GOD DOES NOT GIVE A FREE PASS TO THOSE WHO HAVE NOT HEARD THE GOSPEL

A COMMON QUESTION that many people ask is this: what happens to those who die without ever hearing the gospel? Many people believe that God only holds people responsible for their sins if they have heard the gospel and understood it. If a remote tribe has never heard the gospel then they believe that God would never hold them accountable. But is that actually what the Bible says?

First of all, it's important to realize that there are *not* multiple paths to salvation. There is only one way to be saved, and that is through Jesus Christ:

> **John 14:6:** "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: <u>no man cometh unto the Father, but by me</u>."

> **John 10:9:** "I am the door: <u>by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved</u>, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

Jesus is the *only* way to be saved. All other paths and religions lead straight to Hell. You *cannot* be saved apart from

Jesus Christ.

The reason for this is because Jesus is the only acceptable payment for our sins. You see, God cannot forgive us until our sins have been covered. Since God is just He cannot simply brush our sins under the rug and pretend that they never happened. Our sins *must* be paid for, which means that someone must pay the debt that we owe. That is why Jesus came to Earth, became a man, and died on the cross. Since He was sinless He had no sins of His own to pay for and therefore could die in our place. His death – and His death alone – is sufficient payment for our sins. Our good works can never pay for them. The only acceptable payment for our sins is the blood of Jesus Christ.

Since our sins must be covered in order for us to be made right with God, and since no other religion can pay for our sins, that means that all other religions and teachings lead to Hell. Jesus is the only way to God and the only way to forgiveness. There simply is no other way.

So what about those who never heard the gospel? Does God overlook their sins because they don't know the truth? The Bible says that the answer is *no*:

> **Romans 2:12:** "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;"

As you can see, God does not say "Well, I'm only going to judge those who knew the truth. Everyone else is off the hook." Instead God says something very different: *all those who sinned will be judged*. If they never knew the truth then they will perish without it; if they did know the truth then they will be judged by it.

You see, the reason God has something against us is because *we have sinned against Him*. When you are in court you

cannot tell the judge "You should let me go because I didn't know what I was doing was illegal". Ignorance is no defense! In fact, in the Old Testament there was a special sacrifice for people who sinned in ignorance:

> **Leviticus 5:15:** "If a soul commit a trespass, and <u>sin through ignorance</u>, in the holy things of the Lord; then <u>he shall bring for his trespass unto the Lord</u> a ram without blemish out of the flocks, with thy estimation by shekels of silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for a trespass offering."

Notice that God did not say "Well, you sinned in ignorance so that doesn't count." Even though the person sinned in ignorance *God still required a sacrifice as payment*. Our sins are no different! God still requires a payment for our sins *regardless* of how much we know about the truth. If we knew about God's law then we will be judged by it, and if we didn't then we will perish without it. In either case we will still be held accountable.

That is why Jesus commanded His disciples to spread the gospel to every creature:

> **Mark 16:15:** "And he said unto them, Go ye <u>into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature</u>.
> 16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but <u>he that believeth not shall be damned</u>."

If God ignores the sins of those who don't know any better then the best thing we could ever do for mankind would be to burn every copy of the gospel and make sure that no one ever heard it. That way everyone in the world would be ignorant

and God would be forced to let all of mankind off the hook! Instead of sending out missionaries we should track down and burn all Bibles, silence all preachers, and close all Bible collages. After all, those things are putting men's souls in eternal peril by telling them the truth of God's Word.

Do you see how utterly ridiculous that is? If ignorance gets a free pass then God could have saved all of mankind *if He had just never told anyone the gospel*. But that's not what God did, is it? Instead God *did* give us the gospel, and the reason He did is because *we cannot be saved without it*.

You may say "But it's not fair for God to judge those who didn't know any better!" Tell me: is that line of reasoning going to persuade a judge to let you go? Is there any court that will say "Well, since you didn't know any better you are free to go?" Of course not!

This is why it is so important to send out missionaries. We should *all* feel a burden for reaching the lost with the gospel, and we should all be doing whatever we can to spread the gospel far and wide. Men desperately need to hear the truth of the gospel, because it is their only hope.