“Is It Fair That People Born Into a Christian Home Become Christians and Everybody Else is Doomed to Hell?”

Hey I just read your article on God judging people for sins they didn’t know were wrong. It was very good and helped me a lot but I still have a question. My brother is an atheist and we have been having some friendly debates on God and such. And the point he always makes that I cannot get over is when he says that I am a Christian because I was raised in a Christian home (as was he, but he says he fell away when he looked at the facts himself instead of believing just what he was told) so I am Christian. If I was raised in a Muslim home then I would be Muslim. And the same goes for any other religion. He has a good point. If I was raised in an Islamic family I would believe that Allah was the true God. Why was I so lucky to be born into the one right religion? So what is a good counter argument? I would really appreciate your help.

Also, he makes the point that, let’s say a kid in North Korea who has passed the age of accountability dies. Does he go to heaven? If so then that means God is letting a non-believer into heaven, right? If he doesn’t and goes to Hell, then that seems a little unjust to let a kid who never heard of him go to Hell. Now I know Romans 1:18-32 says that everyone hears of God and I completely believe that and every other word of the Bible, but how can some kid in North Korea or any other given place have nearly as good of a chance as me to get into heaven? I would love any help that you can give me.

Thanks for your letter. These are very good questions. First, let me recommend a very good article by an excellent Christian philosopher that addresses some of your questions. It’s

entitled, "'No Other Name': A Middle Knowledge Perspective on the Exclusivity of Salvation Through Christ": www.reasonablefaith.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5220. Another helpful piece is this, called "Politically Incorrect Salvation": www.reasonablefaith.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5223.

These articles, which you should probably read at least twice, will help you think through many of these issues at a very sophisticated level.

Here is my own brief response to your questions. This response is not intended to be exhaustive; I've referred you to the articles for a more thorough response.

First, I think that you are quite right that passages such as Romans 1:18-23 clearly teach that God has made His existence evident to all men (we can except, of course, very young children and the severely retarded, etc. Please see an article by Probe's Founder, Jimmy Williams, answering the question if babies go to hell). Since all men are the recipients of God's revelation in nature and conscience, they are morally responsible and accountable to Him for how they respond to this revelation. Unfortunately, the vast majority of these people reject God's revelation and they have no one but themselves to blame for this. It's very important that we always bear this in mind. God has made His existence evident to all men, but the vast majority simply reject this evidence—and for this, each is personally accountable to God.

Now, although God is very gracious, and will often send more revelation even to those who reject the revelation they've already been given, He is under no obligation to do so. If people reject the revelation which God has given, He is not in any way obligated to give them more. They are responsible for what He has given, and what He has already given is more than sufficient for them to know that God exists and that they are morally accountable to Him.

But what if someone in an Islamic country or North Korea were to respond positively to God's revelation in creation and conscience? In that case, I think that we can safely say (on the basis of such passages as Acts 8:26-40 and Acts 10) that anyone who responds positively to God's general revelation, will be given yet more revelation (just as the Ethiopian eunuch and Cornelius the centurion were—both of whom became Christians, by the way!).

In other words, God has provided everyone with enough revelation to respond to Him in a positive way. For those who do, God will provide yet more revelation (including the gospel of Jesus Christ). But for those who do not, He is under no obligation to provide yet more light to those who reject what He's already given.

For a much more thorough explanation, please refer to the articles I mentioned. You can find more by William Lane Craig here: www.reasonablefaith.org

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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"How Can a Loving God Send People to Hell?"

Did God create hell? If He did create it, then how can He be a loving God, yet send people to a place of eternal damnation?

Yes, God created hell. Matthew 25:41 suggests that it was

originally prepared for the devil and his angels. But unregenerate human beings will also be cast there.

We must not try to separate God's attributes from one another. God is love, but He is also holy, just and full of wrath against sin. Because of His great love for us, God has provided His Son as a sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the world (John 3:16, etc.). Those who reject this sacrifice will not receive its benefits (including the forgiveness of sins). These will be justly punished by God for their sins, and the wages of sin is death. "Death" in the Bible carries the idea of separation. Physical death is the separation of the spirit from the body (James 2:26). Spiritual death is the separation of a person from God (Ephesians 2:1-2). Eternal death (the Second Death, or Lake of Fire) is eternal separation from God.

I hope this helps.

Michael Gleghorn

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P.S. From Sue Bohlin:

We must also remember that God wants to save people He made in His image, and for whom Christ died, more than we want to be saved. 2 Peter 3:9 tells us that God is not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance. It's not that a loving God SENDS people to hell, but that He sadly allows people to experience the horrible consequences of their refusal to trust Him.