

THE MAIN THING:

God gives these truths regarding those who have never heard of Jesus: large numbers from every tribe, language, nation and people group, will be in heaven; God reveals Himself through creation and conscience and to those who seek him; God will credit Jesus' salvation according to their response to the light they have received; and God is just and will judge everyone fairly.

PURSUE RELATIONSHIP: *Connect and pray as a group*

1. What conversations have you had with persons who have doubted the Christian faith? What was the outcome of those?
2. What conversations have you had with someone who doubted because 'not everyone has heard about Jesus'?

PURSUE GOD: *Time that is devoted to the Word of God*

Observation and Reflection

1. How is God's redemptive plan shown throughout the ages (Gen 15:6; Rom 3:25; Heb 11:6) and throughout the world (Rev.5:9; 7:9)?
2. Read Romans 1:18-32. How has God revealed Himself in a 'general' way? What excuses do people give for not responding to God? (Reference Psalm 19:1 also)
What stories do you know/have you heard of God revealing Himself to someone who has never heard about Jesus?
3. How does 1 Samuel 16:7 connect with the biblical stories of Cornelius (Acts 10:1-7) and Saul (Acts 9:1-9)? Reference Hebrews 11:6 and 2 Peter 3:9 with this discussion.
4. What characteristic of God do the following verses describe? (Gen 18:25 ; Psalm 98:9; Acts 4:12)
What implication does this have for our understanding of the issue of this sermon?

Application

1. What illustration of Pastor Henry's was most compelling for you? Why?
2. In what ways do you need to focus on Joshua 24:14 to renew your dedication to the Lord personally?
How can you live out the commission of Acts 1:8?

THE WORD (NIV)

Genesis 15:6

Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness. . . . **18:25**

²⁵ Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Joshua 24:15

¹⁵ But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

1 Samuel 16:7

⁷ But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Psalms 19:1

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. . . . **98:9**

⁹ let them sing before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity.

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. . . .

4:12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.

Romans 3:25

God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—

Hebrews 11:6

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Revelation 5:9

And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation . . . **7:9** After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.

In John 14:6 Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." He didn't say He was *a way* to God the Father; He said He is *the way*.

Jesus' claim can evoke negative reactions and some people ask, 'If Jesus is the only way to God, then what about all those who have never heard of Jesus?' Let's see what the Bible teaches.

1. The Bible teaches us that people from *every nation, every tribe and every language* will be in heaven, giving praise to the Redeemer (Revelation 5:9).
2. *Large numbers* that no one can count, representing every people group, will be in heaven (Rev. 7:9).
3. God reveals Himself in a general way to everyone (Romans 1:18-21): a) through His creation, a glorious theatre which displays God's creative power. When we look at the vast design, order and precision of the universe, or when we see the miraculous birth of a child, we have enough information to know that these are not the product of chance but are designed by a powerful, creative and intelligent God (Psalm 19:1). b) through God's moral code, or conscience, in our hearts which everyone clearly understands. And yet, although everyone knows intuitively there is a God, many have suppressed this truth, and instead worship things God made. As a result, they gave themselves over to their sinful desires. (Romans 1:18, 22-25, 32; 2:14). But what if they have never heard of Jesus? They are responsible for what they did with what they learned about God in creation and their consciences.
4. God reveals Himself specifically to those who seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). God looks at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). Although God may sometimes show Himself to people who reject Him, as He did with Saul/Paul (Acts 9:1-6), He primarily reaches out to those who are open, no matter where they live or how limited their understanding of God may be. Cornelius is a prime example (Acts 10). God may give a special revelation of Himself through a copy of the Bible, through a dream or vision, through miracles, through the birth of a child, or through the life and testimony of Christians. This is one reason believers need to live out our faith and be prepared to share it with someone who is opening their heart to God. We are pivotal in God's plan (Acts 1:8). God is working in people around us, and will direct people to us or will direct us to those who are seeking Him.
5. There is no salvation apart from Jesus (Acts 4:12, Romans 3:15). God accepts Christ's atonement for those both after Christ died and those before Jesus' time (Genesis 15:6). If people are open to God and respond with trust and love no matter how little light they have received, God will credit the saving blood of Jesus to their account.
6. God is just and He will judge everyone in a fair, just and right way (Genesis 18:25, Psalm 98:9, 2 Peter 3:9).

If you have been skeptical of Christianity because of this issue, don't let your concern about those of other religions or of those who have never heard of Christ prevent you from responding to God. Joshua said (14:14), "Choose for yourself. . . whom *you* will serve. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

The decision rests with you. What will you do with Jesus?