

THE INCREDIBLE RACE NEEDS THE INCREDIBLE GOD

Acts 17:16-31

The human race is incredible...but the whole incredible race needs the incredible God...

1.BECAUSE THE INCREDIBLE GOD CREATED US – Acts 17:16-28

- What Paul saw – verse 16: A city full of idols and false ideas about God. It was a “buffet” or “smorgasbord” of gods. Paul was in Athens the philosophical/intellectual/cultural center of the ancient world. Today we live among different idols and the true and living God is still unknown to many. *“Our hearts are idol factories.” – John Calvin, 1500’s.*
- What Paul felt – verse 16: He was greatly distressed – his spirit was provoked within him. Does the idolatry of humanity ever bother you? – Ezekiel 9:4. *“I could not endure existence if Jesus was not glorified; it would be hell to me, if He were to be always...dishonoured.” – Henry Martyn, missionary to Persia, 1800’s.*
- What Paul did – verses 17 and 18: He went to the marketplace and Jewish synagogues, reasoning with them and seeking opportunities for the gospel. Eventually he was brought to speak in front of the Areopagus – the elite intellectuals of Athens including the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers. Epicureans believed everything was “random”, there was no surviving death and no judgment – so we should “eat, drink, and be merry” for tomorrow we die. The Epicurean goal of life was pleasure and enjoyment. Stoics believed in a one “world soul” or pantheism, that everything was determined by fate, and that people should seek harmony with nature, powers, etc. and submit to “what is” and endure pain. The Stoic goal of life was to “keep a stiff upper lip” and do the best we can under tough circumstances.
- What Paul said – verses 22-31: 1. God is our Creator – verses 24, 26. The Incredible One True God created all people from one man, Adam. We are not here by random or fate. We are personally created by the one true personal God. We are all of one blood and one race. 2. God is our Sustainer – verse 25. He is not in any way dependent on us. We are in every way dependent on Him! God needs nothing from us. We need Him. 3. God is the Ruler of the nations – verses 26-28. He is sovereign over all human history. God is not manipulated or controlled by humans. But He is intricately involved in every detail of human life.

2.BECAUSE THE INCREDIBLE GOD WILL JUDGE US – Acts 17:29-34

- The last point Paul makes about God is that He is our Judge - verse 29-31. We as His creatures are accountable to Him. He as our Creator has every right to say how He will be worshipped. Ignorance of Him is no excuse – Romans 1:20,21. God has been patient with humanity, but now commands all of us to repent- verse 30. Repentance is turning from our sin and turning to God – Acts 20:21; 26:18-20. Repentance is a spiritual U-turn, a new direction in life. All of the incredible race needs the incredible glorious God.
- The Judgment to come is based on our relationship and trust in Jesus. It is all about one Man and one Way – John 14:6. Jesus Himself will be the Judge – John 5:22,23. The race began with one man and ends with ONE MAN. Jesus’ right to judge is based on His righteousness, His humanity, and His resurrection from the dead -verse 31. He is exalted as Lord over all – Philippians 2:9-11.
- Your eternity is based on your response to God’s command to repent – verses 32-34.

- There is an ongoing struggle between tolerance and truth. In the ancient world people were tolerant of other gods and willing to incorporate local deities into the pantheon of gods. In the early centuries of the church Christians were called “haters of mankind” because they did not participate in the pagan festivities and worship of their communities. Today many think all paths in religion lead to the same place. They consider themselves tolerant. But God’s Word – truth – says all other ways are incompatible with Christianity. There is only One Way to God through Jesus. We are not “haters of mankind” today either. We are still called to lovingly proclaim truth, not bow to the idol of tolerance. But we are called to win people to Christ, not just win arguments – 1 Peter 3:15,16. Our world wants easy answers, but in Jesus we are offering eternal hope.
- Because of modern ignorance of God, we need to start where Paul started with God as our Sovereign Creator. Until people realize they are accountable to their Creator, they will not see their need of a Savior. *“Till sin be bitter, Christ will not be sweet.” – Thomas Boston, 1600’s..*

Concluding applications:

- All of our race needs the One True Incredible God. Have you repented of your sin and turned to Jesus?
- Does the idolatry of the world and unbelievers disturb you so that you desire to share the true message of life in Jesus Christ?
- Don’t be ashamed of the one true incredible gospel in the face of opposition, but trust God for the results.
- Live out God’s truth in Jesus as well as speak the truth in love about Jesus.