

Honest Answers to Honest Questions: Question # 6

What about people who never had a chance to hear about Jesus?

Will God send them to hell for not knowing about someone of whom they have never heard? That doesn't seem very fair or just to me!

What if a native in a remote jungle has never heard of Jesus, but strives to live as good a life as he can and sincerely practices religion the best way he knows how. Will God still send him to hell?

To the question ...

“What about people who never had a chance to hear about Jesus? Will God send them to hell for not knowing about someone of whom they have never heard?”

... we answer a simple “no”.

God is a just and fair God, and would never send anyone to hell for not believing in someone about whom they have never heard.

But ... and this is a very important point ...

not believing in Jesus isn't the only sin for which people can be sent to hell.

What if, for instance, in spite of having been given “*clear*” knowledge of God the Father, natural unregenerate men willingly “*suppress*” that knowledge and reject His true Being? And what if natural unregenerate men also take the “*clear*” knowledge of God the Father that they have been given and twist and distort it into an idolatrous misrepresentation and caricature of what God really is, and worship that instead of Him? It would seem that the suppression and rejection of the truth about God the Father would be as serious a matter as rejecting the truth about Jesus Christ.

[Note: Before proceeding further in our discussion, we need to establish what we mean by the terms “Regenerate” and “Unregenerate” men

“Regenerate” men are men who have been “born again” (John 3:3,7), i.e., their hearts have been regenerated or renewed by God the Holy Spirit so that they have willingly and freely received and acted on God's calls to repent and exercise saving faith. “Regenerate” men are Christians.

“Unregenerate” men are men who have not been “born again”, i.e., their hearts have not been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Rather than ever exercising faith or repentance, they will instead “suppress the truth in unrighteousness.” “Unregenerate” men are not Christians, even though they may think or claim that they are (see Matthew 7:21-23). Unregenerate men remain in the “natural” (i.e., unregenerate) state in which they were born, and are often referred to by the double designation of “natural unregenerate” men.]

Back to Q # 5 ...

This suppression and rejection of the truth about God the Father

... is, in fact, precisely what all natural unregenerate men do. The Apostle Paul tells us in Romans 1:18-32 that as a result of their fallen condition all men freely and willingly suppress and reject the clear and abundant knowledge that they have of God the Father ...

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man – and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

Therefore God gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

For this reason, God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, back-biters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the

righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.” (Romans 1:18-32)

**These verses tell us that the real reason for God’s exercise of wrath
against natural unregenerate men ...**

is not that they have not believed in a Jesus of whom they have never heard, but instead “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness ... and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator”.

Indeed, we see in our Romans 1:18-32 passage not one, but four very specific charges against natural unregenerate men that draw “*the wrath of God*” down upon them ...

The first charge is that of “*ungodliness*” – which refers to living a life where God is largely ignored or considered irrelevant, a life in which, if He is considered at all, other things are put before Him.

The second charge is that of “*unrighteousness*” – which refers to man’s sinfulness.

The third charge is that men knowingly and willingly “*suppress the truth*” that they are given about God the Father

The fourth charge is that men not only “*suppress the truth*” about God, but that they also knowingly and willingly distort it, fail to give God His due glory, *and fall into idolatry*, i.e. ...

“... they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man – and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.”

Again, natural unregenerate men are not under the wrath of God for rejecting a Jesus of whom they have never heard, but are under the wrath of God for entirely different reasons altogether – for unrighteousness, ungodliness, suppressing the truth, and descent into idolatry.

Let’s follow God’s case as He lays it out in Romans 1:18-32

All men receive abundant true knowledge of the “*invisible attributes*” of God the Father, “*even His eternal power and Godhead*”. The evidence is displayed all around them in creation such that “*what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them*”.

The evidential knowledge that they receive about God is neither too little nor too obscure. It gets through. It is “*clearly seen, being understood*” by them.

Despite being “*clearly seen, being understood*”, men knowingly and willingly “*suppress the truth*” that they are given about God

Because this knowledge of God is both “*clearly seen*” and “*understood*”, natural unregenerate men are held to be “*without excuse*” for “*suppressing*” it.

Even worse, natural unregenerate men do not stop at suppressing and rejecting the truth about God, but also mar, distort and reshape it into idols –

“Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man – and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.”

Thus, they are “*without excuse, because although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God*”; because they knowingly “*exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator*”; and because they “*did not like to retain God in their knowledge*”.

Again, natural unregenerate men draw “*the wrath of God*” upon themselves for the four specific “*charges*” mentioned above – all done deliberately, for “*although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God*” – and not because they didn’t believe in a Jesus of whom they have never heard.

These four charges are an extremely important matter to God

Natural unregenerate man’s “*ungodliness*”, “*unrighteousness*”, willing “*suppression*” of the truth about God, and “*changing*” and distorting God’s true character and being into idols, is no small matter in the eyes of God.

We need to remember that the very first of God’s Ten Commandments is ...

“You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exodus 20:3)

and that is was Jesus Christ Himself who said that the “*greatest*” of all commandments is ...

“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment.” (Matthew 22:37-38).

So these charges against natural unregenerate man are very significant indeed!

Let’s pause again for Two Observations on the Idolatry of Modern Man and the Utter Lostness of Natural Unregenerate Men in general:

The Idolatry of Modern Man: An “*idol*” is anything that takes the place of the true God in our worship and life. Modern man’s idols are more philosophical than physical and would include things like atheism, agnosticism, secularism, hedonism (worship of self), compulsive materialism, and hyper-environmentalism.

Modern “idols” (which misrepresent God as He really is) found in contemporary “Christian” churches would include ...

Churches that teach “*easy believism*” and “*cheap grace*” – wherein Christianity is a mere matter of mental assent to a set of propositions about Jesus (all of which may or may not be correct) and requires no further embracing of them, no real trusting in them, no relying upon them, and no active commitment of one’s life to them.

Churches which exalt man and diminish God to the point where He is hardly worthy of any worship beyond “lip service”, or, even worse ...

Churches that picture God as being there to serve us.

Perhaps the most widespread example of this kind of idol found in many of today’s liberal churches and on college campuses is the replacement of the true gospel message with what has come to be called *MTD*, or *Moralistic Therapeutic Deism*. In *MTD*, there is a total reversal of the gospel message, with man being naturally good and with God basically being there to help man develop his “*self-esteem*”. It’s one commandment is “*Be nice.*”

On the utter lostness of unregenerate men in general: Many do not realize how utterly lost and resistant to the gospel message natural unregenerate men really are. The Apostle Paul spoke to it in our Romans 1:18-32 passage.

Our Lord Jesus Himself gives us further proof that natural unregenerate man’s problem is not a lack of enough information or a need for more conclusive information. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-29), where the rich man in hell begs to be allowed to go back and warn his brothers “*lest they also come to this place of torment*” ... pleading that “*if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent*” ... Jesus tells us, concerning the rich man’s unbelieving brothers, “*neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.*” So, according to Jesus, we have no reason whatsoever to believe that unregenerate man would not also ‘*suppress*’ any additional information that came his way.

Likewise, the Apostle John tells us in Revelation that even in the midst of the bowls of God’s wrath being poured out on men on earth, even then, men will “*not repent*” and “*give Him glory*”, but will instead “*blaspheme the name of God.*”

“Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory.”

“Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and sores, and did not repent of their deeds.” (Revelation 16:8-11)

It is a sad but true fact that the grip of sin on fallen man’s nature is total and complete.

We need only remember that when Jesus Christ, God Incarnate, came to earth, revealing His Deity, preaching the good news, and healing the sick, He was not only not accepted by “*His own*” people, but was also despised, rejected, scourged and crucified by them.

For further Biblical Proof of the utter lostness of natural unregenerate men, please refer to ...

Appendix 4.1 – Additional Bible Verses on the Fallen State of Natural Unregenerate Man

Back to our discussion

For each of the four charges laid out in Romans 1:18-32, natural unregenerate men, unless they repent and exercise saving faith in Jesus Christ, will come to have ...

God’s Penalties – Both Eternal and Temporal – Imposed Upon Them

They will suffer “*the wrath of God*” eternally in hell ...

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

“Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.” (Jesus Christ, Matthew 13:40-43)

Romans 1:18-32 also tells us that the unrepentant will also suffer temporally (here) as well ...

“Therefore God gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

For this reason, God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, back-biters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.” (Romans 1:24-32)

As stated earlier, this is done ...

Because “*although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God*”.

Because they “*did not like to retain God in their knowledge*”

Because they “*suppressed the truth in unrighteousness*”

Because they “*... changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man – and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.*”

And because they “*... exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator*”

For all these reasons, God judicially hardens and confirms them in their sin, and “*gives them over*” to “*uncleanness*”, to “*vile passions*” and to “*a debased mind*”, i.e., He “*gives them over*” to their own sinful natures. [Note that God does not compel them to sin, but judicially hardens and confirms them in it.]

We also note that one of the sins in which God confirms them is that they are “*haters of God*”.

**The Apostle Paul gives us additional testimony beyond our original passage
that natural unregenerate men knowingly and willingly
suppress the truth and commit sin**

In addition to our present passage on God's revelation of Himself in the heavens, the Apostle Paul also tells us in Romans 2:12-16 that all men have the law of God written on their hearts and in their consciences ...

“For as many as have sinned without the law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law (for not hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or excusing them) in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.”

So, natural unregenerate men do not commit sin out of ignorance of God's law. In addition to having the external knowledge of God's nature clearly displayed all around them (as shown in Romans 1:18-32), natural unregenerate men also have an inward knowledge of God's law that is “*written in their hearts*” and stamped on their “*consciences*”.

But, sadly, just as natural unregenerate men suppress and reject the true knowledge of God the Father that is revealed to them in creation, they also *suppress* their innate knowledge of His law that is “*written in their hearts*” and on their “*consciences*”.

Indeed, they so harden themselves against it, that they finally come to the place where they are spoken of as ...

“... having their own conscience seared with a hot iron” (I Timothy 4:2).

Even worse, as Paul tells us in our original passage, they not only sin knowingly and willingly themselves, but also “*approve of*” others who similarly engage in sin ...

“... who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.” (Romans 1:32)

To recap ...

The reason that all men are justly under the wrath of God is not because they have rejected a Jesus of whom they have never heard, but because they, in their fallen state, willingly and knowingly suppress and grossly abuse the clear knowledge of God the Father that they are given and live sinful lives in clear violation of His revealed law that is written in their hearts and on their consciences.

Thus, we see that the native in the remote jungle who has never heard of Jesus ...

1. does not live as “good” a life as he knows how in the face of a holy and righteous God, but rather lives a life in continual suppression of the clear truth of God that is evidenced all around him and that is also written on his heart and conscience ... and ...
2. that any “religion” that he practices is not a sincere attempt at the worship of the true God, but a debased result of his knowingly suppressing and distorting the knowledge of God that he has been given

Again, the remote native who has never heard of Jesus is not under God’s wrath because he did not believe in a Jesus of whom he has never heard, but is under God’s wrath for other reasons entirely ...

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness”

Such is the case with all natural unregenerate men.

Paul also tells us the REMEDY for our “ungodliness”, “unrighteousness”, “suppression” of the truth, and descent into “idolatry”

Just as Paul told us of the “ungodliness” and “unrighteousness” of men and their desperate need of a Savior, he also tells us of God’s remedy for their desperate need ...

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.” (Romans 5:8-10)

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1)

Our first Romans’ passage (Romans 1:18-32) showed us that all men, due to the sinful nature that they inherit at conception, justly fall under the wrath of God and are in a desperate situation.

Our next two passages from Romans (Romans 5:8-10; 8:1 above) tell us that in an amazing act of *grace* and *mercy*, God Himself provided the remedy for man’s sinful condition when He sent the Lord Jesus Christ to bear all of our sins and die in our place on the cross at Calvary.

Because of Jesus’s death for our sins, when a person comes to repent of their sins and exercise saving faith in Jesus Christ, two amazing things happen ...

God imputes their sins to Jesus Christ on the cross, who atones (pays for) for them

God imputes the righteousness of Jesus Christ to their account

By these two imputations, God, in His heavenly court, can now, judicially and justly, declare us to be both “*Not Guilty!*” and “*Righteous!*”.

[We note that we are not inherently “*Righteous*” in and of ourselves, but are covered by a foreign righteousness, that of Jesus Christ.]

In the Bible these twin imputations are referred to as our “*Justification*” – for we are now, by judicial act in God’s heavenly court, “*justified*” in God’s sight. When God looks at us now, He sees not our sins, as they have been removed and fully paid for by Jesus on the cross, but sees only the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, His own dear Son.

Because all of our sins have been atoned (paid for) by Jesus’s death on the cross and because His righteousness has been credited or given to us as a covering, we can now enter into the heaven and presence of a holy and righteous God.

What a grand and glorious “*remedy*” God has in His *grace* and *mercy* provided for the desperate and needy sinner!

We would urge you to read the gospel of John and learn more of the wondrous provision that God has made for our redemption.

“Appendix 4.1: Additional Bible Verses on the Fallen State of Natural Unregenerate Man

“What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.

As it is written:

*‘There is none righteous, no, not one;
There is none who understands;
There is none who seeks after God.
They have all turned aside;
They have together become unprofitable;
There is none who does good, no, not one.’
‘Their throat is an open tomb;
With their tongues they have practiced deceit’;*

*'The poison of asps is under their lips;
Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.'
'Their feet are swift to shed blood;
Destruction and misery are in their ways;
And the way of peace they have not known.'
'There is no fear of God before their eyes'.*" (Romans 3:9-18)

"Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin" (John 8:34)

"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom we also all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others." (Ephesians 2:1-3)

"This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." (Ephesians 4:17-19)

"... you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind" (Colossians 1:21)

"But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Corinthians 2:14).

"And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will." (II Timothy 2:24-26)

"For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God." (Romans 8:5-8)

"... and men loved darkness rather than the light" (John 3:19)

"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing ...

"For Jews request a sign and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

(I Corinthians 1:18,22-24)

“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells” (Romans 7:18)

“For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.” (Galatians 5:17)

“A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.” (Matthew 7:18)

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (John 3:6)

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like ...” (Galatians 5:19)

“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” (Genesis 6:5)

“But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is no one who calls on Your name, who stirs himself up to take hold of You”(Isaiah 64:6-7)

“Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopards his spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to evil.” (Jeremiah 13:23)

“To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure, but even their mind and conscience are defiled” (Titus 1:15)

“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you ...” (John 15:18-20)