

How Many Shall Be Saved?

Matthew 7:13-14

I. Introduction: 1, 2

1. 3 During our Lord's earthly ministry men were interested in the number that would be saved.

2. For example, the disciples once asked, "Lord, are there few who are saved?" Lk. 13:23

Lk. 13:24-25: *And He said to them, 24 "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will **not** be able. 25 When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,'"*

Matt. 19:23-26: *Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." 25 When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" 26 But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."*

3. In reality there's no need of worrying about the number that shall be saved (**2 Pet. 1:10:** "Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;").

A. It comes down to the individual (**Phil. 2:12:** "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"; **Acts 16:30:** "And he brought them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"; **Acts 22:10:** "So I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do."").

B. Often people have asked the same question. What I'd like to do in this lesson is to interview some different people and see what kind of answers we get and then look through the Bible for an answer to the same question.

II. Discussion:

I. 4 The Atheist:

A. Let's ask the atheist: "How many shall be saved?" Do you know what his answer is? **Nobody!**

B. Obviously the atheist denies the existence of any "god," including the "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth" (Acts 17:24).

C. The atheist denies creation and affirms an entirely naturalistic explanation for the existence of the Universe.

(1) The atheist either believes matter is eternal or the universe came about as the result of the "Big Bang." Explain the "Big Bang."

(2) Is it more reasonable to believe this complex and well-ordered universe began with a random explosion of this "infinitely small and hot singularity?" Or, is it more reasonable to believe an all-powerful, eternal, infinitely superior intelligence created it?

(3) The atheist's account of the beginning of the universe and the origin of life violates many scientific laws we see in operation today. Furthermore, the "Big Bang" doesn't explain the origin of the matter involved in the supposed singularity that produced the "Big Bang."

(4) 5 What about man? The atheist would have us believe:

(a) That dead, lifeless matter somehow, through entirely unintelligent and random processes, was able to organize itself and spring into LIFE!

- (b) The notion that non-life can produce life flies in the face of logic and there is a veritable Mount Everest worth of scientific data proving it is IMPOSSIBLE!
 - (c) But the atheist is ultimately left with this albatross hanging around his neck (*panspermia* doesn't help him!).
- (5) So how does the atheist explain his own existence?
- (a) He believes lifeless matter miraculously organized itself and sprang to life!
 - (b) These one-celled organisms then, again without the aid of intelligence, were somehow able to restructure and reorganize themselves (without the aid of intelligence) into vastly more complex multi-cellular organisms eventually leading to fish, reptiles, mammals, apes, man.
 - (c) So according to the atheist man is merely "the most sophisticated of the apes" and God is nothing more than an invention that came from that ape's mind. Is that reasonable?
- D. I believe it is much more reasonable to believe what the Bible says about creation!
- Heb. 3:4:** "For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God."
- Gen. 1:1, 26-27:** "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." 26-27: "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."
- Acts 17:24:** "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands." **17:28:** "for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'"
- Psa. 19:1:** "The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork."
- Rom. 1:20:** "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,"
- E. Atheism is not only a false philosophy; it is also an angry, dreadful, pessimistic, and fatalistic view of life!
- **"It is absolutely safe to say that if you meet somebody who claims not to believe in evolution, that person is ignorant, stupid or insane (or wicked, but I'd rather not consider that)." —Richard Dawkins
- **"The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully." —Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*
- F. ** The atheist lives without hope as he denies there is anything beyond this life.
- "Be thankful that you have a life, and forsake your vain and presumptuous desire for a second one." —Richard Dawkins
- **"When I am dying, I should like my life taken out under general anaesthetic, exactly as if it were a diseased appendix." —Richard Dawkins
- G. How many will be saved? "None" says the atheist. In the end the atheist is left with nothing.
- "The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be."—Carl Sagan, *Cosmos*

2. 6 The Universalist:

- A. The Universalist takes the position that everybody will be saved. He argues that God is too good to allow anyone to be lost.

******“We believe that God, as the moral governor of the universe, will bestow righteous and equitable rewards and punishments upon all mankind according to their several characters or deserts, but that all punishment will be remedial, and consequently limited.”

—Christian Universalists (<http://www.auburn.edu/~allenkc/inchrniv.html#prin5>)

******“We believe in universal salvation, universal reconciliation, or in other words, of the final holiness and happiness of all mankind, to be effected by the grace of God, through the ministry of his Son, Jesus Christ.”

—Christian Universalists (<http://www.auburn.edu/~allenkc/inchrniv.html#prin5>)

- B. ****** Evidently he’s never read passages like **Rom. 11:22**: *“Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.”*
- C. If the Universalist doesn’t believe in the severity of God, he just needs to look at a few passages:
- Gen. 3**: recount the story of Adam and Eve and their punishment.
- Lev. 10:1-2**: *“Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. 2 So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.”*
- Acts 5:1-11**: recount the story of Ananias and Sapphira. **Acts 5:3-5**: *“But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? 4 While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.’” 5 Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last.*
- Acts 5:9-10**: *“Then Peter said to her, ‘How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.’ 10 Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last.”*
- D. Why did those things happen? Because of the severity of God when man commits sin! Rom. 6:23; Matt. 25:31-46
- E. You see, the person who says nobody will be saved (atheist) is just as wrong as the person that says everybody will be saved (universalist)!

3. 7 The Calvinist:

- A. Calvinism is a system of theology originally devised by John Calvin, who lived during the “Reformation” of the 16th century: A central tenant of Calvinism is predestination.
- “God from the foundation of the world, predestined some men to everlasting life and all others to everlasting death—the number of which is certain and definite.”
- Explain (i.e., two lists of names, the saved and the lost).
- B. Calvinism consists of 5 major tenants represent by the acrostic: **T-U-L-I-P** Calvinism actually harkens back to the theology of Augustine (4th) and is common to most denominations (Catholic and Protestant).
- (1) Total hereditary depravity (**Eccl. 7:29**: *“Truly, this only I have found: That God made man upright, But they have sought out many schemes.”*; **Ezek. 18:20**: *“The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.”*).

- (2) Unconditional election (**Rev. 22:17**: “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And **whosoever will**, let him take the water of life freely.”).
 - (3) Limited atonement (**Heb. 2:9**: “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for **everyone**.”; **1 Jn. 2:2**: “And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the **whole world**.”).
 - (4) Irresistible grace (**Acts 7:51**: “You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always **resist** the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.”; Rom. 1:16-17; 10:17; 2 Thess. 2:13-14).
 - (5) Perseverance of the saints (**Col. 1:23**: “**if** indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and **are not moved away** from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.”; **Heb. 3:6**: “but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are **if** we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.”).
- C. The Calvinist believes one cannot be saved unless the Holy Spirit directly changes his heart separate and apart from the word of God and that once that happens that man will never be lost regardless of how many sins he commits and whether or not he repents: both are wrong! The Calvinists position on salvation is totally wrong in every point! **1 Tim 2:3-4**: “God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

4. 8 The Moralist:

- A. The Moralist takes the position that **all** good, moral people will be saved regardless of what they are religiously.
- B. Although the Bible does teach the importance of morality, it also says one must hear and obey the gospel as in the example of Cornelius:
Acts 10:1-2, 4: “There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, 2 a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. 4 So he said to him, ‘Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.’”
Acts 11:13-14: “And he told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house, who said to him, ‘Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter, 14 who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.’”
- C. And the same is true today; we must live a good moral life:
Col. 3:5: “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.”
But we must also hear, believe, and obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:
Heb. 5:9: “And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,”
1 Pet. 1:22: “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth...”
- D. No matter how good a man is morally; salvation cannot be found outside Christ; one must also obey the gospel:
2 Tim 2:10: “Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”
Eph. 1:7: “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace...”

Acts 4:12: “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

- E. The moralist is wrong; one cannot be saved simply because he is morally good; he must be morally good “in Christ”!

5. **9** The Jehovah’s Witness:

- A. The JW takes the position that exactly 144,000 will be saved (**Rev. 14:1-4**).

(1) This is not to be taken literally! These are figures of speech—waters, the thunder, the harpers, and the 144,000.

(2) By the way, these are all unmarried Jewish men! 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel (Rev. 7:4-8). Will women, married men, and gentiles be excluded?!

- B. **Rev. 22:17:** “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

Matt. 11:28: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

(1) All people are invited to join in and share the blessings of the gospel, “whosoever will,” “unto...all ye that labour and are heavy laden...”

(2) All people have the opportunity to be saved! E-V-E-R-Y-O-N-E!

1 Tim. 2:3-4: “God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

Ezek. 18:23: “Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?” says the Lord GOD, ‘and not that he should turn from his ways and live?’”

2 Pet. 3:9: “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

Jn. 3:15-17: “that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”

Titus 2:11: “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,”

- C. Peter described people like the Jehovah’s Witnesses in **2 Peter 3:16:** “...untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.”

6. **10** The Roman Catholic:

- A. The Roman Catholic takes the position that only those who have embraced Roman Catholicism will be saved.

****“...this fundamental and revealed truth, consecrated by tradition: ‘There is no salvation outside the Church.’ From her alone there flows surely and fully the life-giving force destined in Christ and in His Spirit, to renew the whole of humanity, and therefore directing every human being to become a part of the Mystical Body of Christ.”** (Pope John Paul II, Radio Message for Franciscan Vigil in St. Peter’s and Assisi, October 3, 1981, L’Osservatore Romano, October 12, 1981.)

- B. ****** What does the Bible teach about that? **Matt. 16:18:** “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”; Acts 2

- C. You may read about the Roman Catholic Church in the Bible, but it’s not in Matt. 16:18!

(1) It wasn’t until ~600 A.D. that the first Roman Pope was crowned.

(2) Nearly 600 years after the church was established on the Day of Pentecost in ~30 A.D. The church established in Acts 2 is not the Roman Catholic Church; it is...

Heb. 8:2: “a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.”

Psa. 127:1: “Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it;”

D. If the Bible mentions the Roman Catholic Church it's not in Matt. 16:18, but in **1 Tim. 4:1-3** and **2 Thess. 2:1-10.**

E. The Roman Catholic is deceived; not one Roman Catholic will be saved!

7. **11** The Protestant:

A. The term protestant came from the idea that people protested against the Roman Catholicism (began in the 16th century; Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Knox, etc.).

B. There are thousands of Protestant denominations teaching a multitude of different doctrines, yet the vast majority say that doesn't matter; when asked the question, “How many will be saved?” Most of them say, “Everyone who is sincere.”

(1) What about those who sincerely worship idols?

(2) What about those who sincerely practice human sacrifice?

(3) What about those who sincerely worship the Devil?

(4) What about many of their own who sincerely deny the virgin birth, who sincerely deny the resurrection of Christ, who sincerely deny the inspiration of the Scriptures?

C. “No, I don't believe this fella has the right answer to the question when he says, ‘Just be sincerely religious.’ Lots of people are sincerely religious!”

D. Most conversions in the Bible were of sincerely religious people.

(1) The Jews: Acts 2

(2) The Eunuch: Acts 8

(3) Saul of Tarsus: Acts 9, 22, 26; **Phil. 3:4-6:** “If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”; **Acts 22:3:** “I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today.”

E. If the philosophy of Protestant denominationalism had been around in the first century they would have considered that these “sincerely religious” people were already saved. That's simply not so! **2 Thess. 1:7-9:** “when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 8 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,”; Rom. 1:16-17; **1 Jn. 2:3-4:** “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4 He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

8. **12** The Bible:

A. Would you agree that all seven of those people we interviewed gave the wrong answer in light of the Scriptures?

B. I would be doing you a great injustice if I were to stop here and not give you a positive, clear, and decisive answer as to how many will be saved.

C. To do so we must turn to the only place providing that crucial information: the Scriptures. How many will be saved? As many as...

- ✓ Hear (**Acts 11:14**: “who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.”). What words? (Matt. 17:5; Heb. 1:1-2; Jn. 6:68; Rom. 1:16-17; 10:17)
- ✓ Believe (**Acts 16:30-31**: “And he brought them out and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ 31 So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.’”)
- ✓ Repent (**Acts 17:30-31**: “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, 31 because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”)
- ✓ Confess (**Rom. 10:9-10**: “if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”; **Acts 8:37**: “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”)
- ✓ Baptized (**Mk. 16:16**: “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”; **1 Pet. 3:21**: “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”)
- ✓ Endure (**Matt. 24:13**: “But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”; **Col. 1:23**: “if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister.”)

D. That’s how many shall be saved! No more and no less!

III. Conclusion: **13**

1. Why did Jesus come? **Lk. 19:10**: “for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”
2. Lord knows we all certainly need it! **Isa. 53:6**: “All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way;”
3. How many shall be saved? As many as want to be! How many will that be? Unfortunately Jesus Himself tells us that will only be a few!
Matt 7:13-14: “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. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”
4. But actually the most important question is not, “How many will be saved?”
(a) It is not even, “Have you been saved?”
(b) But it is, “Do you want to be saved?” Well do you?!
5. ** It’s up to you! **2 Cor. 6:2**: “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”
6. I want to add one final thought: We’ve pointed out seven religious philosophies in which salvation cannot be found.
 - A. Have we gained some great victory over them?
 - B. If that’s what you think is the point of the sermon, think again.
 - C. The point is this: there is only one way anyone will be saved and that is doing what the Bible says one needs to do in order to get “in Christ” and to stay “in Christ.”
 - D. We are so blessed to know the truth! Let us obey it, let us live it, and let us teach it to others!

Adapted from a sermon by Ryan Thomas