**Act 17:17-31 Commentary**

**ACT 17:17 –**

THE JEWS AND THE GOD-FEARING GREEKS

The Gospel is a message for Jews and God-fearing people.*[cf. Act 13:16]*

It is not all men that have faith in God [2Th 3:2]

God… accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right [Act 10:34]

…children of Abraham, and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to you that this message has been sent. [Act 13:26]

**ACT 17:18 –**

HE SEEMS TO BE ADVOCATING FOREIGN GODS

The word here translated “gods”, is the same word translated in other places as “demon*s*” or “devils”. In other words, they considered demons to be gods.

**ACT 17:22 –**

MEN OF ATHENS! I SEE THAT IN EVERY WAY YOU ARE VERY RELIGIOUS

To have regard for deity, to have regard for God, to be religious is a good thing. Paul commends the Athenians as religious.

The Athenians were religious, which is a good thing, but they were idolatrous and ignorant of God and his ways. Paul commends them for their good, but does not fail to mention their sin and calls them repentance warning them of the coming judgment.

**LESSONS TO LEARN**

That a people are not Christians or observers of the Law of Moses does not mean that we are to condemn everything about them. if there is anything they have done or are doing right, we should not deny it.

As we can see from all that Paul says next, saying what is right or good about a person or people does not mean that we approve of all their ways or that we are saying that they have no faults that outweigh their good.

**ACT 17:23**

**ACT 17:23 –**

TO AN UNKNOWN GOD –

There is only one true God and the men of Athens did not know him. Therefore, it was he they were referring to as the Unknown God.

**ACT 17:23 –**

NOW WHAT YOU WORSHIP AS SOMETHING UNKNOWN I AM GOING TO PROCLAIM TO YOU –

Paul means that these men, even though they did not know it, were worshiping God, the Only True God. The Only True God is the God these men did not know and were worshiping as AN UNKNOWN GOD.

The sacrifices they offered on that altar to the UNKNOWN GOD were actually offered to the Only True God, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**ACT 17:24**

**ACT 17:24 –**

“THE GOD WHO MADE THE *KOSMOS* AND EVERYTHING IN IT IS THE LORD OF HEAVEN… –

**GOD IS LORD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH BECAUSE HE IS THE CREATOR**

God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth.

This statement is the beginning and sum of the Gospel.

The reason why God is to be worship and obeyed is simply because he made all things. This is the very basis of everything we teach as taught in Scriptures [Gen 1:1; Act 14:15; Rev 4:11; 14:6-7].

This does not require any complicated explanation but only requires faith that God created the whole world and all in it.

The heart of the gospel is not the Lordship of Christ but the truth that God *(the Father)*is the Creator of all things. From this stems every other thing, even the Lordship of Christ.

**ACT 17:24 –**

…GOD …DOES NOT LIVE IN TEMPLES BUILT BY HANDS –

These words of Paul can be taken too far to mean that “God does not dwell in temples at all”. No, that is not what Paul said.

What Paul said was the kind of temple God does not dwell in and not that God does not dwell in temples.

In fact, Paul’s statement that “God does not live in temples built by *human*hands” implies that God actually lives in temples or buildings, but not in man-made buildings.

*God lives in buildings but not in buildings built by men’s hands.*

**GOD HAS A BODY**

Some, with the misconception regarding spirits, that they are bodiless, may think that they here have clear support and that this is the truth behind Paul’s statement here. Scripture, however, does not teach this, and Paul certainly does not believe that spirits are *all*bodiless,

…If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. [1Co 15:44]

* Jesus is a spirit *being*and definitely has a body, this is what it means that he rose from the dead.
* As far as the record of scriptures go, angels too have bodies. For those who may think that the bodily appearances of angels is just some kind of illusion, that though they seem to have bodies they actually don’t, it is good to consider Paul’s testimony. Paul, speaking of the new type of bodies we will be receiving at the resurrection, tells us that as is Jesus, the man from heaven, so are those who are of heaven, e.g., angels [1Co 15:48]. Therefore, since Jesus definitely has a body, the angels too, have bodies.
* Since Jesus, a spirit, has a body, then God the Father as well has a body for Jesus is his exact representation [Heb 1:3]. If Jesus has a body and God does not, then Jesus is a misrepresentation of God.

As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. [1Co 15:48]

**GOD LIVES IN BUILDINGS**

* The Scriptures tell us that heaven is *as* a tent that God spread out to live in.
* Jesus tells us that God our Father dwells in heaven
* One of the many rooms in the Father’s house is the New Jerusalem
* Since it is the Father’s house and these are rooms, then it mean that the Father, living in His own house, at least, spends sometime in the rooms. Of course, he must have a particular room *(i.e., a particular city)*to himself where he dwells in his house *(i.e., heaven)*.
* *Even if it is by His Spirit, our bodies are temples and God dwells in them*.

**ACT 17:25 –**

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

**GOD IS NOT SERVED BY HUMAN HANDS**

Does this mean that God is not served at all? Does this mean that angels don’t serve God?

* God rides upon the Cherubim [Psa 18:10; Eze 1]
* God is guarded and served by Cherubim [Psa 80:1; 99:1]
* Angels serve God [Dan 7:10]

Contextually, Paul speaking about the worship of God, about God dwelling or not in temples, the service Paul is speaking of has to do with what is usually done in temples—the offering of sacrifices to God. This is confirmed by his saying that God does not need anything since “…he gives men life and breath and everything else”.

**ACT 17:26**

**ACT 17:26 –**

FROM ONE MAN HE MADE EVERY NATION OF MEN, THAT THEY SHOULD INHABIT THE WHOLE EARTH –

**THE DIVISION OF NATIONS**

Paul is talking about the division of men into nations. This is important to the Gospel he preaches here. It is important because the division of nations is the beginning of the past when God “overlooked such ignorance”.

It was at the division of men that God appointed the sons of God over them [Deu 32:8-9].

This system is

* What makes it hard to judge this world, and
* Why Jesus’ authority was limited to Israel alone when he was on earth.
* Why the day of judgment was not determined, and repentance not commanded before the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

**ACT 17:26 –**

HE DETERMINED THE TIMES SET FOR THEM AND THE EXACT PLACES WHERE THEY SHOULD LIVE –

**THE TIMES SET FOR THEM**

The times set for them are prophetic times. As we learn from scriptures, nations are judge in keeping with the times appointed them. We have an example in the 70 7s allotted Israel within which period certain predefined tasks were to be accomplished [Dan 9:24].

The boundaries of nations shift and have been shifting. These changes have been due to judgments upon the nations.

**GOD NEVER REALLY LEFT MEN ALONE**

This all shows that that God was always involved in the affairs of men, that he never really let men go their own way. Even in his anger at men, God did not leave men alone to chaos and mere random chance. Instead, God has been involved in the shaping of the history of this world—God still remains the Lord of Lords and the God of gods.

**ACT 17:27 –**

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

**ACT 17:28**

**ACT 17:28 –**

“FOR IN HIM WE LIVE AND MOVE AND HAVE OUR BEING” –

**THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND THE NATURE OF GOD**

The above words of the apostle Paul may seem to teach that God is bodiless, that God does not have an image or form. This, however, is certainly not correct. We can be certain of this because Paul will not teach what the Scriptures do not teach for his doctrines are drawn from the revelation of Scriptures [Rom 16:25] and Paul won’t go beyond what is written [1Co 4:6].

According to Scriptures and Jesus, God the Father has a form, which means that he has a body of his own.

Someone may ask: If He has a body, how then can he be everywhere, and we be in him?

The answer: God is everywhere by/in His Spirit.

**GOD IS EVERYWHERE BY/THROUGH HIS SPIRIT**

* This is how he was on earth during the creation, “…and the Spirit of God *brooded*upon the waters”. [Gen 1:2]
* This is how he was with Israel in the wilderness, he told Moses, “My Presence will go with you I will give you rest” [Exo 33:14]. And Isaiah tells us, “they were given rest by the Spirit of the Lord” [Isa 63:14], and so we can see that the Spirit of God is the presence of God and wherever God’s Spirit is, God is there. Nevertheless, God dwells in heaven.
* In the particular example cited above of God promising to send his presence with Moses, it may be noted that God had said he was not going to go with the people. Since God said he was not going yet his presence went with them, it means that God is still different from his presence.
* That the Spirit of God is God’s presence is confirmed in the fact blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is equal to blasphemy against God *the Father himself* as it is unforgivable neither in this age nor in the one to come [Mat 12:31-32]. On the other hand, however, blasphemy against Jesus the Son is forgivable [Mat 12:32]. Therefore, we can see that the Spirit of God is indeed God’s presence.
* In confirmation of all this and in addition, David tells us that the Spirit of God is the presence of God and that the Spirit/presence of God is everywhere [Psa 139:7-12]

Therefore, it can be said that we live and move and have our being in God because God’s Spirit, His presence is everywhere in the world. Paul wasn’t saying anything new to the Scriptures but only applying what the teach—God’s presence is everywhere.

**JESUS TOO IS EVERYWHERE BY/THROUGH HIS SPIRIT**

Jesus is everywhere by the Spirit of God, by the Spirit of God he controls the whole *kosmos*[Php 3:20-21 *cf.,*Rom 8:11; Eph 4:30]. The Spirit of Christ is in all his servants [1Pe 1:11; Rom 8:9]. Therefore, we can see that, just as the Father, Christ Jesus is omnipresent.

Now, if we were to judge Jesus’ nature based on his omnipresence alone, we would conclude, but wrongly so, that Jesus is bodiless. However, since this is not all we know about Jesus but we know of a certain that he rose bodily from the dead and has a physical body with which he ascended to heaven, we know that his omnipresence does not mean that he is bodiless.

The fact that Jesus is omnipresent and yet he has a body demonstrates to us that the omnipresence of God the Father does not mean that he is without a body.

**ACT 17:28 – AS SOME OF YOUR OWN POETS HAVE SAID, ‘WE ARE HIS OFFSPRING.’ –**

That a people don’t know God does not mean that it is impossible to find any truth among them. Athenians were not Christians, nor were they Jews, and they certainly did not know God. Nevertheless, as Paul quotes, this deduction of theirs, that we are God’s offspring, is true.

So, although the world ultimately is in darkness and is lying, we must be careful that in our zeal for God and Christ we don’t call any truth a lie. To deny a truth all because it is not coming from us is not righteous and can never have the approval of God. For example, it would be wrong for us to reject the verses of scriptures the devil quoted and say that they are lies all because it was the devil who quoted them.

Please, note, however, that

* Paul is not approving of the whole body of knowledge of the Greeks but only quotes a part of their knowledge that is true.
* Also, no matter how much truth you find in the world, what the world ultimately teaches is a lie. Satan is skilled in lying and uses the truth to tell a lie. This happened in the Garden of Eden as it wasn’t everything that the serpent said that was a lie. Also, in his temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, the devil quoted scriptures but misapplied them, his ultimate goal was, however, to lead Jesus astray, to cause him to sin against God.

**ACT 17:29 –**

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

If God created us, then He is certainly nothing compared to a lifeless, powerless idol. Anyone who worships and serves an idol as God is degrading and insulting God because God is so much higher than that.

**THE RATIONALE OF GOD AND PAUL**

These words may not really make sense to idol worshipers as they have their rationale for worshiping idols, nevertheless, they reflect the worldview and rationale of God and the Spirit inspired Scriptures.

The rationale of men who worship idols, no matter how reasonable it sounds to them, does not agree with true wisdom, the rationale of God the Creator, which fills the Holy Scriptures.

We must understand that the rationale and wisdom of God is that which is worked into all creation itself. This system works through images and idolatry is a perversion and corruption of this system. For God, quite apparently, and this only requires just a little reflection, an image is more than a shape or form but also includes attributes.

Why did God place man as lord over all creation?

Because man is God’s image.

Man, however, is not an idol but shares in certain defining qualities of God in comparison to other creatures. Man being God’s image, certainly includes his visible form, but is more than that. Man as God’s image also includes his defining attributes such as wisdom.

Therefore, to God and heaven, an idol, even if it is shaped in the form of a man, is a misrepresentation of God because, in comparison to his creatures, it lacks the defining attributes of God.

Just as God is not opposed to, but in fact, instituted the lordship of man over creation, so too, if there was an image that was really like God, God wouldn’t be opposed to men worshiping it/him.

When God condemns idols in Scriptures, he condemns them based on such facts as *(the lack of such attributes as)*

1. Their inability to talk
2. Their lifelessness, and in God’s case, this is eternal life
3. Their inability to give life
4. Their inability to walk
5. Their powerlessness
6. Their total lack of wisdom [Isa 41:22]
7. The fact that they are made by men [Isa 2:8; 40:19-20]
8. The fact that they are made of destructible and corruptible materials such as wood, stone, metals, etc. [Isa 40:19-20; 44:14-19]
9. Etc.

Idols are false images of God for they lack wisdom, life and much less, the ability to give life, no matter how expensive, they are made of destructible material, etc.

The only IMAGE of God which God has given men *(and even angels)* the freedom to worship, and even commands it, is the Lord Jesus Christ [Joh 5:22-23; Heb 1:6; Rev 5:6-8]. And this is because, he is “the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being,” [Heb 1:3]

**ACT 17:30**

**ACT 17:30 –**

IN THE PAST GOD OVERLOOKED SUCH IGNORANCE –

The particular ignorance here which God overlooked is idolatry.

**IN THE PAST**

* “In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent” [Act 17:30]
* “We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them. 16In the past, he let all nations go their own way.” [Act 14:15-16]
* “This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, 23for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25God presented *Jesus Christ* as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—26he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.” [Rom 3:22-26]

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Reference*** | ***Past*** | ***Present*** |
| [Act 17:30] | ·  God overlooked such ignorance as idolatry | ·  He commands all people everywhere to repent |
| [Act 14:15-16] | ·  He let all nations go their own way *(he let them worship idols and make their own laws)*  ·  He gave them a witness of himself in the seasons and abundant supplies of nature | ·  Idolaters and all men are called to turn to the living God, the Creator of all things |
| [Rom 3:22-26] | ·  All men sinned and fell short of the glory of God  ·  God, in his forbearance, left the sins committed beforehand unpunished | ·  God presented Jesus as a sacrifice of atonement  ·  So as to be just in justifying those who have faith in Jesus  ·  God demonstrates his justice  ·  So as to be the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus |

**WHAT OVERLOOKING SUCH IGNORANCE DOES NOT MEAN**

1. **Righteousness by Faith**. It does not mean that they all have been justified. This is clear from the fact that, before “…now”, Abraham was justified by faith meaning that idolaters *(the sin here overlooked)* were not justified.
2. **Adoption of Sons**. It does not mean that God has accepted all men in the past *(before the command to repent)* into His family as Sons and will glorify them. The Gentiles were certainly not His people much less His sons to be glorified!
3. **Sins knowingly committed**. We must take note that it is ignorance that God is overlooking and not knowledge. God did not overlook sins knowingly committed during the period.
4. **Condemnation**. There are various sources of condemnation, the call for repentance only adds to it—with or without the rejection of the call to repent, a man is certainly under one condemnation or another. For example, whether or not ‘God overlooked such ignorance’, all men are under the condemnation resulting from the transgression of Adam.
5. **The dead**. It does not mean that those who died before the command will not be judged*[Act 10:42; 17:31; Rev 20:12-15]*

**ACT 17:30 –**

BUT NOW HE COMMANDS ALL PEOPLE EVERYWHERE TO REPENT –

**“…THE PAST” VS. “NOW”**

When did “the past” end and “now” begin?

Since the proof that Jesus is the One God has appointed Judge is his resurrection from the dead, was the turning point the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

Or, since repentance began to be preached with John the Baptist, was it since the days of John the Baptist?

**JESUS THE JUDGE**

Jesus is the Man; the One God has appointed to carry out the Judgment. Now, his choice as Lord and Christ was from before he was even conceived, therefore, once he was born, the Judge had been born and so the judgment was certain.

Consider that John testified of Jesus, that he was the One to Judge [Mat 3:10-12] because of his uniqueness, “he was before me” [Joh 1:30]. Therefore, we can see that Jesus’ choice as Judge was not because he was baptized or because he died, or because he rose from the dead.

**JOHN’S BAPTISM**

John the Baptist came preaching repentance in view of the Kingdom of God that was at hand. The world was coming under the authority of a new King, one who was loyal to God. Repentance was because of this coming Kingdom. Now, Jesus is the King of this kingdom, therefore, it’s Supreme Judge. It is, therefore, noteworthy that John’s birth and ministry were of the same period as that of Jesus of Nazareth.

**JUDGE OF ISRAEL AND OF ALL MEN**

Now, for Jesus to be judge of all men, he has to have authority over them all and so we must ask, did he have authority over all men from birth?

Now, before his death and resurrection, although his power was certainly unlimited, Jesus’ authority was limited to Israel. This is revealed to us in such facts as

1. His command to his disciples, during his life on earth, not to go to the Gentiles or Samaritans but only to the lost sheep of Israel [*Mat 10:5-6ff*],
2. During his life on earth, his being not sent to the Gentiles but to the lost sheep of Israel only [Mat 15:24],
3. His saying that he had to die, be lifted up from the earth, to draw all men to himself [Joh 12:32] when some Greeks who were Gentiles, desired to see him *(whom he did not see)* [*Joh 12:20-23ff*].

His authority over Israel is quite understandable as it stems from the fact that he is the Messiah, the Son of David chosen by God, the One entitled to the Throne of David. Therefore, having been anointed by God, whether or not the people submitted to him, Jesus was the King of Israel. This was just as Saul and David were kings of Israel after Samuel had anointed them, whether or not the people acknowledged or submitted to them.

This limitation to Israel was, however, clearly removed after his resurrection from the dead for then he declared to his disciples,

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me [Mat 28:18-19]

So, if he, the King of the Kingdom of God, did not yet have legitimate authority over all nations before his resurrection, and this Kingdom is the basis for the demand for repentance by John, how could John the Baptist rightfully make the demand he was making?

Well, John’s baptism was for Israel only and not for Gentiles too. We can be certain John didn’t baptize Gentiles from Peter’s words before baptizing Cornelius and the other Gentiles with him and the reaction of the believers in Jerusalem on hearing this [Act 10:47-48; 11:1-3,18].

Therefore, since John’s baptism was only limited to Israel, it means that his baptism was limited to the limits of Jesus’ authority at the time which was Israel.

Therefore, “now” commenced in the days of John the Baptist, first with Israel and after Jesus’ resurrection, became for the whole world.

Indeed, as Jesus said, the Kingdom of God began forceful advancement with John the Baptist beginning in Israel and spreading to the ends of the earth.

From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it. [Mat 11:12]

**CONCLUSION**

We can say that “…**now**” began with the Days of John the Baptist, since it was under him that the Kingdom of God began to be announced and repentance was demanded of men.

John’s call was for repentance and the means God commanded was “baptism in water” as the mark of repentance. *(We can see then that men before “…now”, such as Abraham, did not need water baptism for the command that men should repent had not been made by God.)*

Strictly speaking, however, “now” began with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We can see this from the fact that major difference between the past and “…now” is the call for the repentance of all nations and not just of Israel. Now, this call was not really possible before Jesus of Nazareth had been glorified.

Therefore, it was after Jesus’ resurrection that the policy of silence and overlooking “such ignorance” was changed. It, however, started with Israel and then, after Jesus’ resurrection, became a decree for the whole world.

**TIME SECTIONS**

1. Time when God overlooked such ignorance as that of idolatry
2. Time when God commands all men to repent
3. Time when God will judge men

**ACT 17:31**

**ACT 17:31 –**

FOR HE HAS SET A DAY WHEN HE WILL JUDGE THE *OIKOUMENĒ WITH JUSTICE BY THE MAN HE HAS APPOINTED* –

Repentance is commanded by God because a Day of Judgment, the day to judge the whole world, has been set.

**WHY COMMAND REPENTANCE AFTER THE DAY HAS BEEN SET?**

Before this day was set, although men had been sinning, why did God not command repentance?

Why does he command repentance only after the day has been set?

**ANSWER**

It has to do with the requirements for true judgment—not a mockery, not a fraud, but true judgment—and God’s way of ruling the world.

**REQUIREMENTS FOR JUDGMENT**

1. The One who is Judge must have authority over those he is judging [Act 7:27]
2. This requires appointment by God.
   1. It was God who appointed Moses as ruler and saviour/judge of Israel [Act 7:27,35]
   2. The Lord Jesus Christ was appointed Judge by the Father [*Joh 5:22-23ff*; Act 10:42]
3. The One who is Judge must be more righteous than those he is judging [Hab 1:13]
   1. Moses was certainly more righteous than his fellow Israelites as God testified of him [Num 12:7]
   2. God also testified of Jesus Christ as righteous [Mat 3:17; 17:5; Mar 1:11; Luk 3:22; 9:35]
4. Power to enforce one’s will and judgments [Ecc 8:4; Joh 5:22-23]

Because, there was no legal basis to command repentance of men without altering the established order of things. There wasn’t a legal basis to demand righteousness of men.

**JUDGEMENT AND GOD’S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WORLD**

Although God has always and will always be Lord of all, he rules this world through appointed powers. Thus, one way or another, God’s relationship with the world is affected by these powers.

God has always, and will always want righteousness in the world, therefore, to punish sin and unrighteousness has always been his will. However, except he chooses to do it himself, which he doesn’t, to judge the world, God has to do it through his appointed authorities over the earth.

So why didn’t God judge the world before now?

Certainly, the problem was not power. Rather, the problem was righteousness and justice.

You see, in the past, those appointed by God over men did not promote justice, they were unrighteous as God himself testified [Psa 82:1-2,8]. Therefore, except God was not concerned for justice, God could not judge the world.

What is the point in judging the world if it would not be in justice?

**WHY WON’T GOD JUST RULE THE WORLD DIRECTLY?**

The simple answer is that it is not practical.

Often, when we think of the judgment of the world, we think of the judgment of the dead, i.e., the judgment that will follow the last resurrection. However, except there would be no more life or activities after the judgment, the work of the judge, the need for justice and judgment, does not start and end with that great event.

When Moses single handedly sat as presided as judge over all Israel, Jethro his father-in-law counselled him,

What you are doing is not good. 18You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. [Exo 18:17-18]

Of course, God has the strength to bear the burden of all creation, however, he wouldn’t be able to successfully bear it alone.

We must understand that judgement is not a onetime need but a need that will continue forever as long as there are living creatures. Therefore, although God has all power, it is impractical for Him to personally judge all creation. If everybody’s case must be heard, if every matter must be attended to, then God cannot possibly judge the world all by himself. Judgement is not a onetime need or event but is forever.

For this reason, God does not rule all the world directly but appoints administrators throughout his world and through these rules the whole world.

**A NEW LORD OVER THE WORLD**

Now, however, glory to God, a New Judge, a Righteous and Just Judge, has been appointed over the world. Therefore, the world can now be judged in righteousness. Thus, because this Righteous One has been appointed Lord over the world, and this Lord, unlike those before him, is righteous, a day can and has been set for judgment. It is on the authority of this new and righteous Lord that the world is set to be judged. This new Lord is, of course, Jesus Christ, the Righteous and Holy One of God.

A lord determines law that guides his servants and subjects. Therefore, since the world is now under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, the world must do his will.

Now, because of Jesus’ covenant with God, being his bondservant [Heb 10:7], Jesus can only demand the will of God of men and the world. And so, under the Lordship of Jesus, the world must do the will of God.

**REPENTANCE AND THE DAY APPOINTED TO JUDGE**

Men are commanded to repent, not so much because a day has been appointed, but really because a new Lord, a righteous one, has been appointed.

Of course, the new lord has his righteous law, and certainly, he will, whether, he says it or not, punish violators of his rule. We are very sure, however, that he will punish all rebellion against him for he has appointed a day to do this.

Men are commanded to repent and turn to God through Jesus Christ because he is now Lord. There is nothing out of place here: since a new lord has been appointed, it is only proper that his servants and subjects be informed about his appointment and about his law and will. It is proper and kind on the new Lord’s part to inform his subjects of his will and it is good for his subjects to be informed, lest they offend him and incur his wrath ignorantly.

**THE PRESENT STATE OF THINGS**

Now, although the world is now officially under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, it is still under the former *sinful and evil*powers, for though there is a new Lord, they are yet to be removed from power.

This is similar to the time when there were two men—Saul and David—each anointed king over Israel. Because of this state of things, men must choose wisely who to obey or disobey for one of the powers is bound to cease, and whichever of the power’s triumphs will punish all those who opposed it. Quite clearly, Christ is the one God backs and is the one who will triumph.

**WHY DOES GOD COMMAND REPENTANCE OF MEN?**

It is an act of fairness and kindness that God, before judging the world, commands repentance of all men and announces it to the world through His servants.

**WHAT ABOUT THE DEAD BEFORE THE COMMAND TO REPENT?**

To be sure, everyone will be judged, including the dead [Act 10:42; Rev 20:12-15]. The fact that this day depends on the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, plainly implies that it concerns the dead as well.

The fact that they did not hear the call will be put into account because the judgment will be fair. Nevertheless, whether or not they heard, they will be judged in righteousness. It is only in their favor that they should have known about it, it is not required for their judgment.

**ACT 17:31 –**

WITH JUSTICE–

Now, one of the fundamental requirements of Judgement is justice. And so, the judge ought to be just. If it was all about power, God could have always judged the world, but the requirement for justice means that it could only have been with Jesus. Jesus is just, “the most excellent of men” [Psa 45:2] and so is most fit to be judge of the world.

So, this is what Paul is saying: God hasn’t just set a day to judge the world which would really only require power, but has set a day to judge it with justice which requires a just judge. And who better qualified than Jesus Christ? There is no one!

**JUDGING THE WORLD WITH JUSTICE**

Why does Paul emphasize that judgment of the world will be with justice?

The fact that the world will be judged with justice means that men must indeed turn from their sins as no one will be shown favoritism.

**JUSTICE AND DIFFERING MEASURES OF SEVERITY**

Those who hear the command and those who don’t will not be judged with the same severity.

We can be certain of this because

* Teachers will be judged with a higher standard [Jam 3:1]. And
* Though both the servant who knows His master’s will and the one who doesn’t will be punished if they do not do it, however, the ignorant servant will be punished less [Luk 12:47].

**ACT 17:31 –**

BY THE MAN HE HAS APPOINTED –

The Lord Jesus is the one God has appointed to judge the world.

**THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF JESUS’ APPOINTMENT**

The appointment of the Lord Jesus is righteous in every way

* It was he who created the world in the first place. It is, therefore, proper that he should be the one to be its lord and judge [Joh 1:3,10; Col 1:15-16; Heb 1:2].
* He is before all things. Thus, his authority over all cannot be opposed. [Joh 1:2,30; Col 1:17-18]
* He is righteous, more righteous than all [Psa 45:2], and so is best fit to judge for it is improper and a mockery of justice to have one less righteous judging one more righteous than he.

**ACT 17:31 –**

HE HAS GIVEN PROOF OF THIS TO ALL MEN BY RAISING HIM FROM THE DEAD –

**WHAT HAS THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS GOT TO DO WITH HIM BEING JUDGE?**

* If Jesus was a sinner, he couldn’t be raised from the dead [Psa 16:10; Isa 3:11; Eze 18:4,20; Joh 8:33-36; Rom 6:23]. Therefore, his resurrection from the dead is proof of his righteousness and appropriateness to judge.
* His resurrection from the dead confirms him to be the Son of God [Joh 2:18-21; 8:33-36; Rom 1:4] and as the Son of God, it is most appropriate that he should be Lord as God his Father.
* The rule of death stems from the authority of Adam over creation and all his descendants, therefore, no man, even though he is as sinless as Jesus, can be given God’s glory for that would mean he has been delivered from death *(and would make a mockery of God’s judgment against Adam)*.
* For this reason, if Jesus were only a man, no matter that he was sinless, resurrection from the dead through the glory of God, to immortality, would be impossible because sinlessness is not enough to cast off the curse of death.
* If, however, as Jesus was, a man was, apart from Adam, the son of God, i.e., his relationship to God is not totally rooted in Adam, then he could be given God’s glory.
* Therefore, the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead to God’s glory means that Jesus was the Son of God.
* The point is that Jesus did not really become the Son of God through his resurrection, but instead, could rise from the dead because he was already the Son of God.
* By his resurrection from the dead, he bodily received divine nature and, thus, became greater than all men and higher than the spiritual authorities and powers in heavenly places [Col 1:19; 2:10-11; 1Pe 3:22].
* Jesus was already God’s son before his resurrection from the dead.
* Notwithstanding, without the divine nature, confined to the human nature as he was during his life on earth, Jesus was “a little lower than the angels” [Heb 2:9].
* This is similar to a Prince’s relationship to the Throne and servants of his Father’s.
  + It is one thing to be the King’s Son, and whatever the case, this has its benefits, however, one’s level of authority is another.
  + The prince, though the Kings Son, until he is officially given a throne by his Father is limited in his authority as the King’s Son.
  + Just as simply being the King’s Son does not automatically confer highest authority in the land on one. Simply being God’s Son is not enough to raise Jesus to certain levels of authority and power.
* His resurrection from the dead means that the dead will be judged as well [Rom 14:9; Joh 5:22-23,27-29; Act 10:42; Php 2:9-11; 2Ti 4:1; 1Pe 4:5; Rev 1:18]
  + For Jesus*(or any other person, by the way)* to judge anyone, he has to be lord over that person. Therefore, if Jesus will judge the world, then he has to be Lord of all.
  + Of course, basically, any living man with appropriate authority can judge living men. But no man, however great, can extend his authority and power to the dead as their lord and thus, judge.
  + The death and resurrection of Jesus from the dead makes him Lord of the dead. And since he is Lord, even of the dead, they too will be judge and will not by death escape judgment.