

THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

Acts 10:34-35
Lesson #3
Is Christianity the only way?
10/9/2022

Challenges to the Christian Faith

1. Is God there?
(the challenge of **materialism**)
2. Is God fair?
(the challenge of **justice**)
3. Does God care?
(the challenge of **deism**)

The reason for this series of lessons

1.

Authentication (of the Christian message)

- ✓ **Scripture** - It must be authenticated.
- ✓ **Reason** - It must make sense.

Acts 17:11

“they received the word with great eagerness, **examining the Scriptures daily**, to see whether these things were so.”²



The reason for this series of lessons

2.

Integration (of the Christian message)

- ✓ **Intellectually** convincing.
- ✓ **Spiritually** satisfying.
- ✓ **Morally** transforming.
- ✓ **Socially** connecting.
- ✓ **Culturally** inspiring.



The reason for this series of lessons

2.

Dissemination (of the Christian message)

1 Peter 3:15

“... sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being **ready to make a defense to everyone who asks** you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet **with gentleness and reverence;**”



Dissonance (cognitive, social, moral conflicts)

IT'S NOT DENIAL - I'M JUST VERY SELECTIVE ABOUT THE REALITY I ACCEPT



“Faith is believing something you know isn't true.”

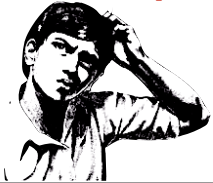
sugarcoat, whitewash, downplay, brush over, cherry pick, gaslight,

Is God fair?

(the challenge of **justice**)

We are told that God is loving & just.

We are also told that all those who have not heard the Gospel and placed faith in Jesus are going to hell.



Is that just?

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Theodicy - Is God fair?

(this week)

Human choice (pluralism)

Is it fair that **only those who hear the Gospel and trust Christ** are saved?

(next week)

Divine choice (election)

Is it fair that God grants saving faith **to some but not all?**

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All Evangelical Christians agree that:

1. Jesus Christ is the **ONLY WAY** of salvation.

John 14:6 “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; **no one comes to the Father, but through Me.**”

2. Christ’s **DEATH & RESURRECTION** is the basis of human redemption.

2 Corinthians 5:21 “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, **that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**”

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3. We are reconciled to God through **FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST.**

John 3:17-18

“He who believes in Him is not judged; **he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed** in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

Romans 10:9-10

“that if you **confess with your mouth** Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and **with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.**”

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The message of the book of Romans makes this clear.

1. All people have enough “light” to be responsible before God. (1:18-20)

2. It is by faith in Christ that sins are forgiven. (3:21-26)

3. Faith comes by hearing the gospel preached. (10:8-21)

4. People can have a zeal for God but still be unsaved. (10:2-4)

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All Evangelicals DO NOT agree

as to how saving faith is recognized or how God’s grace is ultimately received.

Acts 10

“34 . . . God is not one to show partiality, 35 but in every nation the man who **fears Him and does what is right, (practices righteousness)** is welcome to Him.”

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All Evangelicals DO NOT agree

as to how saving faith is recognized or how God's grace is ultimately received.

Luke 23

"33 And when they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. 34 But Jesus was saying, **"Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."** And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves."

Reconciliation was completed by Christ's sacrifice without man's faith.

2 Corinthians 5:18-19

"All this is from God, who **reconciled** us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, that God **was reconciling** the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them."

Christ's sacrifice is the basis of salvation.

But could it be available to some who have not known him or expressed faith in him?

All evangelicals agree that: Salvation comes to some who CANNOT place faith in Jesus.

The Saved

The Lost

Believers in God as the Redeemer

Confessional Christians

Old Testament saints

Special dispensations

Infants, mentally challenged, etc.

"Implicit faith"

(Justin Martyr, John Wesley, C.S. Lewis, Vatican II)



The Saved

The Lost

Believers in God as the Redeemer

Confessional Christians

Those with faith in God but not in Christ specifically

Special dispensations

Those who would believe had they heard the Gospel

Infants, mentally challenged, etc.

Some would have returned had they gotten the message.

Some became Canadians.

Some returned.

Many young men moved to Canada to avoid the military draft in the 60s.

After the Vietnam war, President Carter granted them amnesty.

Daily Herald

Carter grants full pardon to Vietnam draft evaders

UAW strike at GM plant in Michigan

Gov. John DeWitt name Curtis party 16

Biblical examples

- **Holy Pagans** - Job, Abimelech (king of Gerar - Gen.20:1-18), Jethro (a priest of Midian - Ex.18:1-12),
- Jews who lived before Jesus was born - **Abraham**.
- The people of **Nineveh** (Jonah).
- **Abel, Enoch, Noah**, being neither Jews nor Christians, pleased God because they sought Him with the faith response which pleases Him (Heb.11:6)
- **Melchizedek** (a mysterious Canaanite priest) Gen.14:17-24, Heb.6:20-7:22.



- The **Magi** (wise men) Matt.2:1-12
- **Matthew 10:15; 11:22; 12:41-42** - the Ninevites, the queen of Sheba, the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrah.

Could God's grace be broader than what we have thought?

1. The revelation that we have clearly indicates that outside of confession of faith in Christ as savior there is **NO REASON FOR ASSURANCE OF HOPE**.
2. This is the **MESSAGE** we must proclaim.
3. The extension of God's grace beyond what we preach, if possible, **IS NOT REVEALED TO US**.

NOTE:

1. We know that the inclusion of Gentiles in God's grace was a mystery **UNKNOWN** to Israel before Pentecost.
2. We see subtle **CLUES** of "extended mercy" in Scripture.

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Deuteronomy 29:29

"The **secret things** belong to the Lord our God, but the **things revealed** belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law."

We are called to receive and spread the Good News of Christ.

We are not called to counsel God about how He ultimately disburses His gracious blessings.

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How MIGHT we view the issue of the fairness of God with respect to those who have not heard the Gospel?

The **HEART OF GOD** toward those with a **HEART FOR GOD**

The unevangelized may be saved if they respond with faith in God based on the revelation they have. *John Wesley*

God views the unevangelized in terms of how they would have responded had they heard the Gospel. *Clark Pinnock*

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1 Samuel 16:7

"God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, **but the Lord looks at the heart.**"

1 Corinthians 13:12

"For now we see **in a mirror dimly,**"

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"I have never been able to conjure up (as some great evangelical missionaries have) the appalling vision of the millions who are not only perishing but who will inevitably perish. On the other hand, as I have said, I cannot be a universalist. Between these extremes I cherish the hope that the majority of the human race will be saved."

John Stott

Essentials: a Liberal-Evangelical Dialogue p327

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How should Christians view other faiths?



Objects of faith

- responding to what one has.

Hunger for hope

- searching for life.

Image of God

- being authentic.

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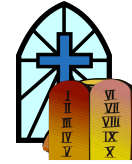
Telling the Gospel story

1. God (not you or I) makes the rules, keeps the score, and judges the soul.
2. I trust that God will be fair.
3. The standard - Be true to myself as a human, created to reflect God's image in this world.
4. In the Cross of Christ, God has made provision for insecure sinners, who feel they fall short.
5. Those who place their faith in Christ are assured of eternal life.
6. No one is forced to trust Christ.
7. We are free to stand before God on the basis of our own merits knowing that He will be fair.

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The Lord of Mysteries

Israel knew God's covenant
The mercies of the Lord divine
Not seeing clear God's mystery
Of Gentiles grafted to His vine.

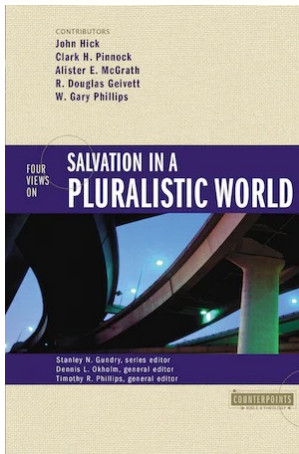


But when the light of God's broad plan
The mystery hid in ages past
Is brought to light at Calvary
A new perspective then is cast.



So when we contemplate the host
Who know not Christ but fear God still
We can't but wonder at the thought
Are other mysteries in His will?

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A Berean's look at ...



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