

44-17-02.wpd --The Ultimatum of Christ's Resurrection
Easter, Gospel, Incarnation, Resurrection, humanity, salvation
Acts 17:24-31

The resurrection of Christ ought 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*.

--Athens in Paul's day was much like our modern world. People have many differing beliefs *about God, about life, about what's important*. Anyone who says, "Jesus is Lord," or mentions a physical resurrection of the body can quickly find themselves in a debate as Paul did. Yet these 2 major elements in the Gospel that Paul was preaching, are the most human-friendly doctrines the world could ever ask for. Not only did *God become human to be humanity's Savior*, but *the salvation He offers goes beyond a full restoration of what is lost in death*. No matter how people at their beliefs, **HOM.idea**.

I. Human Beliefs Are Not Always Human-friendly

A. Philosophies may contain truth, but they always miss something:

1. The Stoics taught that the universe is God, and studying it, discovering its laws, and living by them is the true way to live.
2. The Epicureans taught that man's life is not more than his experience of sensations through the bodily senses.
3. Both of them saw the material world as the central reality, and another popular Greek philosophy, Gnosticism, argued that only the spiritual world was true and the physical world evil.
4. Paul answers all three of these philosophies in the following words, **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.*" (The physical and spiritual world are not the central reality. God made them both, and man who is part of them both, as a *spirit in a body*, cannot

capture that Creator God in human-built temples or in mental philosophies. Humans must look to that Creator for their "life and breath and everything else." Any belief system outside of that may appear to be human-friendly, but is NOT!)

- B. Paul, speaking to those with differing ideas about God and life, told them that God overruled their disagreements, and all human differences, whether *philosophical, national, cultural or racial*, **v.26-28**, 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. 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 dividedness is not human-friendly, but the problems of that disunity can lead us to seek the God Who created *humanity*... and in Him we can find our *true unity*.

TRANS: Peace is the goal of those who claim to promote the best interest of humanity. They may promise peace, but they fail to achieve the unity of humanity that peace requires. Why? Because all humans cannot be united around one culture's ideals, one political party's platform, one racial group's dominance, or one philosophy's viewpoint. All these are *man-centered* or *man-created*. Humanity's unity can only be found in humanity's Maker. No, human beliefs are not always human-friendly... But,

II. God's Point of View IS the Most Human-friendly Viewpoint

- A. Life's meaning and human peace & unity can't be man-made--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 man, made in God's image, represents God as something less than human, man's own idea of himself falls short of reality.
 2. Man-made philosophies and religions can never lead humanity to safety and peace, because they're not really *human-friendly*.
- B. God tolerated this kind of dysfunctional thinking down through history. But finally, God actually showed up, and in the most human-friendly way possible: by Incarnation. By becoming one of us, God laid a foundation for "His Ultimatum" to the lost race of Adam. This was the message Paul gave to the philosophers of Athens, **v.30**, "*In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he*

*commands all people everywhere to **repent** [metanoia, "change your mind."]."*

- C. Despite their differences in culture and philosophy, "all people everywhere" are commanded by God "to repent," **for these reasons:**
1. God "*will judge*" **all** the "*world with justice by the man he has appointed.*"
 - a. In God's estimation, the judgment of human deeds could not be carried out except by a perfect human, and since the race could not produce one, God Himself became a human in Christ.
 - b. The **good news** about the Incarnation is that our sins were paid for by Christ's death, and that our faith can personally access the salvation His sacrifice provided. The **bad news** is that those who won't change their minds, who won't repent of erroneous, ways of thinking and living, who reject God's plan in Christ, must face that judgment on their own, which will be a **disaster.**
 2. God's universal claim on human history was confirmed by what He did 3 days after Christ's crucifixion, 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, touching all people, and Christ's defeat of death by His resurrection confirms His place of eternal Leadership over the *new humanity* of God's plan.
 - b. Christ's bodily resurrection is God's ultimate human-friendly act, because it points to our own restoration to both a *physical* and *spiritual* destiny, which matches our true human nature. (Between *physical birth and death*, salvation is a *spiritual rebirth.* After death, resurrection will be our physical rebirth.)

CONCLUSION:

--**The resurrection of Christ ought to change everyone's mind.**

God's Ultimatum for us to *repent, to change our minds* to His way of thinking, is not an austere, tyrannical commandment, but a sober offer for us to get back on track with His purposes for humanity. Christ's resurrection as a *eternal Human Being* is His commitment to lead us personally in that glorious destiny. No human philosophy, no man-made religion is better than this. The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ in His physical body is the most human-friendly event in the history of this planet! Let's proclaim: He is risen! [He is risen indeed!]

Acts 17:24-31 (NIV) "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. {25} 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. {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. {27} 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. {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. {30} In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. {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."