

# How Many Shall Be Saved?

Matthew 7:13-14

## I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** During the Lord's earthly ministry men were interested in the number that could be saved, e.g.:
  - A. Early in His earthly ministry Jesus was asked: **Lk. 13:23**: "*Then one said to Him, 'Lord, are there few who are saved?'*"
  - B. When Jesus taught on divorce the disciples were shocked: **Matt. 19:25**: "*When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, 'Who then can be saved?'*"
2. As the people asked Jesus the question He did not see fit to give an answer in regards to number.
  - A. You see, 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;*").
  - B. When you ask the question it really comes down to the resolve of the individual (**Phil. 2:12**: "*work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*").
  - C. Sadly not many today are asking the right question in life: **Acts 16:30**: "*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*"; **Acts 22:10**: "*What shall I do, Lord?*"
3. There are many different opinions in the world concerning: "How many shall be saved?"
4. **3** What I'd like to do is to interview some people and see what kind of answers we get and then look in the Bible for God's answer to this important question.

## II. DISCUSSION:

**For our first interview let us ask Mr. Atheist "How many shall be saved?"**

### I. **4** The Atheist:

- A. Do you know what his answer is?
- B. The atheist will tell us that nobody can be saved!

*"Religion teaches the dangerous nonsense that death is not the end."* Richard Dawkins

*"Existence for eternity could get a little boring...especially towards the end."* Woody Allen
- C. Atheist: "Don't you know there's no God, there's no heaven, no hell?"
  - (1) The Universe is just a gigantic cosmic accident! (i.e., Big Bang, 'quantum fluctuation')
  - (2) Our existence is simply due to the random collision of molecules.
  - (3) Carl Sagan put it this way: "*The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be.*"
  - (4) Consequently, according to the atheist, nobody can be saved.
  - (5) Because as one atheist said, "*The only thing we become after death is fertilizer.*"
- D. The atheist denies the very existence of God.
  - (1) He doesn't believe the Bible, he doesn't believe it's the word of God.

*"Properly read, the Bible is the most potent force for atheism ever conceived."* Isaac Asimov

*"The Bible has noble poetry in it...and some good morals and a wealth of obscenity, and upwards of a thousand lies."* Mark Twain
  - (2) So he's got a big problem in regards to the idea of salvation.

*"I'm not scared of dying, because I'm an atheist. I won't even know I'm dead. You know why? Because I'll be f\*\*\*ing dead."* Jim Jefferies (British comedian)

- (3) If you deny God and deny the Bible; you deny the possibility of folks ever being saved!
- E. What about man? What about the creation? (Gen. 1:1, 26; Acts 17:28; Psa. 19:1: *"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork."*; Rom. 1:20)
- Psa. 14:1:** *"The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'"*
- F. I don't believe the atheist; I think he's totally missed the whole purpose of life! Eccl. 12:13-14  
Surely the atheist is wrong when he tells me that no one will be saved.

**Well, let's move on and interview the Agnostic: "How many shall be saved?"**

2. **5** The Agnostic:

- A. An agnostic cannot make up his mind; he doesn't think God exists, but he's not sure.
- B. Therefore, he isn't sure anyone will be saved; the best he could ever offer is a big fat "MAYBE?"
- C. I can't see much value in pursuing the agnostic's philosophy about salvation because it always leads to a question mark.
- D. I agree with Groucho Marx when it comes to agnosticism: "Q: *What do you get when you cross an insomniac, an agnostic, and a dyslexic?* A: *Someone who stays up all night wondering if there is a Dog.*"

**Well, let's interview the Moralist maybe he can tell us "How many shall be saved?"**

3. **6** The Moralist:

- A. The moralist takes the position that all good, moral people will be saved regardless of what they are religiously.
- (1) I wish I could say that!
- (2) I've known several good, moral people in my life and it would be comforting to know that was all that was needed for them to be saved (e.g., Grandma Edna).
- (3) However, the Bible just doesn't uphold that position.
- B. It certainly teaches the importance of morality:
- (1) Cornelius was as good and moral as men come! **Acts 10:2:** *"a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always."*
- (2) But was he saved?
- (3) No, the Bible says he had to first hear *"words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved."* (Acts 11:14)
- C. The same is true today.
- (1) Morality is essential but so is obedience to the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (**Rom. 6:17-18:** *"But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. 18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."*; **1:5 & 16:26:** *"obedience to the faith."*).
- (2) One cannot be saved unless he obeys the gospel and is morally good! 2 Thess. 1:7-9

**Unsatisfactory, so let's move on and interview the Universalist: "How many shall be saved?"**

#### 4. **7** 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 (even Adolf Hitler, Charles Manson and Ted Bundy?).
- B. Universalists teach that God is so full of love that He simply cannot and will not send anyone to eternal Hell fire.
  - (1) It is against His infinite love.
  - (2) They believe God will forgive all--even those who openly reject Him and die cursing God.
- C. John rightly said, “*God is love*” (1 Jn. 4:8), but God also punishes the sinner and hates iniquity.
  - (1) God is not one-sided; He is not simply an infinitely loving God.
  - (2) He is also infinitely just; He must hate sin and will not tolerate it in the end.
- D. Our universalist friend fails to take into account the “*goodness and severity of God*” (Rom. 11:22); You cannot study the history of God and His dealings with man and not be impressed with those two aspects of His personality. Just ask:
  - (1) Adam and Eve (Gen. 3),
  - (2) Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-2),
  - (3) Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5).
- E. Why did those things happen to them?
  - (1) Because of the severity of God when man commits sin!
  - (2) God is not a capricious, temperamental and vengeful God:

**Psa. 103:8:** “*The LORD is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.*”

**2 Pet. 3:9:** “*...but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*”

**1 Tim. 2:3-4:** “*...God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*”
  - (3) But most sinners refuse His gracious offer of forgiveness and salvation:
    - (a) Jesus has the “*words of eternal life*” (Jn. 6:68).
    - (b) But if we reject those words we’ll be lost: **Jn. 12:48:** “*He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him — the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.*”
  - (4) He is also the “*righteous judge*” (2 Tim. 4:8); but His mercy is conditional (**Matt. 5:7:** “*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*”; Matt. 6:14-15) and He will judge all men (**Rom. 2:3b-11**).
  - (5) There is nothing capricious or unfair about Him: **Acts 10:34-35:** “*Then Peter opened his mouth and said: ‘In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. 35 But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.’*”
- F. You see, the person who says nobody will be saved is just as wrong as the person who says everyone will be saved. The Bible upholds neither one of those positions!

**Another strike out, let’s interview the Calvinist; surely he knows: “How many shall be saved?”**

#### 5. **8** The Calvinist:

- A. Calvinism is a system of theology devised by John Calvin, one of the reformers who lived in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.
- B. Some form of Calvinism is believed and taught by every Protestant denomination (and RCC).
- C. Recall Calvinism's five main tenets are represented by the acrostic: T-U-L-I-P.
  - (1) Total hereditary depravity: Man is born a sinner (**Eccl. 7:29**: "Truly, this only I have found: That God made man upright, But they have sought out many schemes."; Ezek. 18:20).
  - (2) Unconditional election: God elects those who will be saved, man does not have free will (**Rev. 22:17**: "And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.").
  - (3) Limited atonement: Jesus died only for the "elect" (**Heb. 2:9**: "...He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.").
  - (4) Irresistible grace: The Holy Spirit regenerates the sinner directly, miraculously, independent of God's word (Rom. 1:16; 10:17; **1 Cor. 1:21**: "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.").
  - (5) Perseverance of the saints: The elect, those regenerated cannot be lost; "once saved, always saved" (**Col. 1:21-23**: "...reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight — 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...").
- D. Remember when we studied church history?
  - (1) Recall what Thomas Campbell said concerning Calvinism: "Calvinism is among the heaviest clogs on Christianity in the world. It is a dark mountain between heaven and earth, and is among the most discouraging hindrances to sinners seeking the kingdom of God and engenders bondage and gloominess to the saints."
  - (2) To that I give a hearty, Amen!
- E. Calvinism is an unusual false doctrine in the sense that absolutely every one of its major tenets is wrong; so the Calvinist is dead wrong about "How many will be saved!"

***Perhaps the zealous Jehovah's Witness can tell us "How many shall be saved?"***

**6. 9 The Jehovah's Witness:**

- A. The JW takes the position that exactly and only 144,000 will be saved – that's the official doctrine of this sect (**Rev. 14:1-4**).
- B. This passage is not meant to be taken literally!
  - (1) The writer is using figures of speech; the waters, thunder, harpers, and the 144,000.
  - (2) These are all unmarried Jewish men! Rev. 7:4-8
  - (3) Will women be excluded? Yes, **Rev 14:4**: "These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins."
- C. When it comes to Scripture (e.g., Rev. 22:17; Matt. 11:28) "Whosoever will" and "all ye that labour and are heaven laden" are the language of Acts, Romans, and Revelation.
  - (1) All people are invited to join in and share the blessings of the gospel! **Titus 2:11**: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,"

- (2) All people have the opportunity to be saved; not just 144,000 Jewish, male, virgins!
- D. God doesn't limit Himself like the JW's falsely argue! 2 Pet. 3:9

***The RCC boasts itself as the original church so surely they know "How many shall be saved?"***

7. **10** The Roman Catholic:

- A. The Catholic takes the position that only those embracing Catholicism will be saved.
- B. What does the Bible teach about the RCC? (Matt. 16:18; **Psa. 127:1**: *"Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it;"*).
- C. You do not read about the RCC in the Bible, not once! 2 Thess. 2:3-4?
  - (1) It wasn't until 606 AD that the first Pope was crowned.
  - (2) This is nearly 600 years after the church of Christ was established on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2/
- D. The Bible just does not say anything about the RCC.
  - (1) And so I believe the Roman Catholics don't have a clue as to "How many shall be saved?"
  - (2) **Matt. 15:13-14**: *"Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. I 4 Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch."*

***There are plenty of Protestant denominations surely they know "How many shall be saved?"***

8. **11** The Protestant:

- A. The term "protestant" came from the idea that people protested against the RCC.
  - (1) But when I ask the question "How many shall be saved" most Protestants will say all religious people will be saved regardless of what they believe as long as they're sincere.
  - (2) All you have to do is be sincerely religious! "faith only"
  - (3) We're all headed to the same place just taking different paths!
  - (4) One church (and now, one religion) is just as good as another!
    - (a) Worshipping idols?
    - (b) Human sacrifice?
    - (c) Worshipping the Devil?
- B. No, I believe the protestant fellow has the wrong answer to the question when he says "Just be sincerely religious". Lots of people are religious! Most conversions in the Bible were of people who were religious.
  - (1) The Jews – Acts 2
  - (2) The Eunuch – Acts 8
  - (3) Saul of Tarsus – Acts 9
- C. But, these folks weren't saved because they were sincere followers of Judaism! They had to obey the gospel of Christ to be saved! Rom. 1:16-17

***Let's turn to the only infallible source to answer the question "How many shall be saved?"***

9. **12** The Bible:

- A. Would you agree with me that all eight of those people gave the wrong answer in light of the Scriptures?
- B. I would do you an injustice if I were to stop here without giving you a positive, clear, and decisive answer as to how many shall be saved.
- C. There is only one place we can find an infallible answer: **2 Tim. 3:16-17**: *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”*
- D. Let me do that really quickly for you. How many shall be saved?
  - (1) All that hear the gospel (Acts 11:14). What words? (Rom. 10:17; 1:16-17; Matt. 17:5), and,
  - (2) Believe it (**Acts 16:30-31**: *“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.’”).*
  - (3) Repent of their sins (**Acts 17:30-31**: *“...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.”*).
  - (4) Confess Christ (**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).
  - (5) Baptized (Mk. 16:16; **1 Pet. 3:21**: *“There is also an antitype which now saves us — baptism(not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,”*).
  - (6) Endure (Matt. 24:13: *“But he who endures to the end shall be saved.”*; Acts 8:22; 1 Jn. 1:7, 9). **That’s exactly how many shall be saved!** Rom. 1:5; 16:26

### III. CONCLUSION: 13

- 1. You see, those first eight people we interviewed gave us their answers.
  - A. Did you notice the difference in their answers and the answers from the Bible?
  - B. Their answers were from human reasoning and philosophy.
  - C. The answers I gave were from God’s book...the Holy Bible, the Word of God!
    - Matt. 1:21**: *“And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”*
    - Lk. 19:10**: *“for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”*
    - 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.”*; Jn. 6:68
- 2. How many shall be saved? As many that want to be!
  - A. *“whosoever will”*: hear, believe, repent, call on the name of the Lord – in the Lord’s way – being baptized, and endure to the end.
  - B. That’s how many shall be saved! No more and no less!
- 3. So the question becomes – have you been saved?
  - A. Do you want to be saved? Those are God’s criteria, it’s the only possible way to do it.
  - C. Should you be in this audience and need to respond we invite you to come TODAY! 2 Cor. 6:2

Adapted from a sermon by Ryan Thomas.

**Unused quotes:**

“If you could reason with religious people, there would be no religious people.” Hugh Laurie

“God is an ever receding pocket of scientific ignorance.” Neil deGrasse Tyson

“To be fair, much of the Bible is not systematically evil but just plain weird, as you would expect of a chaotically cobbled-together anthology of disjointed documents, composed, revised, translated, distorted and ‘improved’ by hundreds of anonymous authors, editors and copyists, unknown to us and mostly unknown to each other, spanning nine centuries.” Richard Dawkins