

“What If They Never Hear the Gospel Preached?”

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from Internet Sources)

Introduction:

- A. 2Thes. 1:4-10
- B. As Americans in any endeavor, we only want an equal opportunity of success, whether in business, legal matters, or sports.
 - 1. We want the resources, rules, and goals clearly outlined at the beginning to ensure that everyone has the same prospects
 - 2. We consider it unfair to have someone in the middle of the effort or when we have finished to say, “By the way...”
 - 3. Salvation as the greatest endeavor of all, leads many to wonder what happens to persons who may have never heard the gospel. Does God condemn those who never had the opportunity to hear the truth?
 - 4. The world now contains 7.4 billion people (9/5/15). The possibility that some may live and die without seeing a Bible or hearing the gospel seems possible.
- C. Many resolve this by teaching that the ignorant are saved.
 - 1. “Since Christ is the Word of God and the Truth of God, he may be received even by those who have not heard of his manifestation in the flesh... We have, therefore, the hope that even among the heathen there may be some ... who under the guidance of the Holy Spirit working through the truth of nature and conscience, have found the way to life and salvation.” (A. H. Strong, Systematic Theology, 1909).
 - 2. “Even some two thousand years after the Great Commission, more people in the world have not heard the gospel than have heard it. The secret things do belong to God, but Christians and non-Christians alike cannot help wondering about the justice as well as the compassion of a God who assigns to eternal torment people who, for reasons beyond their control, never heard about fellowship with him through Jesus Christ ... Our opinion is that scripture does not automatically assign the unevangelized to endless hell.” (Virgil Warren, What the Bible Says About Salvation, 1982).
 - 3. “Although the Scriptures never explicitly teach that someone who has never heard of Jesus can be saved, we do not believe that it infers this. We do believe that every person will have an opportunity to repent, and that God will not exclude anyone because he happened to be born at the wrong place and at the wrong time.” (Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, Answers to Tough Questions, 1993).

I. WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURES?

- A. If these declarations are true and those who may have never heard the Gospel are saved, why did Jesus give the Great Commission?
 - 1. Matt. 28:18-20
 - 2. Every nation is to be taught the Gospel. If people who never heard it are saved, then teaching them the gospel puts their souls in jeopardy.

- a. They might hear the gospel and reject it - Heb. 10:26
- b. They might obey the gospel and later fall away - Heb. 6:4-6
- 3. Would it not have been more merciful on the Lord's part to keep salvation a secret, leaving everyone ignorant and saved by default?
- 4. Even if they did respond to the gospel, they were already saved before hearing the gospel, and the gospel had no impact on their salvation.

B. Why are people lost?

- 1. Are they lost because of ignorance or because they have sinned against God?
- 2. Ignorance of a law does not void the law.
 - a. Will telling a state patrolman that you didn't know the speed limit bring you any sympathy?
 - b. If one must know the law before he can break the law, then there would be no such thing as a sin of ignorance. Ignorance would imply there was no sin.
 - c. Jesus was killed by the Jews in ignorance - Acts 3:17-19
 - d. If ignorance equals innocence, then the Jews committed no sin when they crucified Jesus
 - e. God once overlooked the ignorance of the Gentiles, but now commands repentance from every one - Acts 17:30-31
- 3. Those who sinned under the Law of Moses are judged by that law, and those who sinned without the law also perish - Rom. 2:12
 - a. Having or not having the law did not alter the outcome. It only altered the standard by which they were judged. Even without the law, people sinned
- 4. People are lost because their sins create a breach between them and God - Isa. 59:2; Rom. 3:23, 6:23
- 5. Without salvation, humankind remains condemned - Rom. 5:10, 18

C. How are people saved?

- 1. We can be saved from our sins - Isa. 1:18-20
- 2. Christ died for our sins - 1Cor. 15:3; Rom. 5:8-9; John 14:6
- 3. There is no other means available. There is no other plan of salvation.
- 4. If people can be saved without the death of Christ, then why did God send Him to die?
- 5. If salvation can be had through ignorance, it is better to leave the whole world in ignorance

D. Only in Christ can one have:

- 1. Redemption - Rom. 3:24
- 2. Eternal life - Rom. 6:23
- 3. Every spiritual blessing - Eph. 1:3
- 4. Forgiveness - Col. 1:14
- 5. Salvation - 2Tim. 2:10

E. There is only one way into Christ to obtain these things - Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3-4

F. What happens to those outside of Christ? - 2Thes. 1:8-9

- 1. Who will be destroyed? The disobedient and the ignorant; ignorance does not save.

G. To whom has God promised salvation? Those who:

1. Hear the message - Rom. 10:17
2. Believe the word of God - John 3:16
3. Repent of their sins - Luke 13:3
4. Confess Christ - Rom. 10:9-10
5. Are cleansed of their sins by baptism - Acts 2:38, 22:16; 1Peter 3:21
6. Remain faithful - Rev. 2:10

H. God is the Judge, not me

1. Gen. 18:25 - "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"
2. But He is the Judge, and He will use His own eternal, infinite wisdom, not my very limited, very biased judgment - Isa. 55:8-9
3. We must put our trust in God, including trusting Him to handle the Judgment perfectly - Psalm 103:11, 130:7