or,*

Here beginneth the thirteenth Chapter of the First Book of the Kings, commonly called the Third Book of the Kings.<sup>3</sup>

“And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the LORD unto Beth-el [**BETH-ull**]: and Jeroboam [*dgair-uh-BOW-umm*] stood by the altar to burn incense. And he cried against the altar in the word of the LORD, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith [**SETH**] the LORD; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah [*joe-SIGH-uh*] by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men’s bones shall be burnt upon thee. And he gave a sign the same day, saying, This is the sign which the LORD hath spoken; Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out. And it came to pass, when king Jeroboam [*dgair-uh-BOW-umm*] heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar in Beth-el [**BETH-ull**], that he put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay hold on him. And his hand, which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him. The altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD. And the king answered and said unto the man of God, Intreat now the face of the LORD thy God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored me again. And the man of God besought the LORD, and the king’s hand was restored him again, and became as it was before. And the king said unto the man of God, Come home with me, and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward. And the man of God said unto the king, If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place: For so was it charged me by the word of the LORD, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest. So he went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Beth-el [**BETH-ull**].

“Now there dwelt an old prophet in Beth-el [**BETH-ull**]; and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Beth-el [**BETH-ull**]: the words which he had spoken unto the king, them they told also to their father. And their

## Homily:

Our Second Lesson, from the Book of Acts, fails to convey its full meaning to us today without some additional instruction. It seems to be a nice story of Paul’s interaction with the Athenians, and his preaching the Gospel to them. A good deal more, however, is implied which would have been understood all too well in Paul’s day.

Let’s reconstruct what happened.

In the synagogue in Athens, Paul had taught and debated with the Jews resident there. Presumably he made little headway, as he then seems to have taken to preaching the Gospel in the Agora, the marketplace of Athens.

Now, at this time, Athens was, along with Alexandria, one of the two most noted centers of learning in the world. Although Plato was some three centuries dead and gone, his Academy still functioned in Athens -- justly famed as “Academia”. Philosophers of many schools of thought were teaching in Athens; although each held his philosophical position to be better than any other, they were (as a rule) courteous to each other, and respectful of the other’s views and position. They competed for students; as there was no public education, each of these was, in some sense, his own university.

While basic education was taught (at least to the wealthy) by tutors in most cities, these were the ultimate scholars, who would not demean themselves by taking such a common (even if lucrative) position as tutoring, but rather sought students to come to them, and provide support for their education. Socrates, in his lifetime, had been one of their number, as were Plato and Aristotle after him. Aristotle had, of course, somewhat demeaned himself by becoming a tutor, but since his pupil was Alexander the Great, he was somewhat forgiven this.

hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. 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; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

“And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. So Paul departed from among them. Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

**Text:**

From the Second Lesson: “Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.”<sup>6</sup> In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

father said unto them, What way went he? For his sons had seen what way the man of God went, which came from Judah. And he said unto his sons, Saddle me the ass. So they saddled him the ass: and he rode thereon, And went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak: and he said unto him, Art thou the man of God that camest from Judah? And he said, I am. Then he said unto him, Come home with me, and eat bread. And he said, I may not return with thee, nor go in with thee: neither will I eat bread nor drink water with thee in this place: For it was said to me by the word of the LORD, Thou shalt eat no bread nor drink water there, nor turn again to go by the way that thou camest. He said unto him, I am a prophet also as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the LORD, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. But he lied unto him. So he went back with him, and did eat bread in his house, and drank water.

“And it came to pass, as they sat at the table, that the word of the LORD came unto the prophet that brought him back: And he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, saying, Thus saith [SETH] the LORD, Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the LORD, and hast not kept the commandment which the LORD thy God commanded thee, But camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place, of the which the LORD did say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water; thy carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers. And it came to pass, after he had eaten bread, and after he had drunk, that he saddled for him the ass, to wit, for the prophet whom he had brought back. And when he was gone, a lion met him by the way, and slew him: and his carcase was cast in the way, and the ass stood by it, the lion also stood by the carcase. And, behold, men passed by, and saw the carcase cast in the way, and the lion standing by the carcase: and they came and told it in the city where the old prophet dwelt.<sup>6</sup> And when the prophet that brought him back from the way heard thereof, he said, It is the man of God, who was disobedient unto the word of the LORD: therefore the LORD hath delivered him unto the lion, which hath torn him, and slain him, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake unto him. And he spake to his sons,

saying, Saddle me the ass. And they saddled him. And he went and found his carcase cast in the way, and the ass and the lion standing by the carcase: the lion had not eaten the carcase, nor torn the ass. And the prophet took up the carcase of the man of God, and laid it upon the ass, and brought it back: and the old prophet came to the city, to mourn and to bury him. And he laid his carcase in his own grave; and they mourned over him, saying, Alas, my brother! And it came to pass, after he had buried him, that he spake to his sons, saying, When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre wherein the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones: For the saying which he cried by the word of the LORD against the altar in Beth-el [BETH-ull], and against all the houses of the high places which are in the cities of Samaria, shall surely come to pass.”

*Or,*

Here beginneth the fifteenth Verse of the seventh Chapter of the Wisdom of Solomon.<sup>4</sup>

“... God hath granted me to speak as I would, and to conceive as is meet for the things that are given me: because it is he that leadeth unto wisdom, and directeth the wise. For in his hand are both we and our words; all wisdom also, and knowledge of workmanship. For he hath given me certain knowledge of the things that are, namely, to know how the world was made, and the operation of the elements: The beginning, ending, and midst of the times: the alterations of the turning of the sun, and the change of the seasons: The circuits of years, and the positions of stars: The natures of living creatures, and the furies of wild beasts: the violence of winds, and the reasonings of men: the diversities of plants, and the virtues of roots: And all such things as are either secret or manifest, them I know. For wisdom, which is the worker of all things, taught me: for in her is an understanding spirit, holy, one only, manifold, subtil, lively, clear, undefiled, plain, not subject to hurt, loving the thing that is good, quick, which cannot be letted, ready to do good. Kind to man, stedfast, sure, free from

care, having all power, overseeing all things, and going through all understanding, pure, and most subtil, spirits. For wisdom is more moving than any motion: she passeth and goeth through all things by reason of her pureness. For she is the breath of the power of God, and a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty: therefore can no defiled thing fall into her. For she is the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness. And being but one, she can do all things: and remaining in herself, she maketh all things new: and in all ages entering into holy souls, she maketh them friends of God, and prophets. For God loveth none but him that dwelleth with wisdom. For she is more beautiful than the sun, and above all the order of stars: being compared with the light, she is found before it. For after this cometh night: but vice shall not prevail against it.

“Wisdom reacheth fro one end to another mightily: and sweetly doth she order all things.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

**The Second Lesson:** Here beginneth the sixteenth Verse of the seventeenth Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.<sup>5</sup>

“Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection. And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.) Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars’