

Is There Hope For Those Who Do Not Turn To God In This Life?

Do you have loved ones who have died and not become a christian and you worry for them and their soul beyond the grave? Are they condemned to hell because they didn't "accept Christ"?

Those who profess Christianity total only some 28 percent of the world's population. Vast numbers of the other 72 percent have never had the opportunity to genuinely repent and accept Christ simply because of where they live. Millions more through the centuries likewise never had the opportunity because of when they lived.

Would it be just and right for God to subject them to the same punishment He will give to those who reject Him and make themselves His enemies? Is God really that unfair that all these people who have never heard of Jesus Christ are condemned to hell?

Because most churches believe that God is trying to save the world now there have been different attempts to get around this problem of "What about those who have never heard the name of Christ?"

The Catholic Church has come up with the concept of purgatory so those who don't accept Christ and make it in this life can be purged of their sins after death and still make it to heaven. The only problem with this idea is that it is never mentioned in the Bible.

Many Protestant churches, on the other hand, have "lowered the bar" of what people need to do so as many people as possible can "get into heaven". They preach that obedience to God's laws is not required to be saved – you only have to academically believe Jesus is your Saviour without any change from one's sinful lifestyle.

The second chapter of James is essentially a rebuttal of this view: "...faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe — and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?" (James 2:17-19).

Speaking of Jesus Christ in Acts 4:12 we read: "there is salvation in **no one else**; for there is **no other name** under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." Jesus Himself said: "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are **FEW** who find it (Matthew 7:13-14).

It sounds pretty grim doesn't it for those who die without hearing about Jesus Christ or die without turning to God through His son? Or is it? Is there something that we are missing that is in the Bible which gives these people some hope?

Yes there is!

The world's churches are labouring under the false assumption that this life that people live now is their one and only chance at salvation - even if they lived before Christ was born or live in a place where they have never heard of Jesus Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 15:22-23 we read: "For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ ALL shall be made alive. But, each one in his own order." ALL mankind shall once again be made alive – be resurrected! Notice that they are not currently in heaven or hell but awaiting a resurrection!

Paul said in Hebrews 9:27 that “it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.” What is judgment? Does it just mean being sentenced? Peter wrote that judgment is now on the house of God (1 Peter 4:17). Judgment in biblical terms means a period of trial and testing. With that point in mind, let's see what happens at the end of the millennium.

In Revelation 20 we read: “And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them... And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection...And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works” (Revelation 20:4-5, 12-13).

All who have died will be resurrected and judged according to their works. A period of trial and testing will have begun. They will be judged according to what's written in the books – the Bible. The word Bible itself comes from the word “biblios” which means a library or a collection of books.

God says that you have to repent and be baptized to receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) and that the Holy Spirit is given only to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32). In Acts 2:17 we read: “‘And it shall come to pass in the last days’, says God, ‘that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh’”. There is a time coming when mankind, for the most part, will receive the Holy Spirit – when God will be calling all people on the earth to salvation.

In Ezekiel 37 the prophet Ezekiel describes a resurrection to physical life (not spirit) for all the Israelites who have died and not received salvation. He wrote:

“The hand of the Lord came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones. Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry. And He said to me, 'Son of man, can these bones live?' So I answered, 'O Lord God, You know.' Again He said to me, 'Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord God to these bones: 'Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.' So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army.

“Then He said to me, 'Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, 'Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!' 'Therefore prophecy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God: 'Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it and performed It,' says the Lord” (Ezekiel 37:1-14).

The whole House of Israel who died without receiving God's Holy Spirit will be resurrected to physical life. God says that He will place His spirit in them. Since God only gives His spirit to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32) this means that they will be converted at this time in the future.

They will have their first real chance at salvation, along with the rest of all mankind who have died and not “been saved”.

Jesus also spoke of this time of the Great White Throne Judgment period when He said: “The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here” (Matthew 12:41-42). He also said that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah (Matthew 10:14-15) and Tyre and Sidon (Matthew 11:20-24) would be resurrected for their first real chance at salvation at this time.

For those who have worried about family and friends, learning the real truth about God's plan of salvation is wonderful and life-changing. God truly is a God of justice and fairness who doesn't want anyone to perish but have everlasting life!