

Series on Death and the Afterlife – sermon 10 - 27/02/11 (am)

What Happens to the Unevangelised after Death?

Acts 4:12

Theme: Without personal faith in Christ for salvation a person is lost.

Picture a tribe of South American
Indians in the Amazon basin.

They have never been told of their
need of Christ for salvation.

What will happen to them when they
die?

Two Views of Acts 4:12

Recently this verse has been a storm centre of debate among evangelicals.

There are two main lines of interpretation regarding the afterlife of the unevangelised.

1. Traditional interpretation.

Unless someone *hears* the gospel and exercises saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ alone, that person will eventually die and go to the place of punishment: Hell.

2. Rival interpretation.

It is possible for the unevangelised to be saved without personal faith in Jesus.

The argument is that if the unevangelised seek after the true God by faith, they may, by God's grace be saved.

They are saved through the work of Christ.

Acts 4:12 and John 14:6 clearly teach
that only the work of Christ makes
salvation possible

but do not say that a person has to
know of that work to benefit from it.

Which view is correct?

Consider four principles based on
Biblical teaching:

1. All men are born under the condemnation of God.

(Romans 5:18-19; Psalm 51:5; Ephesians
2:3)

Rejecting Christ is *not the basis of
condemnation*. We are condemned
because we are born guilty of and
polluted by sin.

2. All men are without excuse.

(Romans 1:18-20)

3. Jesus Christ is the only Saviour from the condemnation and wrath of God.

(John 3:16; 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1
Thessalonians 1:10)

4. Hearing the gospel and responding to it is the Biblically revealed means of salvation.

(Matthew 28:19; Romans 10:9-15; Acts 16:14)

To argue anything else *is speculation.*

In light of the above points what can we conclude?

(i) To believe that the unevangelised can be saved without hearing the gospel may lead to disobedience of Jesus' command to evangelise.

(Matthew 28:19)

(ii) To believe that the unevangelised can be saved without hearing the gospel may lead to the conclusion that it is better not to evangelise them.

(iii) Acts 4:12 and John 14:6 must be read in light of other Scriptures that overtly teach that knowledge of Christ presupposes faith in Christ.

(See for example Romans 10:17.)

So we conclude that it is heresy to argue that the unevangelised are safe without personal faith in Christ for salvation.

It is pure speculation to say that God has another way.

If God chooses to deal graciously and mercifully with the unevangelised He will do it ...but we do not know!

Conclusion – The Bible is our Standard

*We must appreciate the fact that we
have heard the gospel!*

*We must not reason God down to our
level.*

The Scriptures show that without personal repentance to God and faith in Christ all are without hope.

We must accept this clear truth from God's Word and make every effort to reach the unevangelised because without faith in Christ for salvation they are lost.