

What About Those Who Never Heard The Gospel?

One of the questions that people sometimes ask is this: what happens to those who die without ever having heard the gospel¹? There's a common belief that God only holds people responsible for their sins if they've heard the gospel and understood it. But is that actually what the Bible says?

First, it's important to understand that there's only one way to be saved. No one can be saved apart from Jesus Christ:

John 14:6: “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

John 10:9: “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”

Jesus is the *only* way to be saved. There aren't multiple paths to God! There's only one, and His name is Jesus. All other paths and all other religions lead straight to Hell. You can't be saved apart from Jesus Christ.

The reason for this is because Jesus is the only acceptable payment for our sins. You see, God can't forgive us until our sins have been paid for. Since God is just He can't simply brush our sins under the rug and pretend they never happened. Our sins *must* be paid for! Someone must pay the debt that we owe. That's why Jesus came to this world, became a man, and died on the cross. Since He was sinless He had no sins of His own to pay for,

1 For the purpose of this discussion we're talking about adults, not children. A discussion on the “age of accountability” can be found here: <http://stories.cyragon.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/AgeOfAccountability.pdf>

and therefore He could die in our place and take upon Himself the punishment that we deserved. His death – and His death alone – is sufficient payment for our sins. Our good works can never pay for them. The only possible payment for our sins is the blood of Jesus Christ.

In order to be made right with God our sins *must* be paid for. That is the only possible way we can escape Hell and enter Heaven. Jesus is the only way to God and the only way to obtain forgiveness. There simply is no other way.

So what about those who never heard the gospel? Does God overlook their sins just because they don't know the truth? The Bible says 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 doesn't 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 they will be judged by it.

The reason God has something against us is because *we've sinned against Him*. When you're in a court of law you can't 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 actually a special sacrifice which people had to offer if they sinned in ignorance:

Leviticus 5:15: "If a soul commit a trespass, and sin through ignorance, in the holy things of the Lord; then he shall bring for his trespass unto the Lord 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 didn't say “Well, you sinned in ignorance it 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. But either way we will be held accountable.

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

Mark 16:15-16: “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”

If God really does ignore 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 no one ever heard it. Then everyone in the world would be ignorant and God would have to let all of mankind off the hook! If God doesn't send ignorant people to Hell then the church should never send out another missionary. Instead we should silence all preachers, close all of our Bible collages, and shut down every church in the entire world. 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 ridiculous that is? It means God could have saved all of mankind *if He had just never told anyone the gospel*. That's madness! No, the reason God told us the gospel is because *we can't be saved without it*. The reason God commanded His people to preach the gospel to every creature is because *if they never hear the gospel then they can't be saved at all*.

This is why it's so important to send out missionaries. We should *all* feel a burden for reaching the lost with the gospel, and

we should all do whatever we can to spread the Word far and wide. There's simply no other way to be saved.