

## Are the Heathen Lost Who Have Never Heard?

Are the heathen lost who have never heard the gospel? This is undoubtedly one of the most asked Bible questions of all time. It is a good question. Many folk around the world will live their life and go to their grave having never been told that Jesus Christ died for their sins, and if they will repent and receive Him they can be saved. When they die, where do they go? They never had a chance to hear the gospel and choose Christ as Savior. Do they go to heaven or hell at death?

We begin our examination of this question by turning to Romans 2:11-12 *“For there is no respect of persons with God. 12 For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;”* These two verses are very enlightening in regard to this discussion. The law of Moses was given to the Jew, that is, the nation Israel. The Gentile *had no law*. Thus, was sin chargeable to the Gentile? The answer is found in verse 12 above, which says *“as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law.”* The Gentile still perished. Likewise, a person who never hears God’s law of the Gospel will die in their sins and perish. God’s law of the Gospel is the message that Jesus died for the sin of mankind and, through repentance and faith in Christ, men can be born again.

We turn now to Romans 3:5-6 *“But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) v6 God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?”* and Romans 9:14 *“What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.”*

Righteousness is required to abide in the presence of God. No one is granted an exception. Hebrews 12:14 *“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord”* Romans 3:5, written above, asks the question *“by our sin can we obtain God’s righteousness?”* The Bible answers the question by saying, in verse 6, *“God forbid- NO.”* God never has or ever will approve sin. Romans 14:11 reads *“For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee*

*shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.*” This verse tells us *every person* shall stand before God in judgment, and that includes people who have never heard the Gospel. Romans 3:6, written above, asks the question “if man’s sin (unrighteousness) can commend God’s righteousness, how can God conduct His judgment of the world (mankind)?” What is God’s judgment? It is the occasion when each person’s conduct in life is measured against the standards of God. The saved, those who heard the Gospel and believed on Christ, will stand in judgment secured by the Blood of the Lamb. The sinner has no defense. Judgment for the sinner will be the sinner’s sin against God’s holiness, whether a person heard or did not hear the Gospel. Therefore, we conclude that God’s judgment cannot be conducted, as called for in God’s Word, if the heathen is righteous who has *not* heard and accepted Jesus.

When I get to heaven, I will not be disappointed if there are those there who have not heard the Gospel. I will say “praise God, halleluiah for His grace.” The Mohican Indians lived in America along the Hudson River Valley before the European settlers came to America with the Gospel. The Incas were in South America many years before those in North America arrived to them with the Gospel. If I get to heaven, and there are Mohicans, Incas, some from Tibet and some from the jungles of Africa who have never heard the Gospel, I will rejoice. I hate the thought of anyone going to hell!

But if we get to heaven and they are not there, then we will remember these scriptures from Romans. Apart from the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, there is no hope for humanity. What motivates a missionary to leave home, go into the jungle, suffer and risk death? The motivation is the privilege of telling others about Christ. They are driven by the Gospel message. I have had the glorious privilege of going into remote villages in Africa where I was the first white man they had ever seen. The vehicle I rode in across the fields and through ditches was the first motorized vehicle some in the village had ever seen. I count it a glorious privilege to have preached to many the Gospel of Christ for the *first* time. I have had the privilege of printing Gospel tracts in languages for people who had no Gospel printed in their language. The expense was great. The sickness I encountered personally was bitter. Why was this done? So that those who have never heard may hear the story of Christ’s saving grace.

There is a hell where *“their worm dieth not and the fire is never quenched”* that men must avoid, and this can only be done through the saving grace found in the message of Christ. A preacher once said he visited a church and found in the church bulletin this statement: *“We are finished with the hellish doctrine of God sending a man or woman to hell.”* Dear reader, **hell** is still real. God has not extinguished the fire of **hell**. Do you know who introduced us to the message of **hell**? Jesus did. More than twenty times **hell** is mentioned in the New Testament, and sixteen times it came from the lips of the Savior. **Hell** is Christ’s message. It is His message of *mercy*, for He did not have to tell us about **hell** in the Bible. He could have left **hell** out of the Bible and let us stagger blindly into the fire with no warning!

Men are not lost (unsaved) because they *have* or *have not* heard the Gospel. Again, we look to Romans 2:12 *“For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law.”* Law refers to *enlightenment*, that is, being told what is right and wrong by God. The law of Moses was enlightenment unto Israel. By the law of Moses Israel knew not to murder, for murder was sin. However, Cain murdered Abel hundreds of years *before* the law of Moses defined murder as sin. Is Cain in heaven? No. The point is clear- men were sinners *before* the law was given, and the law was not what made them sinners.

The message of God’s saving grace by Jesus Christ is a message of enlightenment. This message says *“all have sinned and come short of the glory of God”* and, through Christ’s work on Calvary, the sinner can have forgiveness by repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ. No- it is not the giving of the law (enlightenment) that makes men sinners. Men are sinners because they were born sinners, for Romans 5:12 tells us *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”* By one man’s (Adam’s) sin, all were made sinners. Hearing or not hearing the message of Jesus’ saving Grace does not make one a sinner. God is not standing in heaven today looking down on earth to see who will be a “good boy” and who will be a “bad boy.” God has already decreed Romans 3:23 *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”*

Under the law of man, civilized nations declare a man is innocent until proven guilty. A thief is not a thief until it is proven by the court that he has stolen. God's law says man steals because he is already a thief in his heart. Jeremiah 17:9 "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*"

A teacher gave an exam of one question- what is 2 times 2? There were three students. One boy answered 5, one boy answered 6, and one boy answered correctly, 4. The boy who answered 5 received a test score of zero as did the boy who answered 6. The boy who answered 5 complained to the teacher that his score was not fair. He argued that his answer 5, though wrong, was closer to correct than the answer 6. We know both deserved zero for both were wrong- the answer is 4. There are 99 whole numbers between 0 and 100. Yet, there is only one of those numbers, the number 4, that is the correct answer. Of the 99 numbers, 98 are wrong. Jesus is the only answer for sin. You may live closer to God than your neighbor, but close does not count with God. Every person must be saved through the *only* correct answer, and that answer is Jesus Christ's marvelous death, burial, and resurrection.

There are 2 groups of sinners: sinners who *have heard* and sinners who *have not heard*. The heathen, or any person, who has not heard the Gospel will still perish in hell, as will those who hear and reject. Men are not saved by *not* hearing the Gospel. Men are saved *by* hearing and obeying the gospel.