

[Are There Many Roads to God? Part 4](#)

(<http://www.lamblion.us/2010/05/are-there-many-roads-to-god-part-4.html>)



By [Dr. David R. Reagan](#)

This brings us to a crucial question: Are there any exceptions to the rule that you must place your faith in Jesus in order to be saved?

The answer is yes. Most Christian theologians would agree that there are three groups of people who have been saved without placing their faith in Jesus.

Exception #1: Children

The first group is composed of those children who have died before the age of accountability. The Bible does not specifically state this truth. It is arrived at through deduction from biblical statements.

First, there is the example of King David's child that was born of Bathsheba. When the child died seven days after it was born, David proclaimed by inspiration of the Holy Spirit that although the child could not come back to him, one day he would go to be with the child ([2 Samuel 12:23](#)). The idea that those who die before the age of accountability will be saved is reinforced in the New Testament in the words of Jesus in [Matthew 19:13-14](#) —

Then some children were brought to Him so that He might lay His hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, 'Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.'

This principle of not holding children accountable for their sins before they know the difference between right and wrong is also reflected in a story in the book of Deuteronomy. When the Israelites balked at entering the Promised Land because they were afraid they would be defeated by the Canaanites, God punished them for not trusting Him by making them wander in the wilderness until the rebellious generation had died off (see Numbers 13 & 14).

The Lord proclaimed that only two people of the current generation would be allowed to enter the land — namely, Caleb and Joshua, the two spies out of twelve who brought back a positive report stating they believed the Lord would defeat their enemies ([Deuteronomy 1:34-38](#)). But then, another exception was made: *"Moreover, your little ones...who this day have no knowledge of good or evil, shall enter there [the Promised Land], and I will give it to them, and they shall possess it"* ([Deuteronomy 1:39](#)).



(www.calvaryonthebay.org/kids.html)

Another argument in behalf of the salvation of children who die before the age of accountability is the justice of God. The Bible asserts over and over that our Creator is a God of justice ([Zephaniah 3:5](#)). He has an overwhelming passion for justice ([Micah 6:8](#)). And He promises repeatedly that justice will be one of the characteristics of His Son's millennial reign ([Isaiah 42:1-4](#)). How could a God of perfect justice condemn to Hell children who never knew the difference in right and wrong?

Those who die before the age of accountability will not be eligible to receive special rewards for faithfully serving the Lord, but it appears that they will be granted eternal life. However, this can happen only by having the blood of Jesus applied to them ([Hebrews 9:22](#)).

Exception #2: Mentally Handicapped

This same exception would apply to the mentally handicapped who reach adulthood. Since they are incapable of determining right from wrong and are also incapable of repenting and

putting their faith in Jesus, it is only reasonable to conclude that a just God would not hold them accountable and would apply the blood of Jesus to their sins.

I have a step-grandson named Jason who falls into this category. At about the age of three a genetic defect was activated that caused his immune system to attack his brain. The effect was a frontal lobotomy that rendered him vegetative. I have since dedicated two books to him. He is a constant reminder to me of the fact that we live in a fallen world. I have no doubt that one day, either at death or at the Rapture, his mind will be set right, and I will be able to enjoy his fellowship eternally.

Exception #3: Old Testament Saints

The third group that has been saved apart from faith in Jesus are those people who lived and died before the birth and revelation of Jesus as God's Son, but who placed their faith in their Creator. Hebrews 11 tells us that people like Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Abraham were justified by their faith in God. They had no Scriptures nor any knowledge of Jesus, yet because they related to their Creator in faith, they were saved. Specifically, [Genesis 15:6](#) says that because Abraham believed the Lord, *"it was reckoned to him as righteousness."*

Still, each of these people, and many others like them, were dependent upon the sacrifice of Jesus for their salvation to be sealed. Their faith covered their sins, but the forgiveness of their sins depended upon the sacrifice of a perfect person who did not deserve to die. Only the blood of such a person could produce forgiveness of their sins.

That's why Old Testament saints did not go directly to Heaven when they died. They went, instead, to a place called Sheol (Hades in the New Testament), and their souls resided in a compartment called "Abraham's bosom" or "Paradise." They could not be ushered into the presence of a Holy God until their sins were forgiven.

After Jesus' death on the Cross, He descended into Hades and made a proclamation ([1 Peter 3:19](#)). We are not told specifically what He said, but most likely it was, "The blood has been shed!" I'm sure those words must have produced a chorus of "Hallelujahs!" We are also told that when Jesus ascended into Heaven, He took a *"host of captives"* with Him ([Ephesians 4:8](#)). In other words, He emptied Hades of those who were saved. Paradise was moved from Hades to Heaven, a reality that Paul later affirmed when he said that he was taken up to *"the third heaven,"* which he identified as Paradise ([2 Corinthians 12:1-4](#)).

In Part 5 of this series answering the question, "Are there many roads to God?", we'll tackle the difficult predicament of those who live and die without ever having heard the Gospel.