



# AREOPAGUS PROCLAMATION

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## WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE WHO HAVE NEVER HEARD ABOUT JESUS?

by Daryl E. Witmer

You're a Christian, right?

Yes.

You believe that a person must believe in Jesus to get into heaven?

Not just *believe* in Jesus, but *receive* Him and His grace offer. (John 1:12)

Well, then, what is the fate of the millions of people (past and present) who have never even *heard* about Jesus? Are they all going to hell?

We can be sure that whatever happens to them will be fair. Abraham once said, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" (Genesis 18:25)

Sounds like you're avoiding my question. Will they all go to hell?

Quite likely. But it depends.

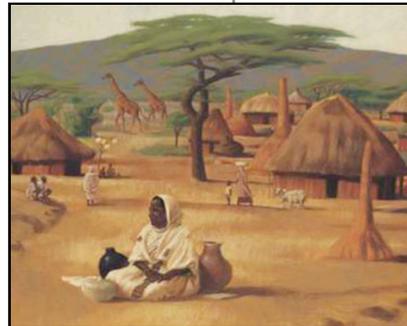
Wow! Sending people who have never even heard about Jesus to hell because they haven't believed and received Him doesn't sound very fair or kind or loving to me.

Well, God doesn't actually *send* people to hell. People end up in hell because they've rejected God's offer to spare them from that terrible place. But remember, I said, "It depends."

### It depends on what?

According to the Bible a person's eternal fate will be determined on the basis of their relationship with Jesus Christ. Whether they

ever hear about Jesus (through God's *special revelation*) may depend on how they respond to the evidence of God that they are provided in nature and conscience (through His *general revelation*). Everyone in the world has an innate sense of God and eternity in their heart. (Ecclesiastes 3:11). No one anywhere has any excuse for not seeking (vs. suppressing) further truth about God after noting the evidence of Him in nature (Romans 1: 19-20). But because the human heart is sinful by birth, many will *not* seek Him. Which is why I said earlier that it's quite likely that most of those who have never heard of Christ will spend eternity in hell. But how can that be attributed to God?



**Let me get this straight. You're suggesting that if someone is looking at the stars one night, senses that there is a God, and does nothing about it, they may be doomed forever? But if they act on that vague sense by seeking God, they will be granted a word about Jesus, and able to receive Him?**

Listen to this true story, related by my friend and fellow Christian apologist, Alex McFarland. Alex says that he was once in Shabwalala, a small dusty town 100 miles from Lusaka, Zambia. While he was talking with some African boys he heard a clanging noise slowly coming down a nearby path. Then they all spotted this rail-thin cow with a bell around its neck being led along by an old disheveled-looking man. The old man immediately came up to Alex and began rattling off words in his native Bebma dialect. A translator explained:

"This man has walked a day and a half to meet with you. He heard there were white missionaries from America visiting, and he has a question for you." When Alex asked about the cow, he was told that the man wouldn't leave his only cow behind or it would have been stolen. So he brought it all the way with him. At that point the man began pointing at the sky and all around him, saying, "I know there's a god, because all of this had to come from somewhere. It couldn't have come from nothing. But I don't know where to take it from there..."

Alex says: "I nearly burst into tears. Here was a man nearing the end of his life, certainly weathered by its trials and storms. He obviously had little to eat, maybe wasn't even sure where his next meal was going to come from. And yet the burning inside him had caused him to leave everything on the chance that maybe a strange foreigner

might have an answer to his soul-searing question. This was probably the most intelligent man I've ever met—more so than any of the university professors I was used to meeting on American campuses—because he knew enough about what he didn't know to seek out an answer. He recognized the stark contrast between the fullness of his surroundings and the emptiness inside him. It was a matter of words before he accepted Jesus into his heart. 'I have sought this for my whole life,' he said with tears in his eyes, his life changed forever and the weight of the world lifted off his shoulders. He then asked if I would come to his village. 'There are 13 more who need to know this,' he pleaded. We went and saw 13 more souls added to the kingdom of God."

NOTE: The somewhat abbreviated account above is related directly from The Ten Most Common Objections to Christianity, by Alex McFarland, ©2007 Regal. Visit Amazon.com

