

THE BEREANS

ACTS 17:11

John 5:18-24

Lesson #19

Is Jesus the Only Way?

11/22/2015

Three intellectual challenges to the Christian Faith

1. Is God there?

(the challenge of **materialism**)

2. Does God care?

(the challenge of **deism**)

3. Is God fair?

(the challenge of **pluralism**)



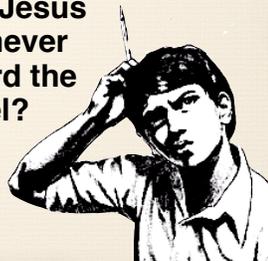
3. Is God fair?

EXPERIENCE

How can an all powerful and loving God allow such "injustice" and seemingly meaningless suffering in His creation?

EXCLUSIVISM

How can God condemn those who do not believe in Jesus or have never even heard the Gospel?



All evangelicals 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.'"

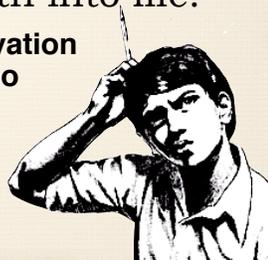
2. Christ's work on the cross is imputed to any and all sinners who will be saved.

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."

John 5:24

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and **believes Him who sent Me**, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life."

- Is Jesus suggesting that salvation is extended to all and any who believe in God the Father?
- Does this not extend saving grace to virtually all religious traditions?



All evangelicals do not agree that:

Salvation comes only to those who place direct faith in Jesus.

Acts 10:34-35

"I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation **who fear him and do what is right.**"

All evangelicals do not agree that:

Salvation comes only to those who place direct faith in Jesus.

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”

All evangelicals do not agree that:

Salvation comes only to those who place direct faith in Jesus.

The Saved



Believers in God as the Redeemer

Confessional Christians

Old Testament believers

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 Christ

Special dispensations

Those who would believe if they knew

Infants, mentally challenged, etc.

The Old Testament examples of God’s grace going beyond the Abrahamic covenant.

- **Malachi 1:11** “From the rising of the sun to its setting, my name is great among **the nations**, and in every place incense is offered to my name and a pure offering; for my name is great among **the nations**, says the Lord of hosts.”
- **Isaiah 19:25** “Blessed be **Egypt** my people, and **Assyria** my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance.”
- **Job, Abimelich** (king of Gerar - Gen.20:1-18), **Jethro** (a priest of Midian)- Ex.18:1-12), **Ninevities. Abel, Enoch, Noah** being neither Jews nor Christians, pleased God because they sought Him with the faith response which pleases Him (Heb.11:6)

The New Testament examples of God’s grace going beyond the Abrahamic covenant.

- **Melchizedek** (a Canaanite priest - Gen.14:17-24) Heb. 7:1-21.
- The **Magi** (wise men) (Matt.2:1-12)
- **Luke 18:9-14** God forgives the publican who simply asks for mercy.
- **Matthew 10:15; 11:22; 12:41-42** Some of the unexpected inhabitants of heaven - the Ninevites, the queen of Sheba, the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrah.
- **Acts 14:16-17** “In the past, He let all nations go their own way. Yet He has not left Himself without testimony.”

John 5

“¹⁸ For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God. ¹⁹ Jesus therefore answered and was saying to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and greater works than these will He show Him, that you may marvel.”

- **Jesus claimed to identify himself with God the Father at an intimate level.**

“²¹ For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes. ²² For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, ²³ in order that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. **He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.** ²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.”

- **God’s work is to give life and judge.** (next week)
- **To reject Jesus is to reject God the Father.**
- **Saving faith in God cannot be divorced from faith in Jesus.**

John 10

“²⁴ The Jews therefore gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, “How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.” ²⁵ Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father’s name, these bear witness of Me. ²⁶ But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep. ²⁷ **My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; . . .**”

- **O.T. saints recognized Christ Jesus when they saw the signs and wonders that authenticated him.**

Problems with grace outside faith in Jesus

- **There is no hope outside faith in Christ.** *Eph.2:12* “remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, **without hope and without God** in the world
- **Confession of faith in Jesus is essential.** *Jn.3:17-18* “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through Him. **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.”
Rom. 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.**”

- **Many will not be saved.** *Lk.13:22-30* “²² Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. ²³ Someone asked him, “Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?” He said to them, ²⁴ **“Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. . . .** ³⁰ Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last.”
- **The argument of the book of Romans**, which makes the following points clear.
 - a. **All people have enough “light” to be responsible before God with respect to their sin.**
 - b. **It is by faith in Christ that sins are forgiven.**
 - c. **Faith comes by hearing the gospel preached.**
 - d. **Many people have zeal for God but are not saved without faith in Christ Jesus.**

- **Jesus prays for his disciples not for the world.** *John 17:9* “I ask on their behalf; **I do not ask on behalf of the world**, but of those whom You have given me; for they are Yours;”
- **There is no postmortem repentance.** *Heb.9:27-28* “And inasmuch as it is **appointed for men to die once, and after this comes judgment;**”
- **The Jews of the first century** certainly seemed to fit the criteria for believing individuals who were not confessing faith in Christ **yet they are condemned.** *Rom.10:1-2; Phil.3:1-11.* The same can be said of the religious audience in Athens. *Acts 17:30-31.*
- **The cases cited as biblical examples** of people saved through general revelation are, at best, **ambiguous.** We know little about Melchizedek’s life experience for example. Cornelius (a “God-fearer”) was not saved until he believed, *Acts.11:14.*

Is God’s grace broader than we can see?

1. The revelation that we have clearly indicates that **without confession of faith in Christ as savior there is no reason for hope.**
2. This is the path we must take and proclaim.
3. The extension of God’s grace beyond what we preach is **possible but not known 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 signs of “extended mercy” in Scripture.

“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

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
Is another mystery in His will?

What do we say to a pluralistic culture?

1. **Humility** - We are not the ultimate judge of who will receive God's grace because there is much that we cannot see.
2. **Judgment** - God will judge all on the basis of works.
3. **Perfection** - The standard is to be true to our nature as image bearers of a perfectly holy God.
4. **Christ** - God has provided a redeemer for those who hunger and thirst for righteousness that they lack.
5. **Choice** - We can choose God's gift or our own merit.
6. **Fairness** - Everyone is free to stand before God on their own merit knowing that God will be fair.
7. **Security** - Everyone who confesses faith in Christ has the promise of Christ's imputed righteousness.