

What about those who
have never heard?

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Christianity teaches...

- Jesus is the only way to be reconciled with God.
- Those who are depending on their own righteousness will not be able to stand in God's judgment.

Is this unfair?

- A common concern expressed by many
- How can this teaching be right?
- God would be unjust to condemn those who have never heard the message of salvation, wouldn't he?

Consider these questions...

- What does the Bible have to say about this?
- What can we reasonably infer from what it tells us?

God's answer to Job:

- See Job chapters 38-41.
 - God asks Job a whole series of questions about the universe he cannot answer.
- We really don't know enough about the universe to intelligently question the morality of God's actions!

Jesus' answer to Peter

- See John 21:20-23.
 - Having been told something of his own future, Peter wants to know what will happen to John in the future.
- Jesus: What happens to John is really none of your business!

Lessons for us from Job & John

- There is a great deal we do not know about why God does what he does.
- God assures us that he will always do what is really right.
- This will be demonstrated for all to see at the Last Judgment.
- Until then, it would be good to give him the benefit of the doubt.

Biblical Balance

- Deut 4:2
 - Don't add to or subtract from God's word.
- Deut 5:32
 - Don't turn to the right or to the left.
- We need to be careful in responding to problems such as this:
 - Deal fairly with what the Bible says.
 - Don't just grab a verse or two.
 - Don't reject what the Bible says because we don't like it.

The Plight of Humanity

The Bible tells us we are not in good shape, and so do our newspapers!

- Matthew 22:35-40
- Romans 3:10-18
- Romans 2:1-16
- John 3:16-21

Matthew 22:35-40

(NIV) 35 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 36 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" 37 Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' {Deut. 6:5} 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' {Lev. 19:18} 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Romans 3:10-18

(NIV) 10 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; 11 there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. 12 All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." {Psalms 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Eccles. 7:20} 13 "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." {Psalm 5:9} "The poison of vipers is on their lips." {Psalm 140:3} 14 "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." {Psalm 10:7} 15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 ruin and misery mark their ways, 17 and the way of peace they do not know." {Isaiah 59:7,8} 18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes." {Psalm 36:1}

Romans 2:1-16

(NIV) 1 You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. 2 Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. 3 So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? 4 Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? 5 But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. 6 God "will give to each person according to what he has done." {Psalm 62:12; Prov. 24:12} ... 11 For God does not show favoritism...

John 3:16-21

(NIV) 16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. 19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. 20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. 21 But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.

The Plight of Humanity

- Matthew 22:35-40
 - The two great commandments
- Romans 3:10-18
 - Human sinfulness described
- Romans 2:1-16
 - We judge ourselves when we judge.
- John 3:16-21
 - We are already condemned for wickedness, not for our response to Jesus.

The Uniqueness of Christ

- John 14:6:
- (NIV) Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

The Uniqueness of Christ

- Acts 4:12
- (NIV) Salvation is found in no one else [but Jesus], for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

The Uniqueness of Christ

Suggested explanation:

- Jesus is the only being in the universe who is both created and uncreated:
 - Uncreated God
 - Created Man
- Only he volunteered to become a created being.
- Only he can give away his righteousness as a creature.

So, what about those who
have never heard?

There aren't any!

There aren't any!

Romans 10:12-18 (NIV) For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." {Joel 2:32} 14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 15 And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" {Isaiah 52:7} ...18 But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did: "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world." {Psalm 19:4}

There aren't any!

- Certainly there are many who have never heard of Jesus *per se*...
- ...but this was true of all humanity before Christ came.
- Yet the Bible does not picture all these as lost back then. For example:
 - Job
 - Melchizedek

There aren't any!

- Nor was the Old Testament Law an alternative way:
 - People were saved before Moses
 - It is impossible for the blood of bulls & goats to take away sin (Hebrews 10:4)
- Apparently people were saved (from their side) by a certain response to what they knew.

There aren't any!

- We suggest all people hear the Gospel through General Revelation (recall Romans 10:18).
- They can learn the following from it:
 - God exists and is moral.
 - We do not measure up to the moral standards within us.
 - Our only hope is to cast ourselves on God for mercy, though we do not know whether or how he can be merciful.

God exists & is moral

- Psalm 19:1 (NIV) The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
- Psalm 94:9 (NIV) Does he who implanted the ear not hear? Does he who formed the eye not see?
- Romans 1:18-20 (NIV) The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

We do not measure up

- Romans 2:1 (NIV) You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.
- 2 Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth.

Our only hope...

- Jonah 3:4-10 (NIV) On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He proclaimed: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned." 5 The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. 6 When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. 7 Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let any man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. 8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. 9 Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish."
- 10 When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.

Our only hope...

- Joel 2:12-14 (NIV) Even now, declares the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning. 13 Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.
- 14 Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing—grain offerings and drink offerings for the LORD your God.

A Summary

- God exists and is moral.
- We do not measure up to the moral standards within us.
- Our only hope is to cast ourselves on God for mercy, though we do not know whether or how he can be merciful.
- In fact, only through the work of Jesus can God be merciful to sinners and still be just.

Does this destroy the need for missions?

- No way! Is there no need to evangelize people in liberal churches just because they have the Bible?
- There is no *explicit* indication that many (or any) are being saved today without information about Jesus.
- The Bible certainly indicates that more are saved if more proclamation is given.

More proclamation, more saved

- Jeremiah 23:22 (NIV) But if they had stood in my council, they would have proclaimed my words to my people and would have turned them from their evil ways and from their evil deeds.
- Matthew 11:21 (NIV) Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.

You have heard

- In any case, this is hypothetical for you personally.
- What are you going to do about it?
- Are you unsaved?
 - Come to Jesus!
- Are you saved?
 - Go to others, help them come to Jesus.

The End

What about those who haven't heard of Jesus?