

General revelation can be defined as “the revelation of God to all people, at all times, and in all places, that reveals that God exists and that He is intelligent, powerful, and transcendent.” Scriptures like **Psalm 19:1-4** and **Romans 1:20** clearly state that certain things about God can be understood from nature and the universe around us.

Sadly, there are still parts of the world with absolutely no access to the Bible, to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, or to any means of learning Christian truth. The question then arises, what happens to these people when they die? Is it fair for God to condemn a person who has never even heard the Gospel, nor heard of Jesus Christ, nor even heard that there is a God? Some propose a solution to this dilemma in the idea that God judges those who have never heard based on how they responded to general revelation. The presumption is that if a person truly believes what can be known about God through general revelation, God will judge the person based on that faith and allow the person entrance into Heaven. Is it possible that such a concept is true?

Before we address that question, a key assumption must be dealt with. Some make the assumption that those who have never heard the Gospel are searching for God, seeking for truth, practically begging for someone to come and deliver the message of salvation. The problem with this assumption is that Scripture declares the exact opposite. **Romans 3:10-12** exclaims, ***“There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”***

According to Scripture, people take the knowledge of God available through general revelation and pervert it to their own liking. **Romans 1:21-23** states, ***“For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.”*** According to Scripture, the “status” of those without God is not one of seeking salvation, but rather one of rebellion, darkness, and idolatry.

In reality, it is not that some people have not heard about God. The problem is they have rejected what they have heard and what is readily seen in nature. **Deuteronomy 4:29** proclaims, ***“But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul.”*** This verse teaches that everyone who truly seeks after God will find Him. If a person truly desires to know God, God will make Himself known. The problem is ***“there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God” (Romans 3:11)***. People reject the knowledge of God that is present in nature and in their own hearts, and instead decide to worship a “god” of their own creation.

It is foolish to debate the fairness of God sending someone to hell who never had the opportunity to hear the gospel of Christ. People are responsible to God for what God has already revealed to them. The Bible says that people reject this knowledge, and therefore God is just in condemning them to hell.

The fact that the lost reject general revelation is the reason why it is so important for us to proclaim the Gospel throughout the whole world (**Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8**).

The Bible nowhere gives any hope that those who have never heard the Gospel are fully believing the truth about God available through general revelation. Again, the Bible describes the lost as being in rebellion against what they already know about God, not seeking for more truth about God.

However, there is always the question, “What if?” **IF** a person who has never heard the Gospel truly and fully believed what can be known about God through general revelation, would that person be saved? **IF** such a person did exist, it would seem consistent with the love, mercy, and grace of God that such a person would be saved. But again, please understand, this is a hypothetical that Scripture does not support.

Acts 10 records the story of Cornelius. Cornelius is described as ***“devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly” (Acts 10:2)***. Did God save Cornelius because of his devotion to God based on the limited knowledge he had of God? No. God sent an angel to Cornelius with instructions for Cornelius to contact the Peter and have him come to Cornelius’ home.

Cornelius obeyed, and Peter came and presented the Gospel to Cornelius and his family. Cornelius and his family believed and were therefore saved (**Acts 10:44-48**). **Acts 10** is a clear example of how we are not saved by believing certain truths about God, or by obeying God in certain respects.

The only way of salvation is the Gospel of Jesus Christ (**John 14:6; Acts 4:12**).

Romans 10:14 declares, *“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?”* God commands us to present the Gospel because of the fact that *“there is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God”* (**Romans 3:10-11**).

Rather than hoping some people are being saved by believing what can be known about God through general revelation, God calls us to go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel. Believing in the Gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ is the only method of salvation the Bible mentions (**John 3:16**).

Instead of debating the fate of those who have never heard, we, as Christians, should be doing our best to make sure they do hear. We are called to spread the gospel throughout the nations (**Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8**). We need to let the fact that people reject the knowledge of God revealed in nature motivate us to proclaim the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. Only by accepting God’s grace through Christ can people be saved from their sins and rescued from an eternity apart from God.

If we assume those who never hear the gospel are granted mercy from God, we run into a terrible problem. If people who never hear the gospel are saved, then we should make sure no one ever hears the gospel. The worst thing we could do would be to share the gospel and have a person reject it, which would result in their condemnation.

No, the fact is, Scripture teaches that people who do not hear the gospel are condemned already, which is why it is important for believers to give themselves to the work of world evangelism and obeying the Great Commission (**Matthew 28:19-20**).



*“What About Those
Who Have Never
Heard The Gospel?”*