

The Lost Who Never Heard the Gospel

Text: II Thessalonians 1:3-10

- I. In any game, we want an equal chance of winning, otherwise the game would not be fun.
 - A. To that end, we want the rules of the game spelled out clearly at the beginning. Nothing is more irritating than to have someone in the middle of the game say, “Oh, I forgot to mention . . .”
 - B. Even in our government we expect the rules of society to be openly declared. We don’t tolerate closed door meetings very well. We definitely don’t like being ticketed for something we didn’t realize was against the law.
 - C. While life is not a game, and matters of salvation are more important than any man-made law, we too are left to wonder what happens to the man who never heard the gospel. Does God condemn those who never had the opportunity to hear the truth?
 - D. Consider that our world now contains 6 billion people. The possibility that some will live and die without seeing a Bible or hearing the message is not inconceivable.

- II. Some teach that the ignorant are saved
 - A. A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, (1909): “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.**”
 - B. Virgil Warren, *What the Bible Says About Salvation*, (1982): “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.**”

- C. Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, *Answers to Tough Questions*, (1993): “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.**”

III. Reasoning from the Scriptures

- A. If these statements were true, then consider why Jesus gave the great commission - Matthews 28:19-20
1. Disciples were to be made of all nations. All nations were to be instructed in the teachings of Christ.
 2. If people who never heard the gospel are necessarily saved, then introducing the gospel to them puts their souls in jeopardy.
 - a. They might hear the gospel and reject it.
 - b. Teaching the gospel would cause some people to be lost.
 - (1) Hearing the gospel and rejecting it causes one to lose their hope of salvation - Hebrews 10:26
 - (2) Even if the gospel is accepted and later rejected, they are lost - Hebrews 6:4-6
 - c. If they did respond to the gospel, then they were saved before hearing the gospel and they continue to be saved after hearing the gospel, then the gospel made no effect on their salvation!
- B. We need to consider why people are lost
1. Are they lost because of ignorance or because they have sinned against God?
 2. We understand that ignorance of a law doesn't nullify the law
 - a. Try telling a policeman that you didn't know the speed limit and see if that brings 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, but it did not excuse their sin - Acts 3:17-19

d. God once overlooked the ignorance of the Gentiles, but now demands repentance - Acts 17:30-31

3. Consider Romans 2:12

a. Notice that those who sin while under the law are judged by that law.

b. Yet, those who sin without the law also perish!

c. Having or not having the law did not alter the outcome. It only altered the standards to which they were judged.

d. Even without the law, people sin!

4. People are lost due to their sins

a. It causes a breach between man and God - Isaiah 59:1-2

b. It is universally found - Romans 3:23

(1) In fact, the points of Paul in Romans 1 and 2 show that sin exists among the Gentiles and the Jews, among those without the law of God and those with the law of God.

(2) All then have earned death for their sins - Romans 6:23

c. Without accepting God's remedy for sin, man remains condemned - Romans 5:16-19

d. Without being reconciled to God, we are enemies of God - Romans 5:10

C. We need to consider how people are saved

1. We can be saved from sin - Isaiah 1:18-20

a. Notice verse 19, "if you consent and obey"

b. To what must we consent and to whom must we obey?

2. Christ died for our sins - I Corinthians 15:3

3. We are justified by the blood of Christ - Romans 5:8-9
 - a. We sing a song “What can wash away my sins – Nothing, but the blood of Jesus.”
4. Only through Christ can a person reach heaven - John 14:6
 - a. There is no other path available. There is no other means of salvation.
 - b. If people could be saved without going through Christ, then why would God have sent him to die?
 - c. If salvation can be gained through ignorance, then it would have been best to leave the whole world in ignorance!
5. Only in Christ
 - a. We have redemption - Romans 3:24
 - b. We have eternal life - Romans 6:23
 - c. We have every spiritual blessing - Ephesians 1:3
 - d. We have forgiveness - Colossians 1:14
 - e. We have salvation - II Timothy 2:10
 - f. How do we get in Christ?
 - (1) Galatians 3:27 - Baptism
 - (2) Romans 6:3-4 - Baptism
6. What happens to those outside of Christ? - II Thessalonians 1:8-9
 - a. Notice the classification of people who will be destroyed:
 - (1) The disobedient
 - (2) The ignorant! – Ignorance does not save!

IV. God has promised salvation only to those who:

- A. Hear the message - Romans 10:17
- B. Believe on the Son of God - John 3:16
- C. Confess Christ - Matthew 10:32-33
- D. Repent of their sins - Luke 13:3
- E. Have been cleansed of their sins through baptism - Acts 2:38; 22:16; I Peter 3:21
- F. Remain faithful - Revelation 2:10

Suggested Invitation: “What Can Wash Away My Sin?” (454)