

RUMINATIONS OF A FORMER HEATHEN

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Who has heard?

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How about those who never heard? Simple question, elusive answer. The short answer, for me, is: I don't know. After many years of study, looking everywhere in the Bible, paying close attention to many opinions, I still don't know what happens to those who never heard. I am no closer now than I ever was to knowing what happens to those who never heard, or those who will never hear. I am hoping that there would be some kind of knowledge imparted to them that would make them seek the mercy of God. God has said that a humble and contrite heart he will not despise. That seems to mean that there will be people all over the world who have never heard of Jesus, nor will they ever hear, but will somehow or another know they are in big trouble with God. They will know they are totally unworthy of God and whether they are in a false religion, or in no religion, they will know they are unclean and will regret, with a clear amount of helplessness, the bad actions and attitudes they have had in their lives. They will have a humble and contrite heart, they will know they cannot save themselves, they will know there is a punishment coming from which there is no escape and they have failed to make themselves acceptable for reprieve. They will also be afraid. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. How will they know? I have no idea. I suppose, with a certain degree of certainty, that the Holy Spirit is the one who will communicate this. How would it happen, or if it happens at all, is what I have no idea about. God holds people responsible to what they know.

All this eventually spills over into election and free will, another subject that never ends. Going back to those who never heard, if God is going to save *only* those he chose from before the foundation of the world (as some maintain), then, those who never heard are, or would be, all those whom God did not choose for salvation. It makes the question of "how about those who never heard?" moot. Those who never heard, or will not hear, are those who were not chosen to be saved. If that is the case it wouldn't matter at all that there would be many that will not hear. Those who will not hear are those who were not chosen to be saved, that's all there is to it. On the other hand, not all of those who hear will be saved. Lots and lots of them will hear, and lots and lots of them will not be saved. As a matter of fact, a lot of the people who ask the question "how about those who never heard?" couldn't care less about those who never heard. They themselves have heard, otherwise the question would never come up. They just want to point at the seeming unfairness of God, they want to deride God, they want to say how can he be a just God if he doesn't let everybody know? They, themselves, are unbelievers, mockers who all they want to do is to speak evil of things

they know nothing about. Murmurers and complainers, their mouths speak great swelling words. There is a clear example of free will, free will in action, rebelling and mocking, rejecting, despising. They ask the question like it is the cleverest thing on earth. I got you now, eh. I got you in a box. How can God be fair if not everybody knows? They will find out for themselves in the day of judgment. It is fear, plain raw fear of God that can save man. I know that mocker, I know every wrinkle on his face very well, indeed. Of course, regardless of who will hear and who will not, we have direct orders to spread the gospel all over the world, the good news that Jesus is the total payment for all our sins. So, from that point of view we must continue the great commission, the great labour must be carried out, shut up and continue.

In the matter of the elect, are there different degrees of election? Jeremiah was chosen before he was formed in the womb. He had no say in the matter. Are there some people who are chosen in a way that they can not possibly rebel? Or can someone who is chosen rebel to the point of losing his "chosennes?" Nevertheless, I trust in the goodness of God and I know that he has mercies for evermore. The people whom I worry about are those who are "good" people. Those are they who don't smoke or drink, don't cheat on their wives or their taxes, are honest in all their dealings, they are helpful, resourceful, cheerful, trustworthy. I've had the privilege of working around people like that, people much more knowledgeable than myself who helped me and guided me in my work. I am not so worried about those who never heard, but about those who have heard and are hardened. Several people come to mind, which I liked very much, but were hard to God, resistant to his entreaties. Interestingly enough, all of them, without exception, had strong Christian backgrounds. Somehow or other, the Church had turned them away. They blamed God for something he did not cause. Another aspect of being saved from before the foundation of the world is, then, that those of us who are saved are nothing more than robots. We were chosen from before the foundation of the world and there is nothing we can do, or could have done, about it. We were programmed to be saved and seek after God before we were born. That seems unfair as well, doesn't it? There was no choice for me but to be saved? I didn't have any say in the matter?

Well, I tell you, I'm glad it was that way. I didn't have enough sense to know I needed to be saved. I didn't know there was no choice. But another question then comes up: when did God stop choosing people? At what point before the foundation of the world did God say I have chosen all of mine and now I'm going to let a bunch of people be born, none of whom I will choose to save? That sounds incredible to me. Why would he do that? It doesn't fit his character. Why would he do that? It would be better not to be born than to be born and go to Hell. It would be better not to be born than to be born and go to Hell. There is absolutely no way God would let people be born with the certainty they will go to Hell after they die. It is impossible that God

would do that. At any rate, still on the subject of God's choosing, where is the fairness in the process? God has to be fair simply because he is good. We can be completely confident in the fact that he is good, and long-suffering. He bends over backwards to give us every chance to turn to him and be saved. So, how is God fair? The Bible says that there is a book that belongs to God, called the "Book of Life". This Book of Life is a book from which one can be presumably "blotted out," or "found written in." In Exodus 32:32, Moses pleads with God for the Israelites after Aaron made them a golden calf for an idol; which was a great sin: "And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin -; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written" God answers in verse 33: "And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book." David, talking to God about his enemies, says in Psalm 69:28, "Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous." People are, or can be, blotted out, or, "written in." So, the fairness has to be that everybody starts out written in. How do they get blotted out? It is rebellion, no doubt about it. We blot ourselves out by running away from him.