



Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious."

ACTS 17:22



"For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: To An Unknown God."

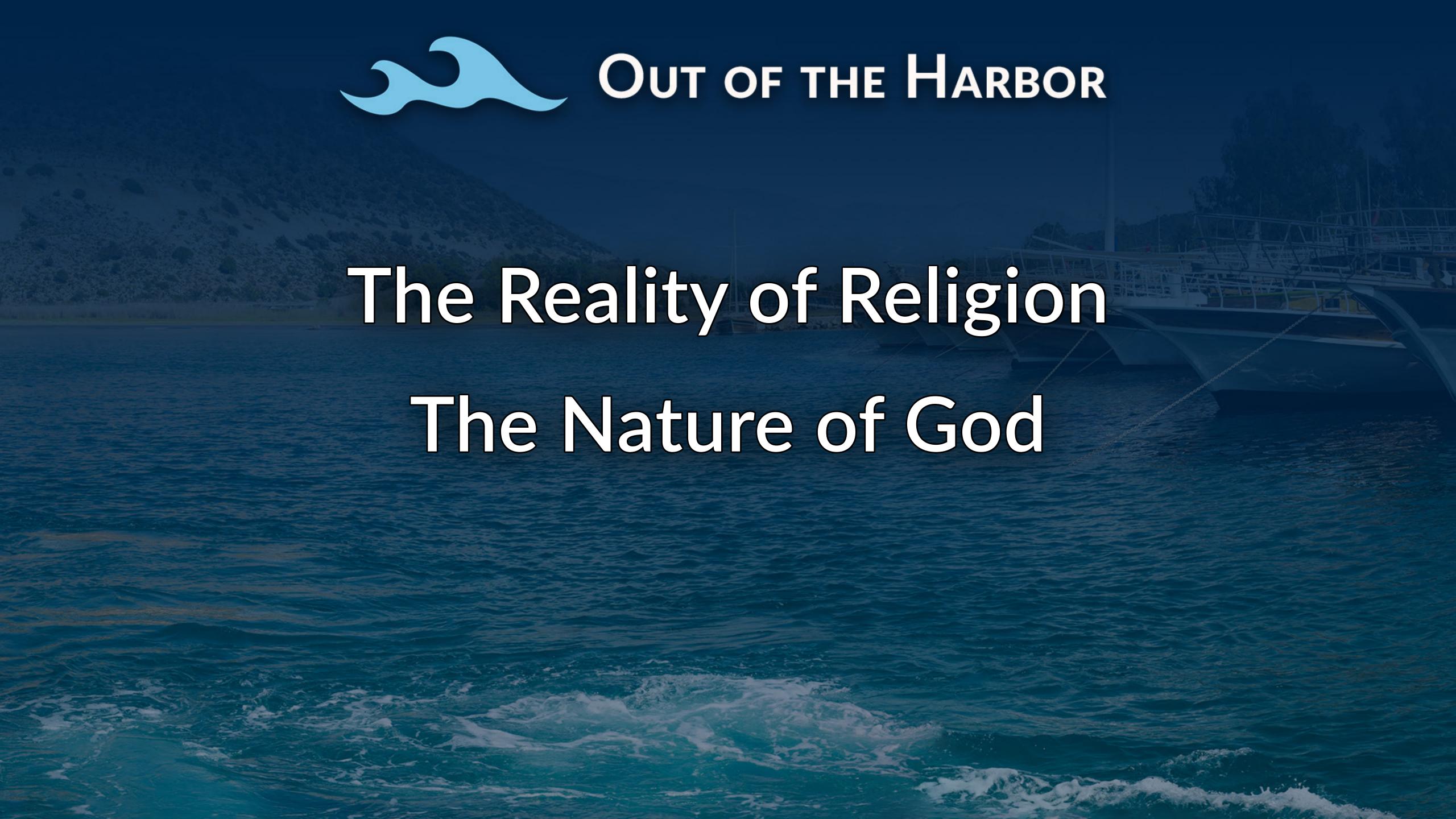
ACTS 17:23

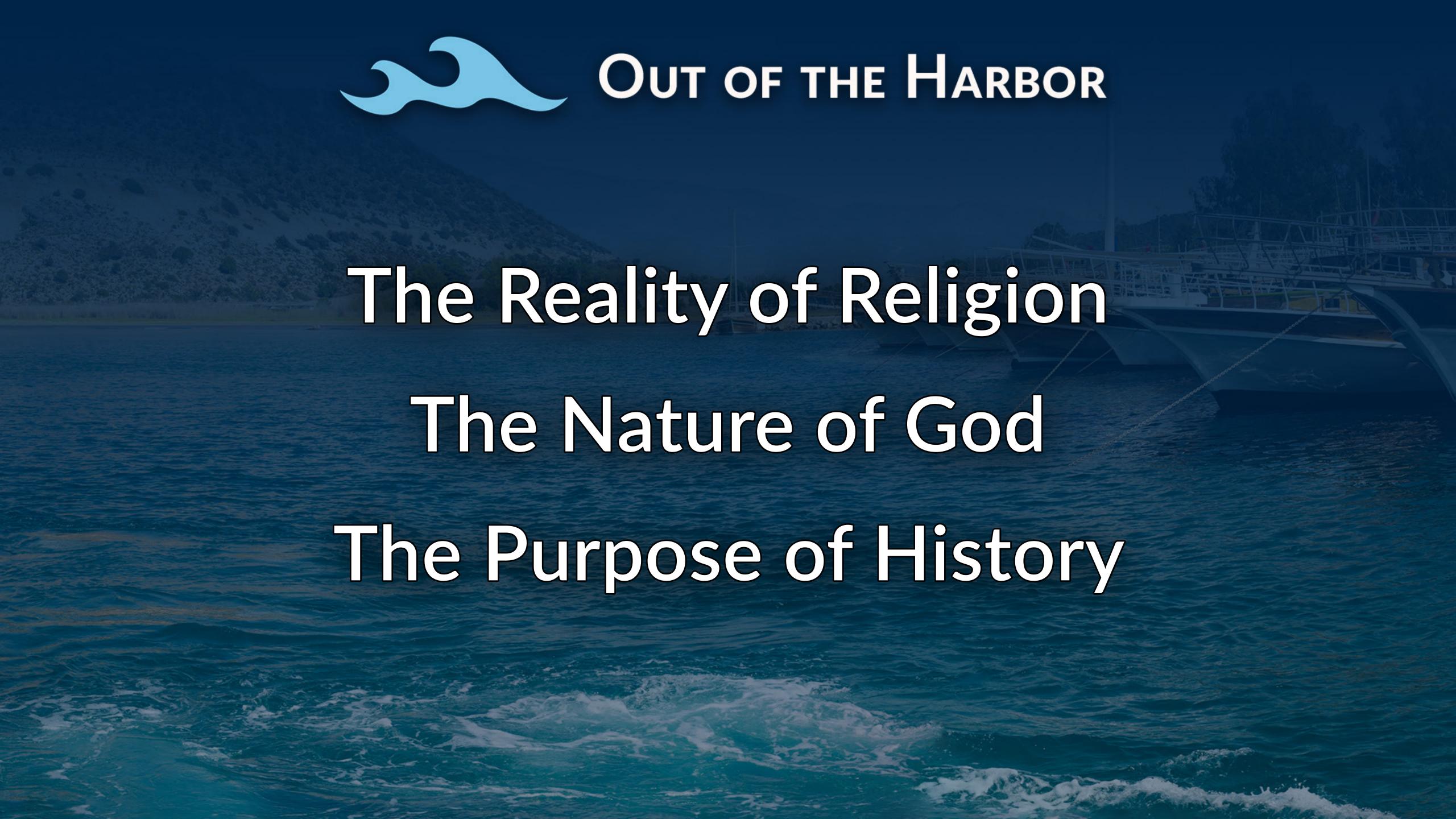


"So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship and this is what I am going to proclaim to you."

ACTS 17:23









The Reality of Religion The Nature of God The Purpose of History The Necessity of Salvation



The Pervasive Nature of Religion (17:22)

To be human is to orient your life around the worship of something or someone.



People pursue religion in order to run to God and to run from God, sometimes at the same time.



"Paul is not picking a fight in his evangelistic approach. He's meeting people on their terms and in a way that is fair and acceptable to them."

PASTOR ZAC HESS



The Typical Speculation of Religion (17:23a)

Human worship reflects what we believe is worthy of our affections and allegiance.



Any religious expression that results in or reflects worship of counterfeit gods (anyone other than the true God as revealed in Jesus Christ) is idolatry, even when cultures can explain or approve of it.



"Idolatry is the attempt either to localize God or to alienate God. Idolatry tries to minimize the gulf between the Creator and His creatures...so that we presume to imagine that we can create and rule God."



"The unknown god is a convenient object of belief, since its character is a matter for me to decide. It cannot challenge me or pose radical questions to me."

LESLIE NEWBIGIN



"People are not empty hard drives waiting for us to download our Christian files onto them. Rather, they have inevitably developed an array of alternative worldviews."





The Christian Answer to Religion (17:23b)

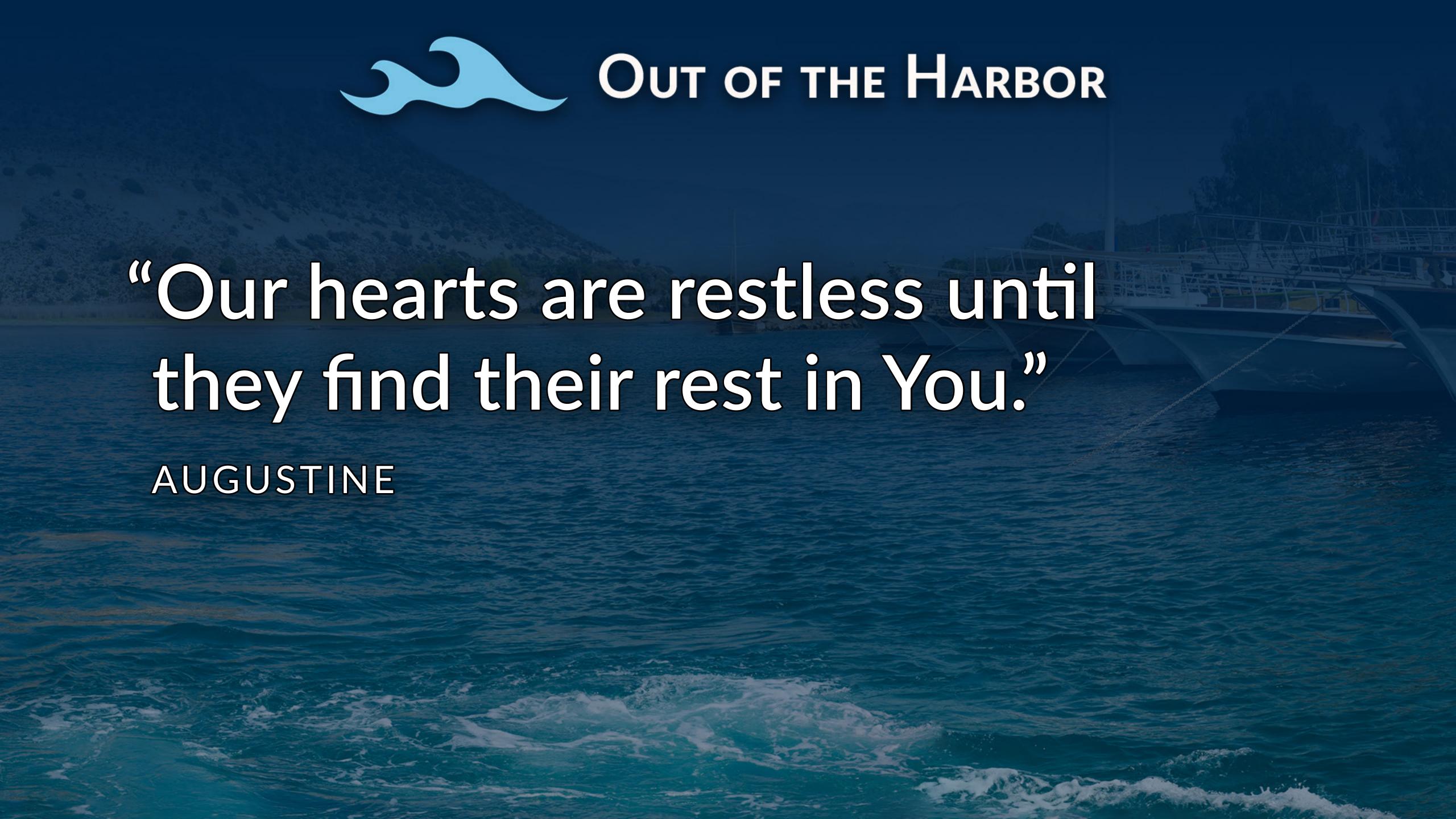
God's revelation — ultimately in Jesus — identifies the only worthy object of our worship.



Religious expression and worship are gifts from God when they find fulfillment in God himself rather than the frustration of empty ritual.



For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and detestable idolatry.





"Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You."

AUGUSTINE

If Jesus is a square peg, everything else is a round hole.



"Paul is not saying here that people can find God solely by following their felt needs and aspirations. They need the Gospel, which alone truly fulfills those needs and aspirations."

AJITH FERNANDO



"Christians must be sensitive to people's needs and aspirations, see how Christ meets them, and use them as stepping stones for communicating the Gospel."

AJITH FERNANDO





Paul built Gospel bridges on the spiritual aspirations of others.



Onlyworship of Jesus fulfils a person's aspirations.



