

WHY I BELIEVE

The Heathen are Lost

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Are the heathen lost? The answer to this question has never been a problem to Bible-believing Christians, for the Bible gives clear evidence that the heathen are lost.
- B. There are many who have taken issue with the evangelical Christian over the lost condition and destiny of the heathen. There are those who reject the authority of the Bible; therefore they deny sin, hell or any form of eternal punishment after this life (universalists). Those who hold this view are not real Christians.
- C. However, a more subtle and much more dangerous position is that many who call themselves Christians say they believe in the wrath of God and eternal punishment for those who have heard the gospel and rejected it, but they do not believe that God will judge the heathen who have never heard about Christ. They maintain that the heathen are victims of their culture and environment, and a just and loving God would not punish them if they never heard the gospel. For a person to make this kind of statement shows a wrong understanding of God, sin and the cross.

II. THE DEFINITION OF HEATHEN

- A. Biblical
 - i. The word for heathen in the Old Testament is goyim (Lev. 25:44; Psa. 2:8; Jer. 9:16) and it is the same word as “gentile” (Judg. 4:3; Isa. 11:10; Jer. 46:1). These words are used interchangeably, and distinguish all nations from God’s chosen people, Israel.
 - ii. In the New Testament, the word ethne is translated “heathen” (Gal. 1:16; 2:9), “gentiles” (Gal. 2:2, 8) or “nations” (Matt. 25:32; 28:19; Gal. 3:8).
 - iii. Conclusion: A strict Biblical definition is that heathen means all nations other than Israel. Every Gentile before conversion to Christ is a heathen, for he is outside of any covenant relationship of salvation with God (Eph. 2:12-13, 19). NOTE: This does not mean that every Jew is automatically saved but God’s covenant of grace in salvation came through Abraham and his seed (Gal. 3:8-9)

cf. Gal. 3:16, 29). While Jews in the Old Testament were in a special covenantal relationship to God, they in the new dispensation of the church have to be saved by grace through faith in Christ (Messiah) as well as the Gentiles (Gal. 3:22 cf. Rom.1:16).

- B. Modern: Heathen is used much differently in modern times and speaks of any person who has never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. He is a Gentile who has never heard of the Bible, the cross, or the church. It is concerning these people that this lesson is directed.

III. THE BASIC ARGUMENTS FOR DENYING THAT THE HEATHEN ARE LOST

- A. Introduction: Those who argue against the heathen being lost do so from natural, human, emotional reasoning and not from the Word of God itself. They reject the Bible as the only rule of faith and practice.
- B. The Problem of Light: If the heathen live up to the light they have, God will not judge them, for God has given all men some natural light concerning Himself.
- C. The Problem of Love: Since God is love, He will not condemn to eternal hell those who have never been given a chance to receive Christ.
- D. The Problem of Justice: It would not be fair for a just God to destroy sincere and seeking souls, even though their method of worship is wrong.

IV. THE THEOLOGICAL REASONS THE HEATHEN ARE LOST

- A. God solemnly declares all men, Jews and Gentiles, under sin and condemned (Rom. 3:23; 3:10-11, 19-20). All men are sinners by imputation of Adam's sin (Rom. 5:12-21; I Cor. 15:22) for all have sinned in Adam. All men are sinners by nature and have received a sin nature from Adam through parents (Psa. 51:5; Eph. 2:3). All men are sinners by acts (Rom. 3:23; Eccl. 7:20). Therefore, all men are lost in sin and stand under the wrath of God. NOTE: God is holy and He must judge sinners, whether they have heard the gospel or not, or He would not be God. God cannot let sin go by unjudged. God's justice demands that a man be judged for his sin, for he has no Savior. NOTE: At the final judgment, men - even heathen - will not plead ignorance, injustice, cultural or environmental differences, but only that they are guilty sinners before a holy God.
- B. Heathen are not lost because they have not believed but because they are sinners. All men were lost before the gospel was ever proclaimed, for men are "condemned already" before trusting Christ (John 3:18). Faith in Jesus Christ saves a man from condemnation. Faith in Christ

saves but the heathen are lost because they are sinners and have no Savior for their sins.

- C. Since all men are sinners, under condemnation and rebellious to a holy God, then no man deserves salvation from God, not even the heathen. God owes no man salvation and no man deserves salvation. If a single person is saved from the just penalty of his sin, it is purely and simply because of the grace and mercy of God. NOTE: If salvation was based on God's justice alone, not one person would be saved for all men are sinners. Thank God that salvation is based on the love, mercy and grace of a sovereign God!
- D. If all men are not lost -- that is, God will let the heathen off the hook -- then there is no need for the gospel as the only means of salvation, for men could be saved some other way than by grace through faith in Christ (Eph. 2:8-9 cf. Rom. 1:16). This would make a mockery of the gospel, for Christ would not be the only escape from sin and judgment (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). If a person can get to heaven apart from the cross, then the cross has no real purpose. NOTE: Those who deny the heathen are lost have for all practical purposes cast over the evangelical faith once and for all delivered to the saints.
- E. If all men are not lost, then the exhortations that the gospel is for all men makes no sense at all (Luke 2:10; John 1:29; I John 4:14). It is obvious that the gospel is to be made available to all men in the world so they can believe and be saved. There would be no universal need of the gospel unless all men were lost.
- F. If all men are not lost, then Christ was deceived when He told His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15) and that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among the nations" (Luke 24:47). He told His disciples they were to go and teach all nations (Matt. 28:19) and His last words were that His disciples were to be witnesses in "the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). NOTE: Christians have tried to fulfill the Great Commission, but have not done a very good job of it. How sad it is that Christians have been so lax in their world-wide responsibility to preach the gospel. Every Christian will one day give an account to the Lord as to his faithfulness to the Great Commission.

V. BIBLICAL REASONS THE HEATHEN ARE LOST

- A. All heathen have some light on God (Rom. 1:18-21), but whatever amount of light God has given them, they reject and would rather be damned than serve the Creator. All men, even the heathen, choose willfully against God because they are sinners by nature.
- B. The Bible declares the heathen to be without excuse (Rom. 1:20). No matter how men may reason, God said the heathen are without excuse.
- C. The heathen have not the Mosaic Law or the Law of Christ to live by but they do have the law of conscience (Rom. 2:12-15). The pagan Gentile has a sense of right and wrong according to his own moral

code, however poor it may be. He does not have the Mosaic Law but he does believe in natural affections, respect for persons, care for others, murder is wrong, etc. The heathen has a law written on his heart, and he cannot keep the law of conscience perfectly; therefore, he sins and stands in line for God's wrath. Man breaks his own laws and proves himself a sinner. NOTE: Rom. 2:12 says the heathen shall perish (without a Savior), and God means exactly what He says.

VI. LOGICAL REASONS THE HEATHEN ARE LOST

- A. If the heathen are not lost because they have not heard, but other men are lost because they have heard and rejected, then we should never go to those who have never heard. Why? Because we will condemn them and rob them of heaven which they already possess apart from Christ.
- B. If the heathen are not lost, then the whole missionary program is a farce. Millions of dollars have been spent on a useless program; thousands of Christians have wasted time and talent seeking to reach the heathen when they are already saved.
- C. Individual Christians and organizations who do not believe the heathen are lost usually have no missionary zeal or program at all, or if they send missionaries to the heathen it is to civilize them, not to offer them everlasting life in Christ and the forgiveness of sins.

VII. CONCLUSION

- A. All men, including the heathen, are lost and headed for a Christless eternity without Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Christians are responsible to take the gospel to the ends of the earth, and God will not save the heathen until they hear the true gospel of Christ.
- B. Christians must be willing to go to the mission field if God calls. They must pray and give money to see the gospel preached in the whole world. NOTE: Any individual Christian or church without a missionary vision is dying, for the Lord Jesus said the gospel is to be preached in all the world to every creature.