

## WHAT IS THE FATE OF THOSE WHO HAVE NEVER HEARD THE GOSPEL?

1. If God is truly all-knowing it is reasonable to believe that He knows all the possible worlds which could/might exist and consequently all the potential actions that free individuals would embrace. It is reasonable to believe that a God with this level of knowledge (middle knowledge) and who values free-will would have foreseen what an individual might have done if they would have had access to the news of the gospel. It also implies that if God knew that they would of their own free willing respond to the news of the gospel that He would indeed find a way to extend the reach of the gospel to that place.
2. The concept of fairness needs to be carefully evaluated as it results to those who have never heard the gospel. God is absolutely righteous and perfect! All of humanity is morally flawed and have fallen desperately far from His perfect standard! Every person outside of Christ has resisted the rule of God in their heart. With or without hearing the good news of the gospel we are told that man is morally culpable on three different levels. First, humanity is aware that God is powerful by virtue of creation (Romans 1:18-20). Second, humanity is aware that God is moral by virtue of conscience (Romans 2:14). Third, humanity is aware that God is good by virtue of providence (Acts 14:16-17). General revelation is available to all of humanity. Romans 1 tells us that despite this knowledge that humanity suppresses the truth about God. In other words, they intentionally hold down the truth much like a person holds down a spring so that it doesn't pop up. Humanity's lack of responsiveness to general revelation precludes people from receiving further revelation. Feinberg expresses this concept with the following observation, *"Those who don't get that information don't fail to get it because it was impossible to attain it; rather they fail to get it because they reject even the truth they have, and don't seek further truth about God."*
3. God will make sure that those who desire to repent will have the opportunity. Acts 17:26 states that God *"determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find, though he is not far from each one of us."* God also is committed to reach people in unusual ways. This truth is revealed in the story of God instructing Philip to go to a desert road which led from Jerusalem to Gaza. The purpose of God sending Philip was a direct answer to the Ethiopian eunuch need for answers as he searched for God by reading in Isaiah but did not know the significance of the passage (Acts 8:26-31).
4. Although we don't have access to all the facts about the individual situation of every person who has ever lived, we do know that God is righteous and fair in all His dealings. When Abraham appeals to God on behalf of Sodom & Gomorrah he acknowledges that God is incapable of mistreating the righteous as He judges the wicked. In God's infinite standard of justice and morality—He will do what is right. The wicked will face justice and the righteous will experience mercy.