

What about Those Who Never Heard About Jesus?

The largest concentration of people who haven't heard the gospel of Jesus Christ are located in a part of the world often referred to as "The 10/40 Window"—a region 10 degrees to 40 degrees north of the equator, stretching from West Africa to East Asia. Organizations are set up to assist in sending a larger number of missionaries to this very needy part of the world through giving, praying, and going. Why did Jesus manifest himself only to the small region around present day Israel? How can historical revelation, given in a specific place and time, become the standard of judgment for the whole world BEFORE the event, and the ignorant world AFTER their occurrence be in ANY way fair? How can God punish those who never heard about Jesus Christ? Did God confine His salvation to one tiny specific group? Is the Bible silent on these issues? Why do the lost use these questions as a smokescreen to confuse those that desire to share the good news? There are several facts discovered in scripture revealing light and understanding to this issue.

I. God is Building a Human Family

II. Natural and Specific Revelations of God

III. God's Work beyond Our Comprehension (Sheep of another Fold)

IV. God is Fair and Just

V. Progressive Revelation

VI. God's Foreknowledge and Providence

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VIII. The Stage of Accountability and Unlimited Atonement

I. God is Building a Human Family

God has legions of angels in heaven. One third have fallen.

God is collecting a human family from the beginning of Adam to the end of Jesus' 1000 year reign.

The Bible claims this family will be collected from every tribe on earth, not all the people of the world, but representatives of every tribe.

Revelation 5:9 Then they sang a new song, "You are worthy to receive the scroll and open its seals because you were killed and **with your own blood you bought for God people from every tribe, language, nation, and race.**

Revelation 7:9 After this, I saw a large crowd with more people than could be counted. They were **from every race, tribe, nation, and language**, and they stood before the throne and before the Lamb. They wore white robes and held palm branches in their hands,

God's goodness is not limited to a narrow band of people, in a narrow band of history.

This would include the continents of Africa and South America.

II. Natural and Specific Revelations of God

There are two main Revelations of God:

Natural General Revelation and Specific Detailed Revelation

Natural General Revelation has two compartments:

- (1) Creation – Visible and Invisible
- (2) Conscience – Knowledge of Right and Wrong

Specific Detailed Revelation contains the last two compartments

- (3) Scripture – Words of God spoken and written

(4) Jesus Christ – Second person of the Triune God

These four compartments progressively reveal detail about God.

Natural General Revelation reveals God's existence through His work of creation without the need to communicate through language. This revelation is immediate to us in cosmology (e.g. heavens, skies), patterns (the seasons and agriculture), moral notions (e.g. conscience), emotions (e.g. joy), the 'structure' of humans.

Psalm 19:1-4 The heavens keep telling the wonders of God, and the skies declare what he has done. Each day informs the following day; each night announces to the next. They do not speak a word, and there is never the sound of a voice. Yet their message reaches all of the earth, and it travels around the world.

Romans 1:19-25 They know everything that can be known about God, **because God has shown it all to them.** God's eternal power and character cannot be seen. But from the beginning of creation, God has shown what these are like by all he has made. That's why those people don't have any excuse.

They know about God, but they don't honor him or even thank him. Their thoughts are useless, and their stupid minds are in the dark. They claim to be wise, but they are fools.

They don't worship the glorious and eternal God. Instead, they worship idols made to look like humans who cannot live forever, and like birds, animals, and reptiles.

New Age Pantheistic religions such as Scientology, Wicca, and Eastern religions worship creation and nature rather than the creator.

So God let these people go their own way. They did what they wanted to do, and their filthy thoughts made them do shameful things with their bodies. They gave up the truth about God for a lie, and they worshiped God's creation instead of God, who will be praised forever.

The scriptures reveal that tribes do not begin with worshipping rocks and creatures. It is their only alternative **after refusing to honor God**. Then they have children and teach them how to worship rocks and creatures.

2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 Lost people are fooled by their evil deeds. They could be saved, but they refuse to love truth and accept it. And God will see they are fooled into believing a lie.

All of them will be punished because they would rather do evil than believe Truth.

Acts 14:15-17 Why are you doing this? We are humans just like you. Please give up all this foolishness. Turn to the living God, who made the sky, the earth, the sea, and everything in them.

In times past, God let each nation go its own way. But he revealed that he was always there by the good things he did. God sends rain from heaven and makes your crops grow. He gives food to you and makes your hearts glad.

From the beginning of Abraham, God used Abraham's people:

- To Orally proclaim God and Preserve His written Word.
- To be Priests who represent and influence other tribes with God's Law and Sacrifice.
- To Produce the Messiah.

The scriptures reveal that Natural Revelation is all that God needs to judge the people from every tribe because God gives everyone a head start by placing the conscience of right and wrong in everyone's mind. It is when they grow old enough to choose wrong over right that they invite judgment upon themselves.

Romans 2:12-16 Those people who don't know about God's Law will still be punished for what they do wrong and the Law will be used to judge everyone who knows what it says.

God accepts those who obey his Law, but not those who just simply hear it.

Some people naturally obey the Law's commands, even though they don't have the Law. This proves that the conscience is like a law written in the human heart. And it will show whether we are forgiven or condemned, when God appoints Jesus Christ to judge everyone's secret thoughts.

In love, God gives everyone born a clear conscience of right and wrong.

And in love, God chose to reveal more detail of himself and his plan to the lost tribes.

As the world began to colonize with the Greeks and Romans, God picked this point in time to enter the world as Jesus Christ and provide more information concerning his plan to build a family.

Specific Detailed Revelation reveals who God is and what He has done for us to be in heaven. Its delivery is through preaching, teaching, and reading of Jesus Christ and the word of God

Acts 17:22-32 So Paul stood up in front of the council and said: People of Athens, I see that you are very religious. As I was going through your city and looking at the things you worship, I found an altar with the words, "To an Unknown God." You worship this God, but you don't really know him. So I want to tell you about him. This God made the world and everything in it. He is Lord of heaven and earth, and he does not live in temples built by human hands.

He doesn't need help from anyone. He gives life, breath, and everything else to all people.

From one person God made all nations who live upon the earth, and he decided when and where every nation would be. God has done all this, so that we will look for him and reach out and find him. He isn't far from any of us, and he gives us the power to live, move, and be who we are. "We are his children," just as some of your poets have said. Since we are God's children, we must not think of Him as an idol made out of gold, silver, or stone. He is not like anything that humans have thought up and made.

In the past, God forgave all this because people did not know what they were doing, but now he says that everyone everywhere must turn to him. He has set a day when he will judge the world's people with fairness. And he has chosen the man Jesus to do the judging for him. God has given proof of this to all of us by raising Jesus from death.

As soon as the people heard Paul say that a man had been raised from death, some of them started laughing. Others said, "We will hear you talk about this some other time."

Belief in this message takes **Bible Faith** and rejection of this message leads to religion.

Religion is man's attempt to create ways to God. (From earth to heaven)

This is the wide dead end path.

Christianity is God's attempt to reach people. (From heaven to earth)

This is the narrow road to eternal life.

What you believe will determine which path you have chosen

Matthew 7:13-14 Go in through the narrow gate. The gate to destruction is wide, and the road that leads there is easy to follow. Many people go through that gate.

But the gate to life is very narrow. The road that leads there is so hard to follow that only a few people find it.

But some people interject, "If only I could see life after death I could make a better decision"

They reject Bible Faith and desire physical proof of their destination.

Luke 16:27-31 But the rich man said, "Abraham, please send Lazarus to my father's home and let him warn my five brothers, so they won't come to this horrible place."

Abraham answered, "Your brothers can read what Moses and the prophets wrote. They should pay attention to that." Then the rich man said, "No, that's not enough! If only someone from the dead would go to them, they would listen and turn to God." So Abraham said, "**If they won't pay attention to Moses and the prophets, they won't listen even to someone who comes back from the dead.**"

Those who lack Bible Faith are just as restricted as 'those who haven't heard'. Their guilty conscience compels them to consider those that have never heard.

They realize they are in the same lost condition as if they never heard of Jesus.

John 5:38-47 You have not believed his message because you refused to have faith in the one he sent. You search the Scriptures, because you think you will find eternal life in them. The Scriptures tell about me, but you refuse to come to me for eternal life.

I do not care about human praise, but I do know that none of you love God.

I come with my Father's authority, and you have not welcomed me. But you will welcome people who come on their own.

How could you possibly believe? You like to have your friends praise you, and you don't care about praise that the only God can give!

Don't think that I will be the one to accuse you to the Father. You have put your hope in Moses, yet he is the very one who will accuse you.

Moses wrote about me, and if you had believed Moses, you would have believed me, but if you don't believe what Moses wrote, how can you believe what I say?

Western culture practices the myth of intellectual neutrality--that given enough data, ANYONE would believe. But this position is contradicted by everyday experience. The vast majority of 'arguments' we have are NOT disagreements over data, but disagreements over how important the data is, or what the data implies (often, for our lifestyle choices), or how much stronger the opposite data is.

We cannot see every tribe or how they experience God, either naturally or specifically, and we assume these tribes have no God given conscience. The question “**What about those who have never heard?**” is a false question because it denies natural revelation and is based upon the assumption that God allows people born void of His presence or a personal conscience.

One cannot explicitly reject Jesus Christ himself and have a positive relationship with God:

John 7:17 If you wanted to obey God, you would know if what I teach comes from God or from me.

Luke 10:16 My followers, whoever listens to you is listening to Me. Anyone who says "No" to you is saying "No" to Me. And anyone who says "No" to Me is really saying "No" to the one who sent Me.

John 3:36 Everyone who has faith in the Son has eternal life. But no one who rejects him will ever share in that life, and God will be angry with them forever.

III. Sheep of Another Fold (God's Work Beyond Our Comprehension)

John 10:16 I have other sheep who are not of this fold. I must also lead those, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one flock, and one Shepherd.

John 10:16 is not referring to Martians or beings from other planets. God's work extends beyond the scriptures and beyond our understanding. Jesus performed more miracles than what the Bible recorded. There were a number of people in the Old Testament, outside of recorded Biblical revelation, that had detailed knowledge of God. And many non-Jews find access to God.

- Melchizedek displayed a very high knowledge of God, and certainly taught even more to Abraham. He was a great High Priest. (Genesis 14)
- Balaam had definite revelations, even though he only obeyed them partially (Numbers 22)

God even used a talking Donkey to reveal His message to Balaam.

- Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2) God wrote His message upon a wall.
- Abimelech (Genesis 20) Received dreams from God. Do tribesmen receive dreams?
- Job displayed a highly developed theology and the scriptures do not reveal how he received this information.
- The Magi who came and worshipped Jesus at birth. (Matthew 2, they were influenced by Daniel)
- Abraham's relatives, such as Laban (Genesis 24)

- Abel, Enoch, Noah--all cited as examples of faith in Hebrews 11 received information about God by word of mouth.

IV. God is Fair and Just

God can judge us by our own conscience. God's universal and final judgment is according to the actions and motives of humanity--NOT to one's "exposure" (or lack thereof) to the Good News. The Bible describes a moral purity that is attainable by ANYONE.

Romans 2:1-12 Some of you accuse others of doing wrong. But there is no excuse for what you do. When you judge others, you condemn yourselves, because you are guilty of doing the very same things.

We know that God is right to judge everyone who behaves in this way.

Do you really think God won't punish you, when you behave exactly like the people you accuse?

You surely don't think much of God's wonderful goodness or of his patience and willingness to put up with you. Don't you know that the reason God is good to you is that he wants you to turn to him?

But you are stubborn and refuse to turn to God. So you are making things even worse for yourselves on that day when he will show how angry he is and will judge the world with fairness.

God will reward each of us for what we have done. He will give eternal life to everyone who has patiently done what is good in the hope of receiving glory, honor, and life that lasts forever.

And he will show how angry and furious he can be with every selfish person who rejects the truth and wants to do evil.

All who are wicked will be punished with trouble and suffering. It doesn't matter if they are Jews (of Abraham) or Gentiles (all Tribes). But all who do right will be rewarded with glory, honor, and peace, whether they are Jews or Gentiles. God doesn't have any favorites!

Those people who don't know about God's Law will still be punished for what they do wrong. And the Law will be used to judge everyone who knows what it says.

1 Corinthians 4:3-5 it doesn't matter to me if I am judged by you or even by a court of law. In fact, I don't judge myself.

I don't know of anything against me, but that doesn't prove that I am right. The Lord is my judge.

So don't judge anyone until the Lord returns. He will show what is hidden in the dark and what is in everyone's heart. Then God will be the one who praises each of us.

Proverbs 16:2 We may think we know what is right, but the LORD is the judge of our motives.

We become accountable for HOW WE LIVE OUR LIVES--what thoughts, actions, and the consequences of who we are that MAKE OUT INTO OUR HISTORY. We are NOT judged by whether we heard the gospel or not.

V. Progressive Revelation

The Old Testament 'way' God dealt with humanity did NOT instantly disappear with the birth of the New Testament Church.

Acts 19:1-5 While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled across the hill country to Ephesus, where he met some of the Lord's followers.

He asked them, "When you put your faith in Jesus and given the Holy Spirit?" "No!" they answered. "We have never even heard of the Holy Spirit."

"Then why were you baptized?" Paul asked. They answered, "Because of what John taught."

Paul replied, "John baptized people so that they would turn to God. But he also told them that someone else was coming, and that they should put their faith in him. Jesus is the one that John was talking about."

After the people heard Paul say this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

These people were still living in the 'Old Testament relationship' with God--even AFTER Resurrection. There are still isolated peoples of the world in that 'less precise' relationship and are 'translated into the church age when they first hear the good news of Jesus Christ

In the Old Testament, one did not have to become a member of Israel to be 'saved'-- salvation would often occur 'outside' of Israel.

Exodus 19:5-6 Now if you faithfully obey me then you will be my very own people. The whole world is mine, but you will be my holy nation and serve me as priests.

The Kingdom of Priests requires people OUTSIDE the nation to be represented by that nation (the function of priesthood) That is, Israel was to be a blessing to outsiders, without REQUIRING the outsiders to become part of the 'Kingdom of Priests'.

Joshua 6:17 But you must destroy it and everything in it, to show that it now belongs to the LORD.

The woman Rahab helped the spies we sent, so protect her and the others who are inside her house. But kill everyone else in the town.

God spared Rahab's judgment since she helped God's people. She was a sheep of God's other fold.

How did she know to believe in God or His people?

Joshua 2:8 Rahab went back up to her roof. The spies were still awake and she told them:

I know that the LORD has given Israel this land. Everyone shakes with fear because of you.

We heard how the LORD dried up the Red Sea so you could leave Egypt. And we heard how you destroyed Sihon and Og, those two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River.

We know that the LORD your God rules heaven and earth, and we've lost our courage and our will to fight. Please promise me in the LORD's name that you will be as kind to my family as I have been to you.

Do something to show that you won't let your people kill my father and mother and my brothers and sisters and their families.

"Rahab," the spies answered, "if you keep quiet about what we're doing, we promise to be kind to you when the LORD gives us this land. We pray that the LORD will kill us if we don't keep our promise!"

VI. God's Foreknowledge and Providence

God presented himself as Jesus Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished demonstrating his justice at the present time to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

Romans 3:23-26 All of us have sinned and fall short of God's glory but God treats us much better than we deserve, and because of Christ Jesus, he freely accepts us and sets us free from our sins.

God sent Jesus Christ to be our sacrifice for Sin. Jesus Christ offered his life's blood, so that by faith in him we could come to God. **God did this to show that in the past he was right to be patient and forgive sinners and shows that God is right when he accepts people who have faith in Jesus.**

Jesus is necessary for everyone's salvation, even those BEFORE His time on earth. God the Father accepted the future sacrifice (ahead of time) of the historical Jesus Christ as the basis of forgiveness in the old testament days and the pre-incarnate Son of God was active in creation and revelation BEFORE assuming a human body in history.

The recipient of that forgiveness may not know the name of Jesus, like Rahab, but they did know that God will provide a substitutionary sacrifice.

Genesis 22:7-8 Isaac said, "Father, we have the coals and the wood, but where is the lamb for the sacrifice?" "My son," **Abraham answered, "God will provide the lamb."** The two of them walked on, and

Genesis 22:14 Abraham named that place "The LORD Will Provide." And even now people say, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."

In Acts, Philip meets the Ethiopian Eunuch. God reveals how He got the message to an open heart from another country. The "coincidences" within the passages display God's perfect timing. The apparently miraculous transportation of Philip away reminds us that God's power is especially active in the area of evangelism. He will use any means to get the message to open hearts.

Acts 8:26-35 The Lord's angel said to Philip, "Go south along the desert road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza."

So Philip left. An important Ethiopian official happened to be going along that road in his chariot. He was the chief treasurer for Candace, the Queen of Ethiopia. The official had gone to Jerusalem to worship and was now on his way home. He was sitting in his chariot, reading the book of the prophet Isaiah.

The Holy Spirit told Philip to catch up with the chariot.

Philip ran up close and heard the man reading aloud from the book of Isaiah. Philip asked him, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

The official answered, "How can I understand unless someone helps me?" He then invited Philip to come up and sit beside him.

The man was reading the passage from Isaiah that said, "He was led like a sheep on its way to be killed. He was silent as a lamb whose wool is cut off, and he did not say a word. He was treated like a nobody and did not receive a fair trial. How can he have children, if his life is snatched away?"

The official said to Philip, "Tell me, was the prophet talking about himself or about someone else?" **So Philip began at this place in the Scriptures and explained the good news about Jesus Christ.**

Galatians 3:8 Long ago the Scriptures said that God would accept the Gentiles because of their faith. That's why God told Abraham the good news that all nations would be blessed because of him.

Jonah 3:1-10 Once again the LORD told Jonah to go to that great city of Nineveh and preach his message of doom. Jonah obeyed the LORD and went to Nineveh. The city was so big that it took three days just to walk through it.

After walking for a day, Jonah warned the people, "Forty days from now, Nineveh will be destroyed!" **They believed God's message** and set a time when they would go without eating to show their sorrow. Then everyone in the city, no matter who they were, dressed in sackcloth.

When the king of Nineveh heard what was happening, he also dressed in sackcloth; he left the royal palace and sat in dust. Then he and his officials sent out an order for everyone in the city to obey. It said: None of you or your animals may eat or drink a thing. Each of you must wear sackcloth, and you must even put sackcloth on your animals. You must also pray to the LORD God with all your heart and stop being sinful and cruel. Maybe God will change his mind and have mercy on us, so we won't be destroyed.

When God saw that the people had stopped doing evil things, he had pity and did not destroy them as he had planned.

This scripture reveals that a relationship with God is NOT dependent on intelligence or education. Children can enjoy this relationship, those with physiologically-based mental challenges, and even those without a 'basic' education.

1 Corinthians 1:25 Even if God is foolish, he is wiser than everyone else, and even if God is weak, he is stronger than everyone else.

Remember what you were when God chose you. The people of this world didn't think that many of you were wise. Only a few of you were in places of power, and not many of you came from important families.

For God chose the foolish things of this world to put the wise to shame. He chose the weak things of this world to put the powerful to shame.

What the world thinks is worthless, useless, and nothing at all is what God has used to destroy what the world considers important. God did all this to keep anyone from bragging to him.

We do not know how much historical content is required for a person to believe nor "how much error" is allowed.

VII. Gossip – Word of Mouth – The Whole World Hears About Jesus

There are tribal legends that speak of a supreme God who sent his only son as a savior for man's sin. The reputation of God and his people travel throughout the world, even within families that are not missionaries.

2 Chronicles 9:1-6 The Queen of Sheba heard how famous Solomon was, so she went to Jerusalem to test him with difficult questions. She took along several of her officials, and she loaded her camels with gifts of spices, jewels, and gold. When she arrived, she and Solomon talked about everything she could think of. He answered every question, no matter how difficult it was.

The Queen was amazed at Solomon's wisdom. She was breathless when she saw his palace, the food on his table, his officials, all his servants in their uniforms, and the sacrifices he offered at the LORD's temple.

She said: Solomon, **in my own country I had heard about your wisdom and all you've done.** But I didn't believe it until I saw it with my own eyes! And there's so much I didn't hear about. You are greater than I was told.

John 6:45 It is written in Isaiah 54:13, "And they shall all be taught of God.", therefore everyone who hears and learns of the Father comes to Me.

Isaiah 54:13 And all your children shall be taught of God; and great peace upon them.

Acts 2:1-12 On the day of Pentecost all the Lord's followers were together in one place. Suddenly there was a noise from heaven like the sound of a mighty wind! It filled the house where they were meeting. Then they saw what looked like fiery tongues moving in all directions, and a tongue came and settled on each person there. The Holy Spirit took control of everyone, and they began speaking whatever languages the Spirit let them speak.

Many religious Jews from every country in the world were living in Jerusalem. And when they heard this noise, a crowd gathered. But they were surprised, because they were hearing everything in their own languages. They were excited and amazed, and said: Don't all these who are speaking come from Galilee? Then why do we hear them speaking our very own languages?

Some of us are from Parthia, Media, and Elam. Others are from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, parts of Libya near Cyrene, Rome, Crete, and Arabia. Some of us were born Jews, and others of us have chosen to be Jews. Yet we all hear them using our own languages to tell the wonderful things God has done.

Everyone was excited and confused. Some of them even kept asking each other, "What does all this mean?"

Do you think these people returned to their homelands and spoke of what they saw and heard?

Many non-Christian skeptics and atheists have rejected a caricature of Jesus that is not revealed in the old testament. They have witnessed a misrepresentation of the real Jesus. But they truly never have seen the real Jesus of love, quiet commitment to noble freedom, patience in the face of unrequited love. The same may be true of members of non-Christian (and especially non-Western) religions, that have rejected a false Jesus Christ, one WORTH rejecting. But the Jesus of the Bible, when seen in a pattern of balance, and in the blinding light of His love on the Cross should not be rejected.

God knows how individuals WOULD HAVE responded to the gospel, and factors that into the judgment criteria.

Matthew 11:20-25 In the towns where Jesus had worked most of his miracles, the people refused to turn to God. So Jesus was upset with them and said: You people of Chorazin are in for trouble!

You people of Bethsaida are in for trouble too! If the miracles that took place in your towns had happened in Tyre and Sidon, the people there would have turned to God long ago. They would have dressed in sackcloth and put ashes on their heads.

I tell you that on the day of judgment the people of Tyre and Sidon will get off easier than you will. People of Capernaum, do you think you will be honored in heaven? You will go down to hell! If the miracles that took place in your town had happened in Sodom, that town would still be standing.

I tell you that on the day of judgment the people of Sodom will get off easier than you.

At that moment Jesus said: My Father, Lord of heaven and earth, I am grateful that you hid all this from the wise and educated and showed it to only ordinary people.

The future judgment is "MORE BEARABLE" for those whom God knew WOULD HAVE responded to extra-ordinary evidence. God uses experiences and thoughts to speak to your heart.

VIII. The Stage of Accountability and Unlimited Atonement

God allows the blood of Jesus to cover those who had no chance to reject Him, such as babies who die before or after birth, or the mentally impaired. This same heart that longs for us to turn to Him would also respond in love to the cry of a heart that says, "God, if you are there, here I am! I don't know you, but you are God and I am not, and I trust you!"

God's judgment is completely fair and His kindness is communicated (and operative) to all. God reveals Himself to humanity through several non-linguistic forms (nature, anthropology, morality, patterns, emotions), and even linguistic data (in the form of tradition) has been preserved for all the descendants of the original pair of humans.

God deals with people according to the information they have--with specific focus on how they welcome or resist that truth. God's moral judgment is upon the sin nature, actual deeds, and actual motives.

With those that respond to God's revelation in nature and extra-biblical tradition, seeking grace and His activity on their behalf, God initiates a relationship with them that develops additional disclosures of God's special sacrifice of His Son.

God's acceptance of imperfect people into a living relationship with the morally pure God, is based on the penalty-removing sacrifice of God the Son on the Cross often unknown to the recipients of that grace (e.g. OT saints).

Deuteronomy 1:38-39 I will let Joshua your assistant lead Israel to conquer the land. So encourage him and people of Israel, you said that **your innocent young children, who do not yet know right from wrong**, would be taken prisoner in the battle for the land. But someday **I will let them go into the land, and with my help, they will conquer it and live there.**

The stage of accountability is relative to the child's conscience development. Impaired children, such as retardation or accident, may never reach full mature conscience. Only God and that person knows and understands what is happening with them spiritually.

Throughout the stretch of history, God has given additional detail, precision, instruction in the record of His disclosures and actions in history (i.e. the Bible). This in no way compromises or diminishes the 'power-to-save' of the "least-precise" statement of God's gracious nature and God's saving actions in history.

The elements of original truth are perverted with distortions of man made world religions, but there are sects within EACH of these major religious traditions that 'look very much like' aspects of OT religion, and there are often adherents of those religions that misunderstand their traditions in the correct direction.

The small, selected slice of history reported in the bible indicates considerable action on God's part in 'getting the message out' to individuals--often involving providence and 'odd chanced' events. A sufficiently competent God could obviously orchestrate events, dreams, visions, rumors, conscience, and misunderstood traditions, in such a way as to reach those who seek Him honestly and earnestly.

The response to truth in natural/universal revelation *always* witnesses of Jesus Christ--and *never* against Him. So called evidence of Evolution discovered by pseudo sciences are never concluded or accepted as fact. And they scream out the question, "Did God really say that?"

God's concern for humanity and His interest in our welfare transcends attempts to criticize His plan.

God is perfectly good and perfectly fair in ALL His dealings with us.

2 Peter 3:3-13 But first you must realize that in the last days some people won't think about anything except their own selfish desires. They will make fun of you and say, "Didn't your Lord promise to come back? Yet the first leaders have already died, and the world hasn't changed a bit."

They will say this because **they want to forget** that long ago the heavens and the earth were made at God's command. The earth came out of water and made from water. Later it was destroyed by the waters of a mighty flood. But God has commanded the present heavens and earth to remain until the day of judgment. Then they will be set on fire, and ungodly people will be destroyed.

Don't forget that for the Lord one day is the same as a thousand years, and a thousand years is the same as one day.

The Lord isn't slow about keeping his promises, as some people think he is. In fact, God is patient, because he wants everyone to turn from sin and no one to be lost.

The day of the Lord's return will surprise us like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a loud noise, and the heat will melt the whole universe. Then the earth and everything on it will be seen for what they are. Everything destroyed. So you should serve and honor God by the way you live. You should look forward to the day when God judges everyone, and you should try to make it come soon. On that day the heavens will be destroyed by fire, and everything else will melt in the heat. But God has promised us a new heaven and a new earth, where justice will rule. We are really looking forward to that.

God has revealed himself progressively to the human race, and the clearest of understandings does not seem to be a prerequisite for salvation. Salvation is not based on good works, good belief, but rather by God's Grace, which is a gift of God.

Ephesians 2:7-10 God did this so that in the future world he could show how truly good and kind he is to us because of what Christ Jesus has done.

You were saved by faith in God, who treats us much better than we deserve. This is God's gift to you, and not anything you have done on your own.

It isn't something you have earned, so there is nothing you can brag about.

God planned for us to do good things and to live as he has always wanted us to live. That's why he sent Jesus Christ to make us what we are.

Good works and religion allows for bragging in the false attempt of earning a way to heaven but Salvation is something God does, accomplished through Jesus Christ and is His responsibility to accomplish it. There is no other way. Salvation is available by only one means, the acceptance of Blood sacrifice, and it has always been the same and always will be the same, past, present and future. Jesus is the only way to the Father; the people of the Old Testament were not saved by keeping the Law, they were saved by putting their faith in Christ.

Most people believe the person of God in the Old Testament is the Father and that the Son rarely appears. The exact opposite is true. The person of God in the Old Testament is the Son and the Father is primarily revealed in the New Testament.

Matthew 11:27 My Father has given me everything, and he is the only one who knows the Son. The only one who truly knows the Father is the Son. But the Son wants to tell others about the Father, so that they can know him too.

John 14:6-11 "I am the way, the truth, and the life!" Jesus answered. "Without me, no one can go to the Father. If you knew me, you would know the Father. But you do know him, and you have seen him." Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father. That is all we need."

Jesus replied: Philip, I have been with you for a long time. Don't you know who I am? If you have seen me, you have seen the Father. How can you ask me to show you the Father?

Don't you believe that I am one with the Father and that the Father is one with me? What I say isn't said on my own. The Father who lives in me does these things.

Have faith in me when I say that the Father is one with me and that I am one with the Father. Or else have faith in me simply because of the things I do.

The God of the Old Testament is primarily revealed as the Son.

John 1:17-18 The Law was given by Moses, but Jesus Christ brought us undeserved kindness and truth. No one has ever seen God. The only Son, who is truly God and is closest to the Father, has shown us what God is like.

John 6:46 The only one who has seen the Father is the one who has come from him. No one else has ever seen the Father.

Exodus 24:8-12 Moses took the blood from the bowls and sprinkled it on the people. Next, he told them, "With this blood the LORD makes his agreement with you."

Moses and Aaron, together with Nadab and Abihu and the seventy leaders, went up the mountain and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was a pavement of sapphire, and it was as bright as the sky.

Even though these leaders of Israel saw God, he did not punish them and they ate and drank together.

Judges 13:3-24 one day an angel from the LORD appeared to her and said: You have never been able to have any children, but very soon you will be pregnant and have a son. He will belong to God from the day he is born, so his hair must never be cut. And even before he is born, you must not drink any wine or beer or eat any food forbidden by God's laws. Your son will begin to set Israel free from the Philistines.

She went to Manoah and said, "A prophet who looked like an angel of God came and talked to me. I was so frightened, that I didn't even ask where he was from. He didn't tell me his name, but he did say that I'm going to have a baby boy. I'm not supposed to drink any wine or beer or eat any food forbidden by God's laws. Our son will belong to God for as long as he lives."

Then Manoah prayed, "Our LORD, please send that prophet again and let him tell us what to do for the son we are going to have." God answered Manoah's prayer, and the angel went back to Manoah's wife while she was resting in the fields. Manoah wasn't there at the time, so she found him and said, "That same man is here again! He's the one I saw the other day."

Manoah went with his wife and asked the man, "Are you the one who spoke to my wife?" "I Am," he answered. Manoah then asked, "When your promise comes true, what rules must he obey and what will be his work?" "Your wife must be careful to do everything I told her," the LORD's angel answered. "She must not eat or drink anything made from grapes. She must not drink wine or beer or eat anything forbidden by God's laws. I told her exactly what to do."

"Please," Manoah said, "stay here with us for just a little while, and we'll fix a young goat for you to eat." Manoah didn't realize that he was really talking to one of the LORD's angels. The angel answered, "I can stay for a little while, although I won't eat any of your food. But if you would like to offer the goat as a sacrifice to the LORD, that would be fine." Manoah said, "Tell us your name, so we can honor you after our son is born." "No," the angel replied. "You don't need to know my name. And if you did, you couldn't understand it."

So Manoah took a young goat over to a large rock he had chosen for an altar, and he built a fire on the rock. Then he killed the goat, and offered it with some grain as a sacrifice to the LORD. But then an amazing thing happened. The fire blazed up toward the sky, and the LORD's angel went up toward heaven in the fire. Manoah and his wife bowed down low when they saw what happened.

The angel was gone, but Manoah and his wife realized that he was one of the LORD's angels. Manoah said, "We have seen an angel. Now we're going to die." "The LORD isn't going to kill us," Manoah's wife responded. "The LORD accepted our sacrifice and grain offering, and he let us see something amazing. Besides, he told us that we're going to have a son."

Later, Manoah's wife did give birth to a son, and she named him Samson. As the boy grew, the LORD blessed him.

Isaiah 6:1-7 In the year that King Uzziah died, I had a vision of the LORD. He was on his throne high above, and his robe filled the temple.

Flaming creatures with six wings each were flying over him. They covered their faces with two of their wings and their bodies with two more. They used the other two wings for flying, as they shouted, "Holy, holy, holy, LORD All-Powerful! The earth is filled with your glory."

As they shouted, the doorposts of the temple shook, and the temple filled with smoke. Then I cried out, "I'm doomed! Everything I say is sinful, and so are the words of everyone around me. Yet I have seen the King, the LORD All-Powerful." One of the flaming creatures flew over to me with a burning coal that it had taken from the altar with a pair of metal tongs. It touched my lips with the hot coal and said, "This has touched your lips. Your sins are forgiven, and you are no longer guilty."

Genesis 18:1-2 One hot summer afternoon Abraham was sitting by the entrance to his tent near the sacred trees of Mamre, when the LORD appeared to him. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. He quickly ran to meet them, bowed with his face to the ground,

Genesis 18:8-10 He then served his guests some yogurt and milk together with the meat. While they were eating, he stood near them under the trees, and they asked, "Where is your wife Sarah?" "She is right there in the tent," Abraham answered. One of the guests was the LORD, and he said, "I'll come back about this time next year, and when I do, Sarah will already have a son." Sarah was behind Abraham, listening at the entrance to the tent.

Genesis 18:16-19 When the three men got ready to leave, they looked down toward Sodom, and Abraham walked part of the way with them. The LORD said to himself, "I should tell Abraham what I am going to do, since his family will become a great and powerful nation that will be a blessing to all other nations on earth. I have chosen him to teach his family to obey me forever and to do what is right and fair. Then I will give Abraham many descendants, just as I promised."

John 1:1-18 In the beginning was the one who is called the Word. The Word was with God and was truly God. From the very beginning the Word was with God. And with this Word, God created all things. Nothing was made without the Word. Everything that was created received its life from him, and his life gave light to everyone. The light keeps shining in the dark, and darkness has never put it out.

God sent a man named John, who came to tell about the light and to lead all people to have faith. John wasn't that light. He came only to tell about the light. The true light that shines on everyone was coming into the world.

The Word was in the world, but no one knew him, though God had made the world with his Word. He came into his own world, but his own nation did not welcome him. Yet some people accepted him and put their faith in him. So he gave them the right to be the children of God.

They were not God's children by nature or because of any human desires. God himself was the one who made them his children.

The Word became a human being and lived here with us. We saw his true glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father. From him all the kindness and all the truth of God have come down to us. John spoke about him and shouted, "This is the one I told you would come! He is greater than I am, because he was alive before I was born." Because of all that the Son is, we have been given one blessing after another.

The Law was given by Moses, but Jesus Christ brought us undeserved kindness and truth. No one has ever seen God. The only Son, who is truly God and is closest to the Father, has shown us what God is like.

Colossians 1:13-22 God rescued us from the dark power of Satan and brought us into the kingdom of his dear Son who forgives our sins and sets us free.

Jesus Christ is exactly like God, who cannot be seen. He is the first-born Son, superior to all creation. Everything was created by him, everything in heaven and on earth, everything seen and unseen, including all forces and powers, and all rulers and authorities. All things were created by God's Son, and everything was made for him.

God's Son was before all else, and by him everything is held together. He is the head of his body, which is the church. He is the very beginning, the first to be raised from death, so that he would be above all others. God himself was pleased to live fully in his Son. And God was pleased for him to make peace by sacrificing his blood on the cross, so that all beings in heaven and on earth would be brought back to God.

You used to be far from God. Your thoughts made you his enemies, and you did evil things. But his Son became a human and died. So God made peace with you, and now he lets you stand in his presence as people who are holy and faultless and innocent.

Acts 4:10-12 But there is something we must tell you and everyone else in Israel. This man is standing here completely well because of the power of Jesus Christ from Nazareth. You put Jesus to death on a cross, but God raised him to life.

He is the stone that you builders thought was worthless, and now he is the most important stone of all. Only Jesus has the power to save! His name is the only one in all the world that can save anyone. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

Once human independence has been looked at under the blinding searchlight of God's scrutiny, all will realize they have been treated fairly.

True Christianity is God actively searching for man. This is the importance of witnessing and missionary projects. There are recorded situations in which missionaries have gone into isolated cultures and found groups of people who quickly recognized the God of the Bible as the God they had been trying to find. These people have traditions of a lost holy book and speak of a Creator from whom they are separated from and desiring to know. When the gospel is presented to such groups, there is a quick acceptance of Jesus Christ. These observations support the conclusion that although people may have some light concerning the One true God, they need to have the knowledge of God that comes through a specific knowledge of God's Son, Jesus Christ. Without biblical information, they continue to grope for an answer to their spiritual needs.

Just as the mirror and the smooth surface of the lake reflect the sun and reveal not only its existence but also to some extent its nature, so the conscience in man reveals both the existence of God. The conscience reveals not only that God exists but also that he sharply distinguishes between right and wrong. He always does what is right and that he holds the rational creature responsible for always

[Matthew 13:11-16](#) Jesus answered: I have explained the secrets about the kingdom of heaven to you, but not to others. Everyone who has something will be given more. But people who don't have anything will lose even what little they have.

I use stories when I speak to them because when they look, they cannot see, and when they listen, they cannot hear or understand.

So God's promise came true, just as the prophet Isaiah had said, "These people will listen and listen, but never understand. They will look and look, but never see.

All of them have stubborn minds! Their ears are stopped up, and their eyes are covered. They cannot see or hear or understand. If they could, they would turn to me, and I would heal them."

But God has blessed you, because your eyes can see and your ears can hear!

If we are teachable, it is profitable, and "more will be given." The condition of increase is according to the condition of our open hearts. If you do not respond correctly to what light you have been given, it will also be taken away. He who lays hold of truth and uses it will receive

more enlightenment, but he who refuses to appropriate truth will lose even the understanding of truth he once had been given. But if someone does not live up to the light given there will be enough to judge them. When they have rejected the light already given, they will not receive any more light instead blindness sets in.

John 12:44-48 In a loud voice Jesus said: Everyone who has faith in me also has faith in the one who sent me and everyone who has seen me has seen the one who sent me.

I am the light that has come into the world. No one who has faith in me will stay in the dark.

I am not the one who will judge those who refuse to obey my teachings. I came to save the people of this world, not to be their judge but everyone who rejects me and my teachings will be judged on the last day by what I have said.

When the blind and deaf Helen Keller learned to communicate with the outside world, her teacher shared with her about God. Helen said that she always knew God was there, but she just did not know His name.

The Karen tribe of Burma speak of : the almighty, all-knowing God named Y'wa created everything. He created two persons, a man named Thanai and a woman named Eeu, and placed them in a garden with seven kinds of fruit trees. One kind they could not eat, though. The evil Mu-kaw-lee deceived the two persons, telling them they would have miraculous powers and ascend to Heaven. Mu-kaw-lee persuaded them to eat the fruit of the tree of trial. They ate and became subject to sickness, aging, and death.

The Santal tribe of India believe: "Thakur Jiu" (Thakur = genuine, Jiu = God), who created the first couple, a man named Haram (Adam?) and a woman named Ayo and put them in Hihiri Pipiri, which was west of India. The evil Lita tempted them to make rice beer and pour part of it on the ground as an offering to Satan. They did so, and became drunk on the rest of the beer. When they woke up, they knew they were naked and felt ashamed. They later had seven sons and seven daughters. Their descendents became corrupted, so Thakur Jiu hid a "holy pair" on Mount Harata (=Ararat?), and destroyed the rest in a flood. Eventually their ancestors traveled (east) from forest to forest, until they came to high mountains, which blocked their path. Finally they got through (perhaps at the Khyber Pass) and they came to their homeland near Calcutta. See *Eternity in Their Hearts* (p.41-44)

No Second Chance After Death

a) Every knee, not only in Heaven, but on earth, and the dead will bow to Jesus in Philippians 2:10 (See also Isaiah 45:23-24). Every eye will see Jesus return in Revelation 1:7, and will see God's glory in Isaiah 40:5.

b) Whatever God intended to communicate 1 Peter 3:19, Jesus preached to the spirits in prison, and "for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." (1 Peter 4:6 KJV)

c) People die once and then face judgment (Hebrews 9:27-28). There is no second chance after death for people who reject Jesus.

Man's problem has never been the lack of revelation, but only pride and refusal to change his attitude towards grace. People do not respond to the amount of revelation they already have; they know what to do, but refuse to do it. Most of Jesus' contemporaries rejected Him because they refused to believe, despite all fulfilled prophecies, miracles, healings and even His resurrection. People are given everything they need in order to be saved, but if they refuse the available revelation, they are fully responsible for it and cannot be justified at God's judgment. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ tells us that man lacks any chance to please God by his own efforts, that God's grace in Jesus was an absolute necessity and His love for us was big enough to save us from the spiritual disaster to which our illusory independence would have brought us. The Bible makes it clear that everyone has received some revelation. The very creation itself speaks of a God who is awesome in power, while the wonder of a human personality suggests that our creator is relational and personal.

However, our rebellious nature refuses to acknowledge this. Jesus taught that those who have had more revealed to them will be held more responsible. It is therefore a vital part of human responsibility to respond to the revelation that God has laid before you in the person of Jesus.

Followers of Jesus are people with a deep compassion for those who have not heard about Jesus, because he is the one who offers mercy and forgiveness for all humanity, who have rejected what God has revealed.

There are three classes of people who are ignorant. Some people are ignorant of various ideas and concepts because they have never been taught. Others are ignorant because they have never taken the time to learn or are unwilling to take the time to learn. Neither of these first two categories of people are ignorant because of inabilities. The third class of people are those who are ignorant because of inabilities. These fit into the same realm as innocent children — safe in the arms of Jesus. Those who we are concerned with in this article are those who fit into one of the first two categories, but the bottom line is "Is ignorance an excuse?"

Those Who Do Not Know God

Second Peter 1:3-4 We have everything we need to live a life that pleases God. It was all given to us by God's own power, when we learned that he had invited us to share in his wonderful goodness.

God made great and marvelous promises, so that his nature would become part of us. Then we could escape our evil desires and the corrupt influences of this world.

Second Thessalonians 1:5-9 All of this shows that God judges fairly and that he is making you fit to share in his kingdom for which you are suffering.

It is only right for God to punish everyone who is causing you trouble, but he will give you relief from your troubles. He will do the same for us, when the Lord Jesus comes from heaven with his powerful angels and with a flaming fire. Our Lord Jesus will punish anyone who doesn't know God and won't obey his message.

Their punishment will be eternal destruction, and they will be kept far from the presence of our Lord and his glorious strength.

All of us must realize that all who are ignorant of the gospel message do not know God. Therefore, those who are ignorant of the gospel message are those who Christ will take vengeance against.

No man is without excuse because we can look inwardly and know that God exists. And we can look at the universe and know that God exists. Since we can know that God exists, we have a responsibility to Him to do His will.

Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Involved in spiritual accountability is a knowledge of good and evil. Relative to some of the children of the Israelites we read, "Moreover your little ones...which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil..." (Deuteronomy 1: 39). There is a time in the absence of a certain level of development in a child's life that they do not know to choose good and refuse evil (Isaiah 7: 16).

It is obvious that Jesus had such children in mind when he said, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18: 3).

The stage of accountability is when one understands, is capable of believing, repenting, confessing Jesus' deity, and being baptized.

Sin is lawlessness (I John. 3: 4). Belief requires certain intellectual and volitional abilities (John. 8: 24). Repentance, confession, and baptism entail abilities which small children do not possess. Belief, repentance, confession, and baptism are all equally essential to initial salvation or, put another way, exercising accountability.

Men and women responded during the First Century. "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women," Luke wrote (Acts 5: 14). Again, "...they were baptized, both men and woman" (Acts 8: 12).

This refers not to any particular "age" but is a sphere of consciousness concerning the existence and jurisdiction of God which is arrived at through the assimilation and processing of data in one or more categories.

The example at Romans 1 uses the declaration of God that is inherent in the created universe.

Once a person becomes aware of this "knowledge of God" (Romans 1:21), they are responsible for recognizing Him as God (honor at Rom. 1:21) and expressing humility (giving thanks at Romans 1:21).

Thus at the time that a child has the capacity to understand the reality of God's revelation about Himself as announced in the heavens - at that time he is now accountable to that revelation.

And only God knows "when" this happens, but it is God's responsibility to get the gospel to those who are interested. The church is simply the vehicle to communicate the gospel in whatever areas its members are located and ministering. And if need be, God will move someone from one area to another in order to get the specific gospel information to someone who is searching for it.

If someone chooses NOT to honor Him as God, then God is not obligated to provide "further" information such as the gospel of Christ. In such cases as this, the person then resorts to embracing various degrees of "darkness" viewpoint, idolatry, etc., AND may or may not ever actually here the gospel - and yet still be totally accountable to divine justice and inherit the lake of fire.

The basis for accountability to God is stated at Exodus 20:5 as, "of those who hate me." Children are only recipients of the fathers' iniquities if they perpetuate the same attitude and action of sinfulness. However, if independent from their father, they express rebellion (hatred) against God, they are then held accountable for there own iniquity.

Isaiah 7:14-15 But the LORD will still give you proof. A virgin is pregnant; she will have a son and will name him Immanuel.

Even before **the boy is old enough to know how to choose between right and wrong**, he will eat yogurt and honey, and the countries of the two kings you fear will be destroyed.

If a person is saved in spite of ignorance, then the gospel is not a gospel of salvation, it is a gospel of condemnation. If an African tribesman who is isolated from the rest of the world and who never had

the opportunity to hear the gospel can be saved because of his ignorance, then when the gospel is preached to him, it would bring condemnation rather than salvation if he did not respond to it favorably. It would not be the "glorious gospel" (1 Tim. 1:11), it would be the horrible gospel. It would not be "the gospel of peace" (Rom. 10:15), it would be the gospel of conflict. It would not be "the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24), it would be the gospel of the brutality of God. There would be no "hope of the gospel" (Col. 1:23), only despair.

This justification through ignorance would make the gospel of no power rather than "the power of God unto salvation..." (Rom. 1:16). It would make the "Great Commission" of Jesus useless, unproductive, and vain. Yea, even the sacrifice of Jesus would have no value if man could be saved through ignorance. It would be better for the world not to know than to know and to be condemned. If man could be saved in ignorance, we are doing no favors to anyone by teaching the gospel.

Jesus Christ paid the price for every person and that price was His own precious blood.

Conclusion

1) God never intended anyone to be out of fellowship with Him. Heaven was intended to be man's destination. God is holy and loving and wants everyone to repent (Exodus 34:6-7; Jonah 4:10-11; 2 Peter 3:9). Although He is a just and righteous God, He is also a loving God.

2) God's nature prevents Him from being unfair. The Bible teaches that God judges fairly (Gen. 18:25; Psalm 7:11, 9:18; 1 Peter 1:17). In His infinite justice, He will be much fairer than we with our limited understanding of justice could possibly be.

3) Man is not in total ignorance or in total spiritual darkness. The Bible clearly teaches that man has an awareness both of God and of eternity (Psalm 19:1-4; Eccl. 3:11; John 1:9; Acts 14:15-17; Rom. 1:18-21, 2:15). It was the Roman sage Seneca who said, "God is near you, is with you. A sacred Spirit dwells within us, the Observer and Guardian of all our evil and all our good. There is no good man without God. But this God-consciousness is not enough. Man must have more information than this in order to be saved. The Christian message is in jeopardy at either extreme. If God-consciousness is sufficient for salvation, then the Bible's revelation is unnecessary. This is wrong because the Bible places such an importance in bringing the message of Jesus Christ to those who

have not heard (Rom. 10:14). But if the Bible is the only way a person can be saved, then we are back to our initial question about those who haven't heard.

4) God will provide the necessary information to those who seek Him. God rewards those who seek Him (Heb. 11:6). He will give anyone who earnestly seeks Him enough information to make a decision (1 Chron. 15:2; Psalm 9:10; Prov. 8:17; Jer. 29:13; Acts 8:30-31). God sent Peter to a Roman official named Cornelius to tell him about Jesus (Acts 10). It is also possible that God may work faith in a person's heart so that, like Job, he may say, "I know that my Redeemer lives," without knowing the identity of the Redeemer.

5) To those of us who are saved by God, we are to publish and to herald His word to the four corners of the earth. If we really care about that isolated, ignorant and unenlightened tribesman, we will do everything in our power to send the gospel light to the far reaches of the world. We will not hold back the gospel, but proclaim it at every dawning of the morning and dusk of the evening.