

Biblical Theological Seminary
ST777 Seminar: Attacks on Christianity
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WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHO HAVE NEVER HEARD?*

Introduction:

Christianity teaches that Jesus Christ is the only way to be reconciled with God, that those who are depending on their own righteousness will not be able to stand in the judgment.

A common concern expressed by many when they hear this message is to feel it cannot be right, for God would be unjust to condemn to hell those who have never heard the message of salvation.

Want to consider this subject today; what does Bible have to say about this? What can we reasonably infer from what it tells us?

Revelation Mystery, Curiosity:

Job 38-41: God's answer to Job: you really don't know enough about universe to *intelligently* question the morality of God's actions

John 21:20-23: Jesus' answer to Peter: what happens to John is really none of *your* business.

There is a great deal we do not know about why God does what he does, but he assures us that he will always do what is really right and that this will be demonstrated for all to see at the Last Judgment.

Biblical Balance:

Deut 4:2: don't add to or subtract from God's word

Deut 5:32: don't turn to right or left

We need to be careful in responding to such problems as this to deal fairly with what the Bible says, not just grabbing a verse or two and running with them, nor rejecting the Scripture because we don't like what it says (since there is excellent evidence it is the Word of God as claimed).

*presented to IVCF, E. Stroudsburg Univ, 5 May 1983

The Plight of Mankind:

Matt 22:35-40: the two great commandments

Rom 3:10-18: man's sinfulness described

Rom 2:1-16: man judges himself in the act of judging

John 3:16-21: man already condemned for wickedness, *not* for his response to Christ

The Uniqueness of Christ:

John 14:6: Jesus the way; no one comes to Father but thru him

Acts 4:12: salvation in no one else; no other name...by which we must be saved

[suggested explanation: Jesus only being in universe both created and non-created; he is only being who has "surplus righteousness" that can be given away]

What About Those Who Have Never Heard?

Rom 10:12-21: there aren't any!

Certainly many have never heard of Jesus *per se*, but this was true of all mankind before Christ came.

Yet the Bible certainly does not represent all people as lost before then.

Nor was the OT law an alternative way, for people were saved before Moses, and before Abraham (and it is impossible for blood of bulls & goats to take away sin); apparently people saved (from their side) thru a certain kind of response to what they knew.

Suggest all men hear Gospel thru general revelation (note Rom 10:18^{*}); mankind can learn following:

(1) God exists and is moral (Ps 19:1-6; Ps 94:9; Rom 1:18-20).

(2) We do not measure up to the moral stds. within us (Rom 2:1-2).

(3) Our only hope is to cast ourselves on him for mercy, though we do not know whether

^{*}Rom 10:18 (NIV) *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."*

or how he can be merciful (see Jonah 3:4-10; Joel 2:12-14). In fact, only thru the work of Christ can God be merciful to sinners and still be just.

Doesn't This Destory the Need for Missions?

No way! Is there no need to evangelize members of liberal churches because they have the Bible?

There is no *explicit* indication that many (or even any) are being saved today without information about Jesus.

The Bible certainly indicates that more are saved if more proclamation is given (Jer 23:22; Matt 11:21)

In any case, this is hypothetical for you personally.

You Have Heard

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.