

# "Are You One Of The Few Who Will Be Saved?"

## INTRODUCTION:

- I. I recently mentioned about a survey conducted in the U.S. by Newsweek magazine and Beliefnet of those who identified themselves as "Christians."
  - A. Among the questions was this one: *Can a good person who isn't of your religious faith go to heaven or attain salvation?*
    1. Here are their responses...
      - a. 79 percent taking the survey said "Yes."
      - b. 12 percent said "No."
      - c. And 9 percent said they "Don't Know."
    2. The responses are interesting.
      - a. Eight out of ten people surveyed said they believe those who are affiliated with differing religious denominations – different from them – will be saved.
  - B. If this survey is accurate, then most people in the religious world believe MOST people will be saved.
    1. Is that true?

2. What I found most interesting is that 91 percent – 9 out of 10 – Catholics believe a good person who isn't of their religious faith will go to heaven or attain salvation?
3. However, among those religious groups who emphasize the authority of the Scriptures and have a strict or literal interpretation of the Bible – known more commonly as Evangelical Protestant Christians – responded "Yes" seven out of ten times.
  - a. This group would include Baptists, conservative Presbyterians, Pentecostals, all so-called "Non-Denominational Community" churches (like Change Point), the Christian Church, and even churches of Christ.
  - b. Seven out of ten said "Yes" – a good person who isn't of their religious faith will go to heaven or attain salvation?
4. I wonder what the results would be if we were to take a similar survey among only those who are members of churches of Christ?
  - a. Would the results be similar?
  - b. Would it be 60 percent, 50 percent, maybe 40 percent – or four out of ten – members of the Lord's church?
  - c. How would you answer the question: *Can a good person who is NOT a member of the churches of Christ go to heaven or attain salvation?*

- C. Well, you might find it interesting to know the question about who can be saved has been around for a very long time.
1. In fact, Jesus was asked a similar question about who would be saved, and He spoke often on the subject.
  2. So let's take a moment to see what the Lord had to say about who will be saved.
  3. And then, let's see if you and I are among that group?

**BODY:**

- I. Most who are NOT Christians find it rather surprising to learn that Jesus taught that only FEW will be saved.
  - A. Most like to think that the majority of people in the world will be saved – especially those who are morally and ethically good.
    1. And yet, Jesus taught quite differently.
      - a. **Luke 13:23-24** – *Then one said to Him, "Lord, are there few who are saved?" 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"*
      - b. **Matthew 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."*

- B. This really shouldn't come as a surprise when we look at the Scriptures.
  - 1. Remember that, according to the Scriptures, only eight souls were saved during the Flood in the days of Noah – Noah, his wife, their three sons and their wives. **(Genesis 7:21-23; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 2:5)**
  - 2. Also remember that, according to the Scriptures, only three souls escaped the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah – Lot and his two daughters. **(Genesis 19:24-30)**
  - 3. And, according to the book of Numbers, out of 603,550 over the age of 20 only two were permitted to enter the land of Canaan – Joshua and Caleb. **(Numbers 14:26-32; cf. 1:45-46)**
  - 4. Sadly, for the vast majority, Jesus taught that there will be only a few who find the way that leads to life. **(cf. Matthew 7:14)**

II. And just what is the way that leads to life?

- A. Again, we find that Jesus taught something concerning the way that leads to life that only few will find.
  - 1. Not only do most people in the religious (so-called "Christian world") believe the majority will be saved, most also believe it

doesn't really matter what you believe as long as you are a good moral person.

a. Well, let's see if that's true – it would certainly be nice, but is it true?

2. When we examine the teachings of Jesus we discover that He taught there is only one way.

a. **John 14:6** – *Jesus said to him [Thomas], "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

b. In years past I've heard sermons on this passage that presented Jesus as "The Way," as well as "The Truth," and the only source of "The Life."

c. While Jesus IS the only way, and while He IS truth personified, and while He IS the only source of spiritual life, this isn't really what Jesus meant by this statement.

d. Jesus was actually saying I am the true and living WAY. In other words, there is no OTHER way to God except through Jesus Christ – the true and living way.

III. But once again, this really shouldn't come as a surprise when we look carefully at other examples in the Scriptures.

A. And there are many examples of other religious people who needed salvation.

1. The devout Jews on the Day of Pentecost.

a. **Acts 2:5** – *And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.*

b. **Acts 2:36-39** – As the apostle Peter was preaching on Pentecost, he concluded his sermon by saying: *"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." 37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"*

*38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."*

2. There is also the example of the devout Ethiopian who was returning from worship at Jerusalem.

- a. After the Lord told Philip to go to this man, he found the Ethiopian eunuch reading from the prophet Isaiah concerning the prophecies of Jesus.
  - b. **Acts 8:35-39** – *Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. 36 Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" 37 Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." 38 So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. 39 Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.*
3. Remember that Cornelius needed salvation through Jesus Christ despite the fact that he was a very religious person.
    - a. **Acts 10:1-2** – *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.*

- b. And yet, Cornelius was instructed by the Lord to send for the apostle Peter who came and preached the gospel of Christ to Cornelius and to all in his house.
4. There is also the example of a devout woman by the name of Lydia who faithfully worshipped God and who kept the Sabbath.
- a. **Acts 16:14-15** – *The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. 15 And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay."*
5. Then there is the wonderful example of a devout man by the name of Saul of Tarsus who later became known as the apostle Paul.
- a. He persecuted Christians in his earlier years, until the Lord appeared to him and sent him to hear Ananias proclaim that Jesus truly is the Christ.
  - b. Finally Ananias asked: **Acts 22:16** – *And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*
- B. Therefore, simply being religious or devout is not enough.



1. A person simply cannot be saved apart from faith in Jesus Christ, and apart from obeying the gospel by being baptized into Christ for the remission of sins.

III. But what about salvation? Did Jesus teach anything specific about salvation that would lead us to believe that only a few will be saved?

A. Many in the religious world today believe that all that is needed to be saved is to simply believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

1. They believe that we are saved by faith only, with no need for obedience.
2. And yet Jesus said in the judgment there would be those who believed in Him but were still lost.

a. **Matthew 7:21-27** – *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' 24 "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the*

*rock: 25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. 26 "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: 27 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."*

- b. The Lord said there will be those who believed Him to be their Lord, and who perhaps spent their entire lives believing they were serving the Lord.
  - c. But the sad truth is, they had not done the Father's will!
- B. This should certainly come as no surprise, especially when we consider other things taught in the Scriptures about salvation.
- 1. For example, the Bible teaches that Jesus is the author of salvation but only to certain ones.
    - a. **Hebrews 5:8-9** – *though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. 9 And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,*
  - 2. In fact, the Scriptures are rather plain in stating not all who believe will be saved.

a. Will the faith of demons save them?

(1). **James 2:19-20** – *You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe — and tremble! 20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?*

b. And then, there were those in the days of Jesus who believed He was the Son of God, but they fell short in one area.

(1). **John 12:42-43** – *Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*

## **CONCLUSION:**

I. So what does all this tell us?

A. We certainly know that the belief that many (if not all) will be saved is a very comforting doctrine, and most certainly a view that is praised as tolerant and loving.

1. But if one really desires to be saved we must not only follow Jesus, we must also abide in His teaching.

- a. **John 8:30-32** – *As He spoke these words, many believed in Him. 31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. 32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*
- b. **John 12:44-49** – *Then Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. 45 And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me. 46 I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. 47 And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. 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."*

2. These are the few who will be saved.

- a. Those who believe that Jesus is the only way and who receive His words, and who abide in His word by doing His Father's will.

II. Even though only a few will be saved, it's God's desire that all are saved.

A. Two passages of Scripture teach this wonderful truth.

1. **1 Timothy 2:3-4** – *For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*
  2. **2 Peter 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.*
- B. God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit have done all they can do to offer salvation to mankind.
1. God gave His only begotten Son to die on the cross for our sins.
  2. Jesus humbled Himself and took upon Himself the form of man, coming in the likeness of man, to offer His blood on the cross to redeem all mankind.
  3. And the Holy Spirit has revealed all this through the writings of the inspired apostles and prophets.
  4. All you need to do is simply believe what is written in the Scriptures about the one and only way to salvation, and obey it.
  5. Have you done that? Are you one of the few who will be saved?
    - a. Have you been baptized into Christ for the remission of your sins – just like we read about earlier?
    - b. And if you have, have you continued to faithfully obey what is written about salvation?

- c. If you have failed to do either, don't leave your soul in jeopardy another moment – come to Christ now.

**Actual Survey Results:**

	Yes	No	Don't Know
Evangelical Protestants <sup>1</sup>	68%	22%	10%
Non-Evangelical Protestants <sup>2</sup>	83%	10%	7%
Catholics	91%	3%	6%
Non-Christians	73%	3%	24%
Total:	79%	12%	9%

**1 Evangelical Protestants:** Those who emphasize the authority of the Scriptures and have a strict or literal interpretation of the Bible, and who are opposed to the institutional authority of the church.

**2 Non-Evangelical Protestants:** Those who view the church as authoritative, and who place value in following long-established traditions, and take a rather adaptive view of interpreting the Scriptures (not strict or literal interpretation).