

Acts 17:24-31 (NIV)

²⁴“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. ²⁵And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. ²⁶From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. ²⁷God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. ²⁸‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’ ²⁹“Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man’s design and skill. ³⁰In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. ³¹For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”

44-17-02-God’s Ultimatum in Christ

Easter, Gospel, Incarnation, Resurrection, humanity, salvation
Acts 17:24-31

God intends for Jesus and His resurrection to change everyone’s mind.

INTRODUCTION: (text as Scripture Reading)

–When Paul preached in Athens, it says in **Acts 17:18**, A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, “What is this babbling trying to say?” Others remarked, “He seems to be advocating foreign gods.” They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. Paul’s preaching raised a controversy because of 2 critical points: 1) the *person of Jesus Christ*, and 2) the *resurrection*.

–Today’s world is much like Athens in Paul’s day. People hold varying beliefs about *God, life, values, priorities*. Say “*Jesus is God’s Son*” or talk about *bodily resurrection*, and you might soon be in a debate, as Paul was. Yet these 2 major Gospel elements of “Jesus and the resurrection” form the most *human-friendly* message in existence. In Christ, God not only became one of us to be our Savior but He offers us spiritual new birth that will ultimately restore what is lost through physical death. No matter what beliefs people are now holding on to, **HOM.idea**.

I. Human Beliefs Are Not Always *Human-Friendly*

A. Most philosophies contain truth, without being fully true:

1. The **Stoics** taught *pantheism*—that the universe *is* God ... that to *study* it, *discover* its laws, and *follow* them is the true way to live.
2. The **Epicureans** taught *materialism*—that *human life* is nothing more than what is experienced through *the bodily senses*.
3. These 2 belief-systems focused on the *material* world as the central reality, but a 3rd Greek philosophy, **Gnosticism**, called *matter* ‘evil’ and that only the spiritual world was important.
4. Paul answered all 3 of these— **v.24-25**, “*The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.*”
 - a. The *material* **and** *spiritual* realms are *good*, because God made them both. (We are *part of both realms*, but we can’t confine our Maker either in *material temples* or in *mental concepts*.)
 - b. Humans depend on this Creator for “*life and breath and everything*”

else.” (*Belief-systems* start here, or they’re not *human-friendly!*)

- B. Knowing their differing ideas about *God* and *life*, Paul told them*
1. *that God is Ruler over human differences— v.26, *From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.*
 2. *that God wants us to rediscover Him— v.27-28, *God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’*
(Human discord isn’t human-friendly, but seeking and finding our Creator is, for it’s humanity’s only way to *true unity*.)

TRANS: Those claiming to promote humanity’s best interests promise us *peace*, but *peaceful unity* never comes. There’s no end to differing cultural goals, opposing political agendas, conflicting philosophical viewpoints, clashing racial-group demands. These are all *man-created* and *man-centered*, yet **none** of them are *mankind-friendly*. Humanity’s true unity can only be found in humanity’s true Maker. And...

II. God’s Point of View *IS* the Most *Human-Friendly* Viewpoint

- A. *Life’s meaning* and *spiritual peace* can’t be manufactured— v.29,
“*Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man’s design and skill.*”
1. When God is represented by “*gold or silver or stone*,” it places Him lower than us, who are made in His image. (This makes our own *self-concept*—our human identity— come up *short of reality*.)
 2. These kind of *philosophies* or *religious beliefs* aren’t really human-friendly: they **can’t** meet our need for *spiritual peace*.
- B. Through the ages, God tolerated dysfunctional thinking like this,
1. But finally—in the most human-friendly way possible—God showed up: He literally *became one of us... a real human being*.
 2. Christ’s *Incarnation* laid the foundation for His “Ultimatum” to the lost race of Adam. (This was Paul’s message to the Athenian philosophers— v.30, “*In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent* [“to change (their) mind.”].”
- C. Despite all these differences in culture or philosophy, “*all people everywhere*” are commanded by God “to *repent*.” *Why?* Because...
1. God “*will judge*” **all** the “*world with justice* by the man he has appointed.” (A divine judgment of human deeds can only be carried out with

perfect “*justice*” by a *perfect human judge*, and because our race could not produce one, God Himself became a human in Christ.)

2. The **good news** of the *Incarnation* is that our sins were paid for by Christ’s bodily death on the Cross. (*Our faith* can personally access the free salvation His sacrifice provided there by grace.)
 3. The **bad news** is that those who don’t change their minds—who reject Christ’s offer and retain their own ways of thinking and living—must face that divine “justice” entirely on their own...
- D. God dramatically confirmed His universal claim on human history 3 days after Christ’s death on the Cross— (repeating from v.31), “*For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.*”
- a. Death is humanity’s universal enemy. (Since Jesus defeated death by *resurrection*, He now legitimately holds the place of *eternal Leadership* over the new humanity that God is creating.
 - b. Christ’s resurrection is our ultimate hope, because it provides for those *in Christ* both a spiritual and a physical destiny that matches our true, body-spirit human nature. (Between *physical birth and death*, He gives us spiritual new birth. After death, on *Resurrection Day*, He will give us bodily rebirth.)

CONCLUSION:

–**God intends for Jesus and His resurrection to change everyone’s mind**. This *change* isn’t some austere, tyrannical commandment, but God’s gracious but sober offer for us to get back on track with His purposes for humanity. Christ’s resurrection allows Him, as an *eternal Human Being*, to lead us personally in that glorious eternal destiny.
–Next to His *Incarnation*, the *Resurrection of Jesus* is the most human-friendly event in all history! **No philosophy or religion, can top what God has in store** for His *born-again* and *bodily-restored* children.
–**If this resurrection Gospel hasn’t yet changed your own mind** and brought you *new birth in Christ*, it can do so this very moment. Simply, make an ‘about face’ from trying to live your earthly life on your own, and ask Him to come into your heart. **But if**—through this “good news about Jesus and the resurrection”—this gift of new birth is already yours, then be like Paul and invite others to join on this wonderful journey of faith in Jesus.