

What About Those Who Have Never Heard the Gospel?

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What About Those Who Have Never Heard the Gospel?

I. Introductory Comments

- A. In order to try to answer the question of what about those who have never heard the gospel, we need to get clear in our minds
1. exactly what the gospel is, and
 2. certain other theological concepts within which the question must be situated.

I. Introductory Comments

- B. It is my contention that before we can accurately answer the question before us, we must be clear on the theological doctrines of General and Special Revelation.

II. The Doctrine of Revelation Generally Considered

- A. Revelation Defined
- B. Revelation Distinguished
- C. Revelation Divided

II. The Doctrine of Revelation Generally Considered

A. Revelation Defined

That aspect of theology which deals with God making known to mankind His divine person and divine truths that would otherwise be unknown; to unveil

II. The Doctrine of Revelation Generally Considered

B. Revelation Distinguished

1. from inspiration
2. from illumination

II. The Doctrine of Revelation Generally Considered

C. Revelation Divided

1. General Revelation
2. Special Revelation

General Revelation

- a. The Nature of General Revelation
- b. The Content of General Revelation
- c. The Purpose of General Revelation
- d. The Effects of General Revelation

General Revelation

a. The Nature of General Revelation

- 1) It is based on creation.
- 2) It is addressed to people as intelligent creatures.
- 3) It is accessible to all people.
- 4) It enables believers to engage unbelievers.

General Revelation

b. The Content of General Revelation

- 1) God's existence (Rom. 1:19-20)
- 2) God's deity (Rom. 1:19-20)
- 3) God's power (Rom. 1:19-20)
- 4) God's goodness (Rom. 2:14-15; Acts 14:17)
- 5) God's glory (Psalm 19:1)
- 6) God's providence (Acts 14:14-17)

General Revelation

c. The Purpose of General Revelation

- 1) to reveal the necessary truths about God to all people in order to provide mankind with sufficient light about God to make mankind responsible
- 2) With this light mankind is left guilty before God and without excuse.

General Revelation

d. The Effects of General Revelation

- 1) It does not condemn a person, because that one is already condemned because of his sin.
Romans 3:23
- 2) It does not save a person.
- 3) Rather it brings sufficient light to the person so that he is without excuse if he does not respond to the light.

What About Those Who Have Never Heard the Gospel?

Special Revelation

- a. The Makeup of Special Revelation
- b. The Means of Special Revelation
- c. The Method of Special Revelation

What About Those Who Have Never Heard the Gospel?

Special Revelation

- a. The Makeup of Special Revelation
 - 1) Whereas General Revelation rests on creation, Special Revelation rests on re-creation.
 - 2) It is sourced in the living Word, Jesus Christ, and the written word, the Bible.
 - 3) It is objective and factual.

What About Those Who Have Never Heard the Gospel?

Special Revelation

a. The Makeup of Special Revelation

- 4) It contains that which was previously hidden ...
- 5) but which is now revealed to us.

What About Those Who Have Never Heard the Gospel?

Special Revelation

b. The Means of Special Revelation

- by the Holy Spirit

c. The Method of Special Revelation

- through God's prophets and apostles

What About Those Who Have Never Heard the Gospel?

III. The Question Before Us

A. What happens if someone dies without hearing the gospel? - Positions taken:

1. Universalism: Everyone is ultimately saved regardless of what they believe.

What About Those Who Have Never Heard the Gospel?

III. The Question Before Us

A. What happens if someone dies without hearing the gospel? - Positions taken:

2. Inclusivism: Christ saves not only those who consciously believe the gospel, but also all who never heard the gospel but fulfilled other requirements (e.g., responded to what they knew)

III. The Question Before Us

A. What happens if someone dies without hearing the gospel? - Positions taken:

3. Pluralism: All religions can lead to God. Salvation is not necessarily based on Jesus Christ. Pluralism is distinguished from universalism in that pluralism says that any religion can save but not necessarily all will be actually saved.

III. The Question Before Us

A. What happens if someone dies without hearing the gospel? - Positions taken:

4. Exclusivism: Christ saves only those who consciously believe the gospel. (Sometimes called Particularism.) Thus, all those who die without hearing the gospel (and thus without believing the gospel) are condemned.

III. The Question Before Us

B. The Biblical View: Exclusivism

1. Only those who believe the gospel have eternal life. (John 14:6; Acts 4:10-12; Rom. 4:4-5)
2. All those who do not believe are condemned. (John 3:36)
3. One can only believe the gospel by hearing the gospel. (Rom 10:14)

III. The Question Before Us

C. Can a person be saved by General Revelation (the light of nature)?

1. God the Father has revealed Himself TO all people throughout all time and places without exception through the things He has made. (Ps. 19:1-6; Rom. 1 & 2; Acts 14:17)

III. The Question Before Us

C. Can a person be saved by General Revelation (the light of nature)?

2. Special Revelation is given FOR all people.
3. The gospel is given TO all that respond to the light of General Revelation.
4. The Acts Argument

III. The Question Before Us

D. Objections

1. People are just raised to believe their own religion.
2. How can God condemn people for not believing something they had no opportunity to believe?