

# CHRISTIANITY IN A RELIGIOUSLY DIVERSE WORLD

## Session 4

### Inclusivism: Christ Will Save Most of the Unevangelized

#### Outline

---

- I. Inclusivism Defined
  - A. Salvation is only available through the death and resurrection of Jesus.
  - B. Anyone can benefit from this salvation by responding positively to whatever revelation God has given them. For some, this revelation includes hearing the gospel, but for others it does not.
  - C. The majority of people, but not all, will find salvation.
- II. Clark Pinnock's Inclusivism
  - A. Part 1: God's universal salvific will entails universal access to salvation
    - i. Salvation must be universally accessible. (2 Peter 3:9)
  - B. Part 2: People can be saved without having heard the gospel
    - i. Patriarchs, other OT saints, and "holy pagans"
      - a. Job 1:8; James 5:11. Genesis 14:17-24. Genesis 20. Exodus 18:1-12, especially vv. 10-12. Numbers 22. 1 Kings 10:1-12 and 2 Chronicles 9:1-13; Matthew 12:42. Acts 10.
    - ii. Faith principle "People are judged on the basis of the light they have received and how they have responded to that light."
    - iii. The basis of salvation in every age is the death of Christ.
    - iv. The requirement for salvation in every age is faith.
    - v. The object of faith in every age is God.
    - vi. The exact content of faith changes as people receive more revelation.
  - C. Part 3: Large multitudes of the unevangelized will be saved
    - i. Optimism in the Old Testament
      - I. God is interested in saving all of humanity (Genesis 9:8-17)
      - II. God is at work in the nations (Amos 5:7; Psalm 87:4ab; Psalm 47:8-9; Malachi 1:11; Jonah; Jeremiah 18:7-8)
      - III. In the end, the nations will gather under God (Isaiah 19:24-25; Psalm 102:15; Psalm 102:22; Isaiah 25:6-8)
    - ii. Optimism in the New Testament
      - I. God accepts people from every nation (Acts 10:34b-35)
      - II. Jesus redemptive work is universal (Colossians 1:16-17)
      - III. Jesus is the savior of all people (Romans 5:18; 1 Timothy 4:10; 1 Corinthians 15:22)
      - IV. In the end, the nations will gather under God (Revelation 21:5a; Revelation 21:24; Revelation 22:2)

- iii. God is at work in all parts of life, including other religions.
  - D. Summary,
    - i. The Bible tells us that God wants everyone to be saved, that He is actively at work in all the nations, and that Christ is the savior of all people.
    - ii. Therefore, we should have hope that the majority of people will be saved.
    - iii. Those who have never heard of Christ are saved through their response to whatever revelation God has given them. The emphasis here is on the person's attitude to that information, not the content of the information itself.
    - iv. Finally, God is at work in every aspect of people's lives, including other religions. Members of other religions may be saved by Christ depending on their response to whatever parts of those religions are true revelations from God.
- III. Assessment
  - A. Part 1: Universal Access
    - i. This seems right (John 3:16-17; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9)
  - B. Part 2: Salvation for the Unevangelized
    - i. The Patriarchs, other OT saints, and "holy pagans" are clear examples.
    - ii. Saved by explicit faith in God as they knew Him. (Genesis 15:6)
    - iii. A geographical change, rather than chronological.
    - iv. The "faith principle" is too simplistic. Does not include General Revelation.
  - C. Part 3: Optimism
    - i. The Biblical Data
      - a. Scripture speaks of the reach of the Gospel, not it's success.
      - b. The nations may be saved by the Gospel.
      - c. The New Testament is pessimistic about the number of the saved.
    - ii. Fallacious Arguments for Optimism
      - a. Non-sequitur: few are saved vs. God's universal salvific will
      - b. False dichotomy: Restrictivism vs. optimism
    - iii. Undermines Missions
    - iv. General Revelation discounts most religions and their adherents.
- IV. Conclusion
  - A. OT saints were saved by their response to whatever revelation they did have.
  - B. That revelation did not include the Gospel.
  - C. Saved by Christ, though they did not know Christ.
  - D. Examples of this are extremely rare.
  - E. Scripture is optimistic about the reach of the Gospel, but pessimistic about its success.

F. Non-Christian religions lead people away from Christ and salvation.

*Further Reading:*

- **A critique of Pluralism and Inclusivism:** “Is Jesus the Only Savior?” by Ronald Nash.
- **An exposition and critique of Inclusivism:** “Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World” see defense by Clark Pinnock and critique by R. Douglas Geivett and W. Gary Phillips.
- **A journal article with a discussion on the flaws of Inclusivism:** “Misgivings and Openness A Dialogue on Inclusivism Between R. Douglas Geivett and Clark Pinnock” by R. Douglas Geivett and Clark Pinnock.
- **An article presenting a nuanced proposal for the uniqueness of salvation by Christ that takes the insights of Inclusivism but avoids some of its flaws:** “Politically Incorrect Salvation” by William Lane Craig.