

Series: God Who Creates – Acts 17:22-34

I believe in God the Father, Creator of heaven and earth...

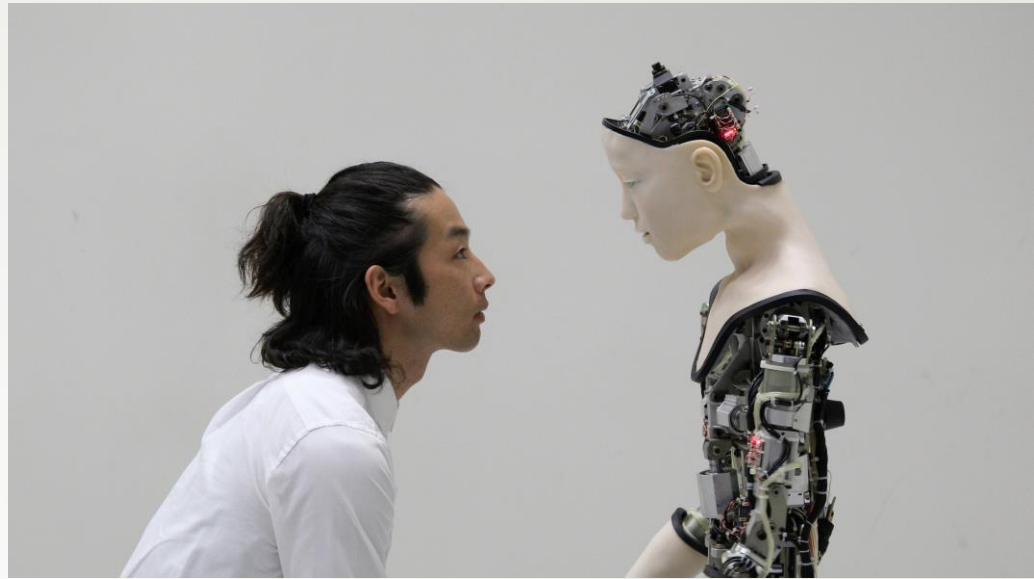


“Acropolis in Athens” by Leo von Klenze 1846, Paul stands in the
sunlight on the Areopagus indicating the dawn of Christianity

“A Message To All”

Isaiah 61:9-10 &
Genesis 9:18-19

A modern art exhibit focused on the difference between humans and artificial intelligence.



How do we know who God is? Is there really a creator? How do we know what the creator is like? What does our creator expect of us? How did we get so messed up? Is there hope for us? For the world?

As we press the boundaries of artificial intelligence, we struggle to even understand what it means to be human. Yet if artificial intelligence really becomes reality and not just mimicry what will our creation wonder about us?

Acts 17:26-27 [ESV]

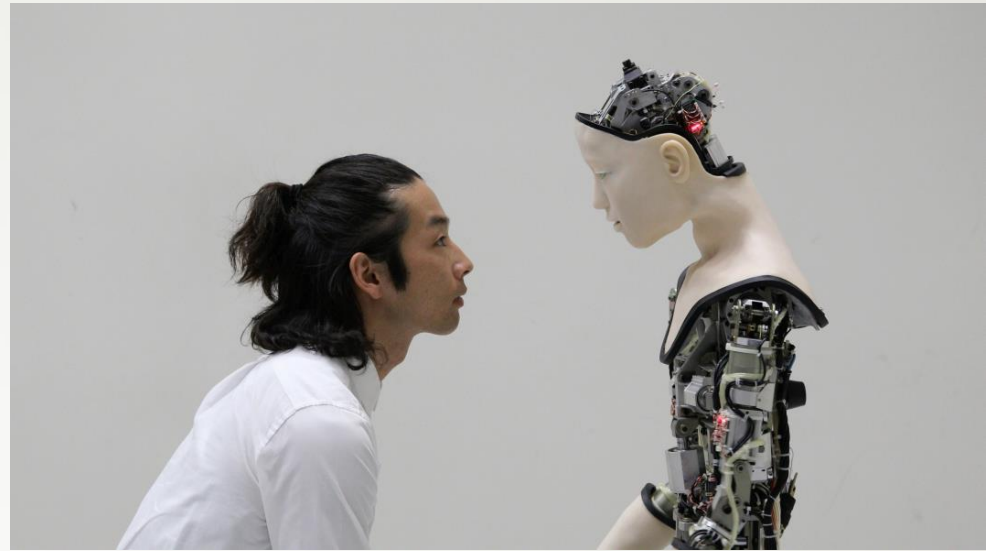
26 And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place,

27 that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us,...

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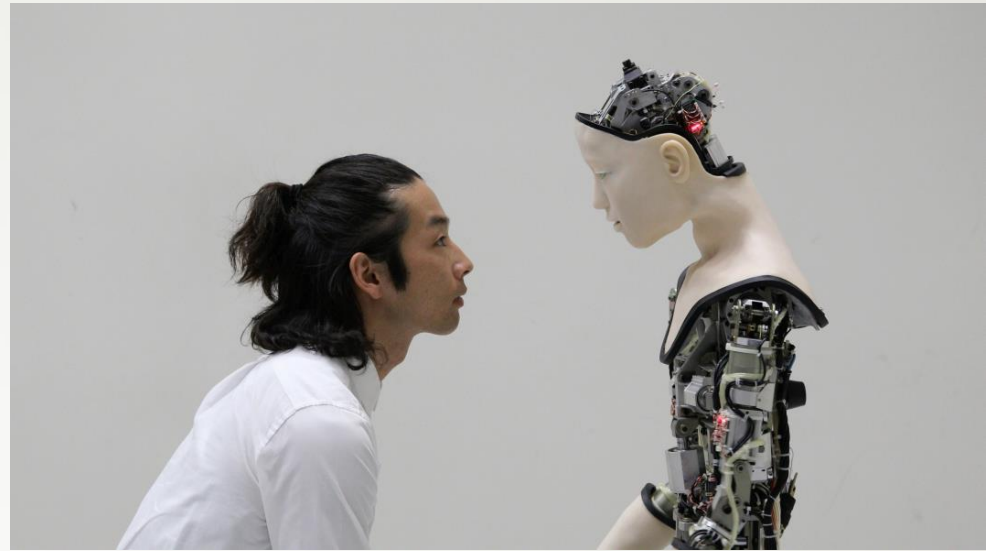


Paul at the Areopagus knew that philosophers in Athens had for centuries struggled with these questions. While most did not believe in a Materialist universe, with the exception of the Epicureans. Yet they did not believe deity (God or gods) was knowable. Jewish religion was a bit of a an enigma for them. It stated that God had revealed himself to humanity. They certainly believed that there was some sort of divinity behind morality, order in creation and human existence. But could we know what he was like?

“A Message To All”

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Paul wanted to get across to his audience, God made all humans. And God revealed enough of himself in creation that humanity could find him if they really looked for him.

The tragedy was that we did not want to find him. Because if we had he is close enough to comprehend.

Paul reflects on the creation of humanity in Adam and Eve. He knows that we were created to have a relationship with God.

That desire is a part of us, thus the universal need in all human cultures for religion.

Genesis 9:18-19 [ESV]

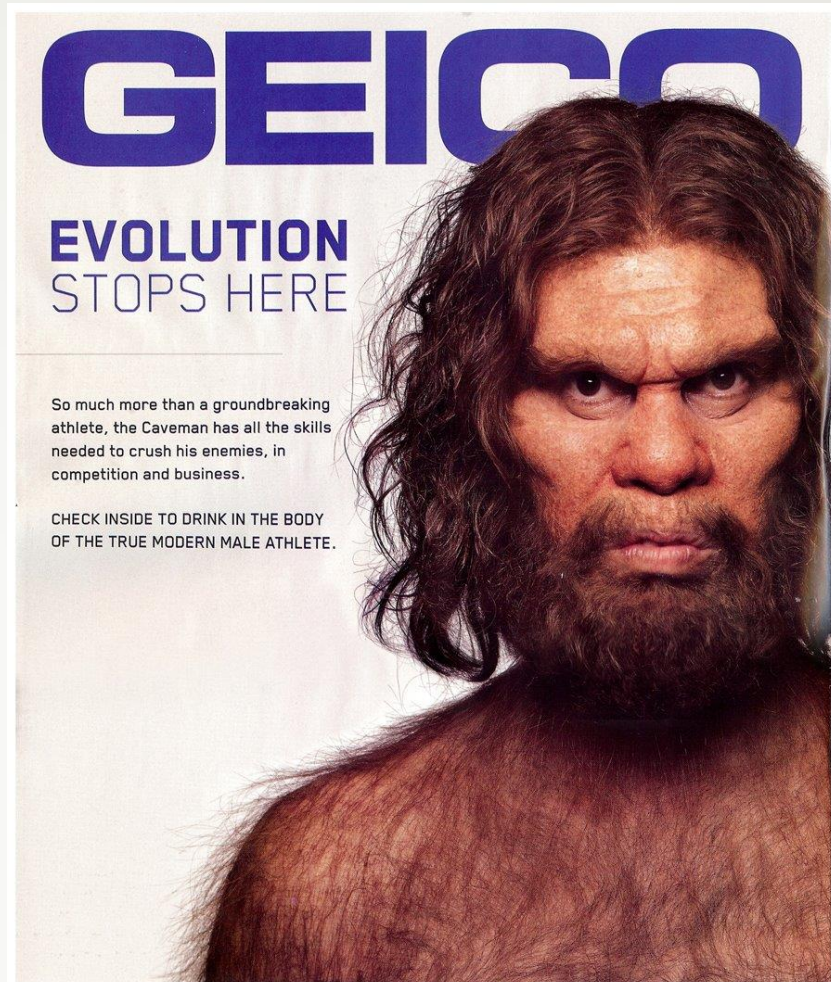
18 The sons of Noah who went forth from the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.)

19 These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the people of the whole earth were dispersed.

“A Message To All”

Isaiah 61:9-10 & Genesis 9:18-19

Modern evolution theory ran into a major problem, micro biology and genetics. Statistical analysis of human DNA shows that human “genetic isopoint” in the recent past that dead ends in a common shared ancestor pair. All humans came from this pair. It is supported by mitochondrial DNA which is the only DNA perfectly replicated in our cells and is carried down through women.

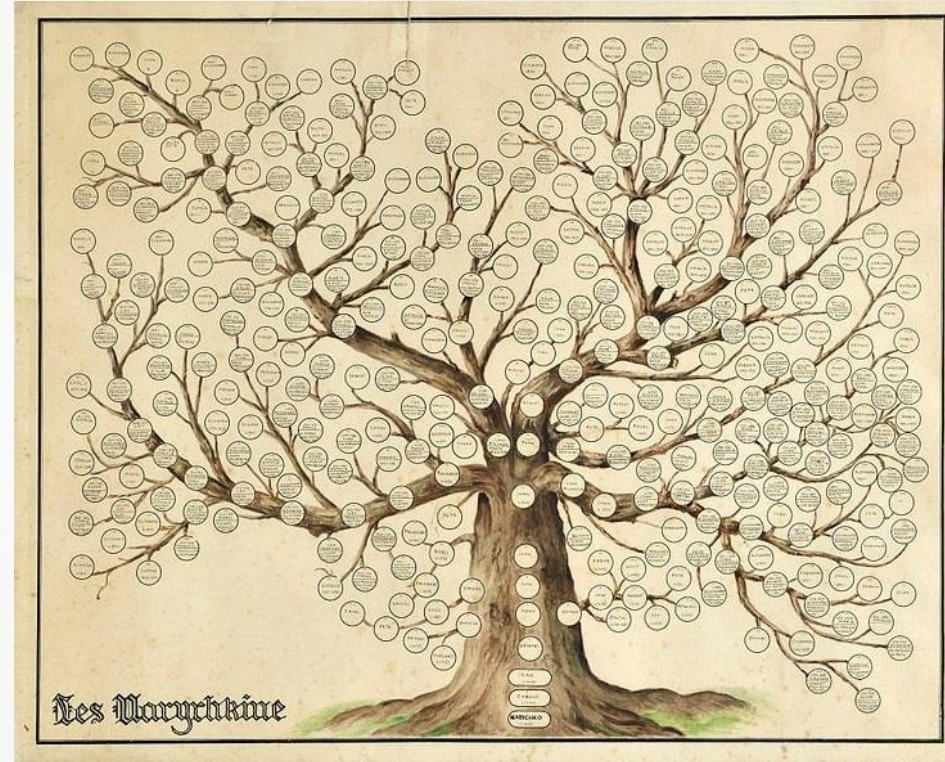


Geico's 2006-2007, Cave Man campaign was one of the most successful ad campaigns of all time .

All people with European ancestry have 1 common ancestor that live around AD 1000. We are all pleased to realize that we have royalty in our ancestry, but in truth every person who has European descent is a descendent of King Charlemagne (reign 748-814). Due to interrelations all people with European heritage have several common ancestors.

“A Message To All”

Isaiah 61:9-10 &
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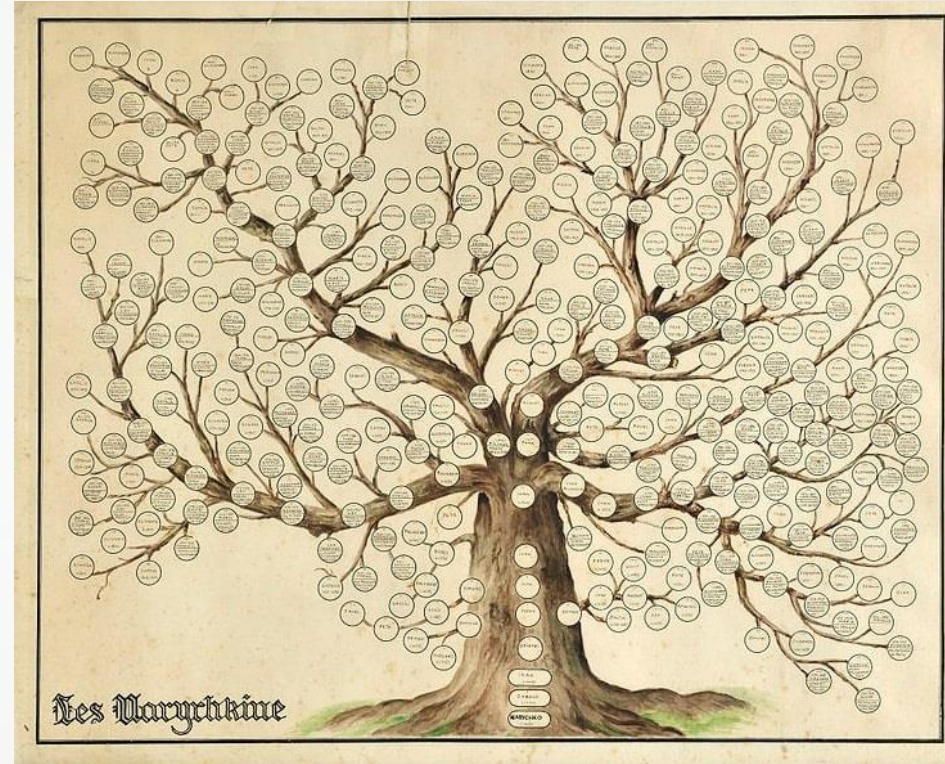


A European Family Tree from the 1700s.

As this reality dawned on scientists and mathematicians they calculated the mathematical convergence of all humans. What they discovered is that all humans converge in a single pair sometime between 5,000 to 15,000 years ago. The variation in time is due to unknowns such as plagues and natural disasters. The most realistic genetic isopoint is between 5,000 and 7,000 years ago.

“A Message To All”

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A European Family Tree from the 1700s.

Interestingly this corresponds with a Biblical chronology of the creation and the deluge (flood) account in Genesis. A basic reconstruction of the genealogies in the Masoretic (Jewish) text of the Bible puts the date of Creation at 4114 BC and the Deluge at 2458 BC. The LXX (Greek translation from 200 BC) sets these dates at 5554 BC and 3298 BC respectively. Others stretch these out by viewing “fathers” as “ancestors” in some cases.

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“A Message To All”
Isaiah 61:9-10 &
Genesis 9:18-19



An ABC TV sitcom based on the Geico Caveman was cast for 2007. The pilot was deemed racist and never shown, the show lasted 6 weeks before being canceled. The experience was so devastating that Geico even dropped the AD campaign.

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Colossians 3:9-11 [ESV]

9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices

10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

11 Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

Paul states to the Athenians that all humans are basically the same. This became a central tenant of the Christian faith. In Colossians 3:9-11 Paul drives home this reality. We are all created in God's image. The variation in human DNA worldwide is less than the variation in the DNA found in separate groups of Chimpanzees living in different parts of Africa.

“A Message To All” Isaiah 61:9-10 & Genesis 9:18-19

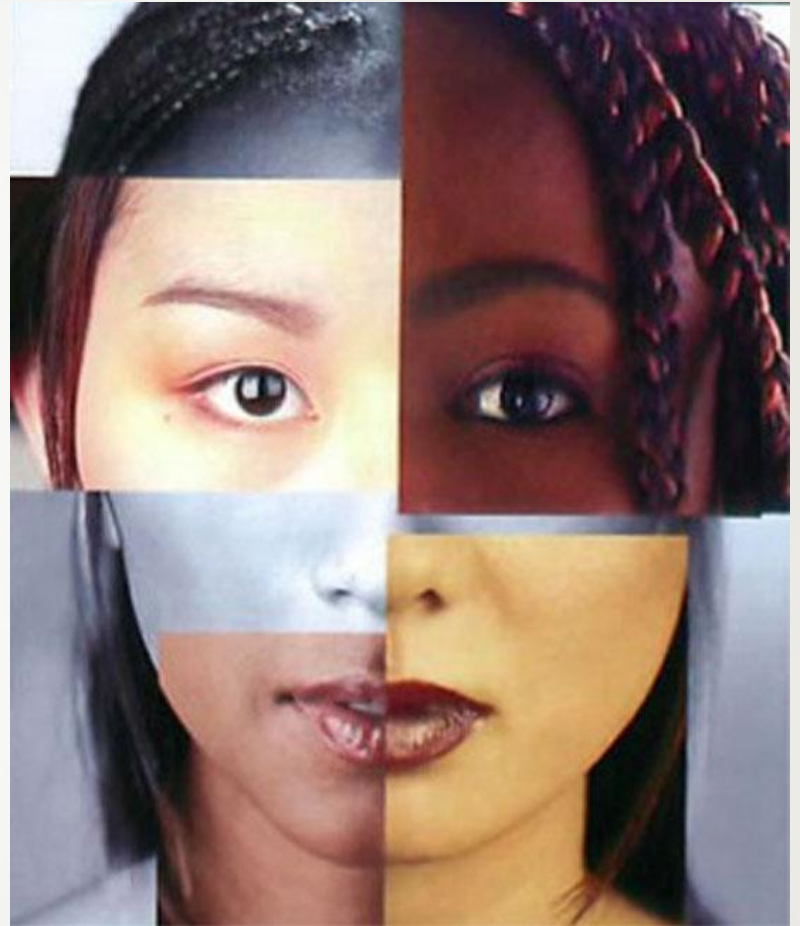


This composite picture demonstrates the similarity of people.

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The fact that there is so little variation in human DNA has led many scientists to question the very concept of “race”. Our modern concept of “race” is built on “color” but genetically that distinction is one of the smallest between humans. Other physical distinctions, such as facial structure account for larger differences genetically. This also extends to our sense of morality and fairness and basic cultural structures.

“A Message To All” Isaiah 61:9-10 & Genesis 9:18-19



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Christianity from its beginning promoted the view all people are identical in personal value. Our faith applies to all people. This has not been true of most religions in the world. The concept of the gospel was that Christ died for all people no matter their station, ethnic background or culture. This was a radical view in the ancient world and it still is. For Christians all people are sinners and need God's forgiveness and redemption.

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“A Message To All”

**Isaiah 61:9-10 &
Genesis 9:18-19**



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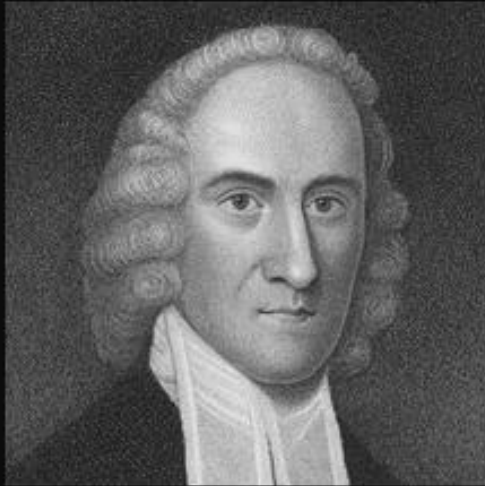
Romans 1:19-20 [ESV]

19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.

20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

“A Message To All” Isaiah 61:9-10 & Genesis 9:18-19

Jonathan Edwards



All truth is given by revelation, either general or special, and it must be received by reason. Reason is the God-given means for discovering the truth that God discloses, whether in his world or his Word. While God wants to reach the heart with truth, he does not bypass the mind.

AZ QUOTES

Christianity since the Middle Ages has asserted that God can only be known through his revelation of himself. The revelation comes in 2 forms: “General Revelation” through creation and “Special Revelation” in his word.

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“A Message To All” Isaiah 61:9-10 & Genesis 9:18-19

When we look at ancient myths, we find epic poems about creation and the flood. While they differ in the character of the gods or the cause of human failure or the reason for judgement in the flood, they do agree that humans are created and have failed. Paul on Mar’s Hill connects to this shared belief among all human cultures. Some of the earliest mythological accounts of creation and the flood go back to the time of Abraham, 2000 years before Jesus came.



The “Deluge” tablet from the Gilgamesh Epic c. 2000 BC. This tablet dates to around the time of Abraham, though the epic itself predates Abraham. Many copies exist. It has many parallels with the Bible.

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Christians call myths signs of

“A Message To All” Isaiah 61:9-10 & Genesis 9:18-19

Christians identify myths, signs of creation in nature itself and our moral conscience as “general revelation”. This general revelation is a glimpse of God embedded in human culture, creation and our hearts. Paul in Romans chapter 1 speaks of the general revelation to all humanity. But that revelation due to our fallen nature is insufficient to lead us to God.



The Atra-Hasis Epic from c. 1650 BC includes both a Creation and Deluge account. It differs greatly from the Bible. The 3 primary gods created humans because of a rebellion among the lesser gods.

Isaiah 61:9-10 [ESV]

9 Their offspring shall be known among the nations,
and their descendants in the midst of the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge them,
that they are an offspring the LORD has blessed.

10 I will greatly rejoice in the LORD;
my soul shall exult in my God,
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation;
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a
beautiful headdress,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

God chose to reveal Himself more fully to the Israelites, and through them to prepare the world for the revelation of His Son Jesus Christ. This “Special Revelation” changed everything. Because of this we know why God made us, why we are fallen and how he redeemed us. It is truly a message to all. The Christian view of humanity came to us from our Jewish roots. Because of these concepts, Christians view all humans as equal before God. This principle has profound implications.

“A Message To All”

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5 Implications of the Christian view of Humanity

- The 1st implication is that no ethnic or racial group is superior to another.
- The 2nd implication is that we must treat every human being with respect.
- The 3rd is that men and women are of equal standing before God though their roles may differ.
- The 4th is that class, circumstance nor education makes any difference in value before God.
- And 5th, God desires all humans to come to repentance and salvation through Jesus Christ.

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Romans 1:16-17 [ESV]

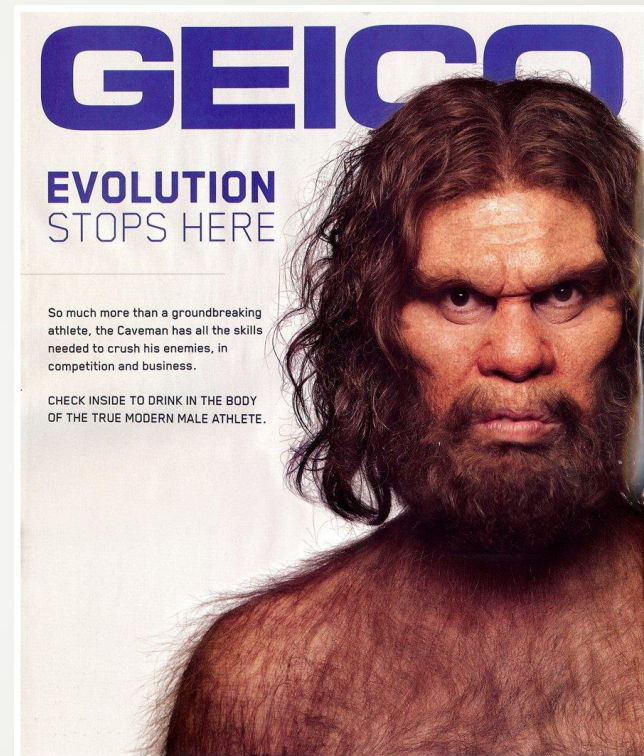
16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

These 5 implications have driven social change in Western culture. Everything from work and safety laws to anti-slavery laws to civil rights laws to child protection laws. The world would be a darker place without the message of the gospel. We only need to look at cultures where this Christian value of human equality does not exist to see the results. For the Greeks and Romans this concept did not exist. It was the Christian ideals that Paul expressed on Mar's Hill (the Areopagus) that would transform the world.

“A Message To All”

Isaiah 61:9-10 &
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Geico's 2006-2007, Cave Man campaign.

Galatians 3:25-29 [ESV]

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

As Christians we do not always live up to this standard. But we are always aware that God has such a standard even when we fail to live it out in our attitudes or actions.

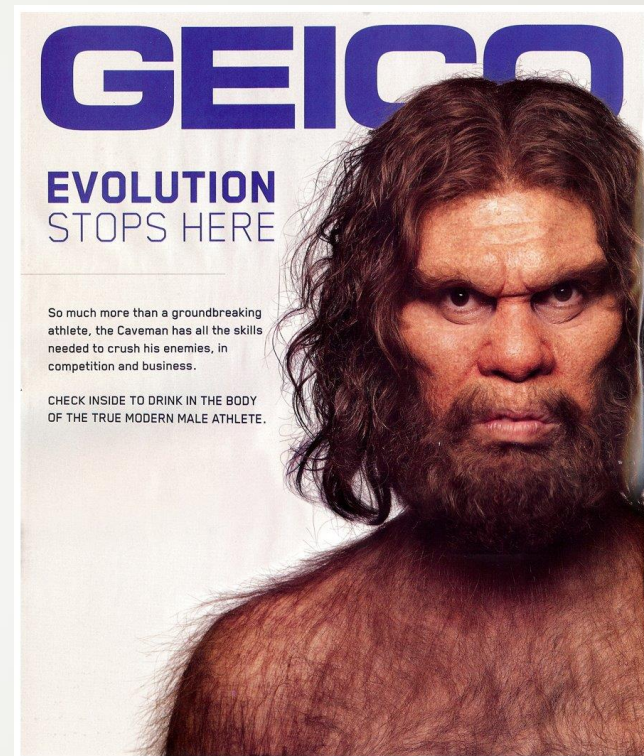
It is because we see God's image in every other human that we are constrained to seek justice, demand fairness and protect the weak and vulnerable.

We recognize all who share our faith as brothers in Christ no matter their skin color, cultural background, ethnic heritage or language. Ours is a revolutionary faith, it changes the world.

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1 Corinthians 12:13 [ESV]

13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

“A Message To All” Isaiah 61:9-10 & Genesis 9:18-19

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“Acropolis in Athens” by Leo von Klenze 1846, Paul stands in the sunlight on the
Areopagus indicating the dawn of Christianity