

San Juan church of Christ

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What Does God's Word Say About...

Salvation and Those Who Never Heard the Gospel

Many are left to wonder what happens to those who never hear the gospel of Christ. Does God condemn those who never had the opportunity to hear the truth? The purpose of these articles is to preach the gospel so that those who read these words might look further into God's word and find what God requires to be saved. Consider that our world now has approximately 7 billion people. The possibility that some may live and die without seeing a Bible or hearing its message is not inconceivable.

A religious book written by Virgil Warren, "What the Bible Says About Salvation" (1982), suggests that people cannot help wondering about God's justice and compassion, when He assigns to eternal torment people who, for reasons beyond their control, never heard about fellowship with Jesus Christ. His opinion is that "scripture does not automatically assign the untaught to hell." In Josh McDowell's book, "Answers to Tough Questions" (1993), he said "We do believe that every person will have an opportunity to repent, and that God will not exclude anyone because he was born at the wrong place and at the wrong time."

Reasoning from the scriptures we would have to refute these men's teachings because if they were true, why would Jesus give the Great Commission? "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). If people who never heard the gospel are necessarily saved, then introducing the gospel to them puts their souls in jeopardy. They might hear the gospel and reject it, which causes one to lose their hope of salvation (Heb.10:26). Even if the gospel is accepted and they later reject it, according to scripture they will be lost (Heb. 6:4-6).

We need to consider why people are lost. Are they lost because of ignorance, or because they have sinned against God? We understand that ignorance of the law does not nullify the law. Try telling a policeman that you did not know the speed limit and see if that brings you any sympathy. Even in our government we expect the rules of society to be openly declared. We do not like being charged with something we didn't realize violated man's law. Jesus was killed by the Jews in ignorance but it did not excuse their sin (Acts 3:17-19). Paul wrote "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened" (Rom. 1:20-21). The question we should ask ourselves is: if people could be saved without going through Christ, then why would God have sent Him to die? If salvation can be gained through ignorance then it would have been best to leave the whole world in ignorance! (This topic will be continued next week)

Please send any comments, questions, or requests for a Bible study to:
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