

Is Everybody Saved?

- I. We live in a world where anything goes. Astrology, Druid worship, Voodoo, Tarot and psychic readings, Islam, Buddhism, you name it, every major American city has all these and more. The motto of today is tolerance and relativism. It doesn't matter what you do. Even Christianity has morphed into tolerance as the defining stance. God is love. Everybody is saved. Don't bother me with anything else. I don't want to think about it.
Whatever happened to hell? Is it just an old-fashioned idea? Something from the past? Merely a word for swearing but not a matter of being eternally lost?
- II. What views of hell and salvation are out there in the world today?
 1. **Universalism.** Everyone is saved. If there is a hell, no one is in it. Some Bible verses support such a view: Rom 5:18: "One man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men." Rom 11:32: "For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all."
The problem with universalism is that it is **unjust**. Whatever happens in this world is not serious because God saves everyone anyway. Serial killers, terrorists, just plain mean and cruel people are no big deal. As Shakespeare wrote in *As You Like It*, "All the world's a stage." We are merely players, each with our own entrances and exists. At the end of history God rings down the curtain and says: Wasn't that interesting. Universalism makes everything meaningless.
 2. **Damnationism.** Some are eternally lost. Only true believers go to heaven; the rest go to hell. As with #1 above, some Bible verses support such a view: Matt 25:46: Some "will go into eternal punishment." And Matt 7:13: "The gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many."
The problem with damnationism is that it is **unjust**. What about those who have never had a chance to hear the gospel? What about the natives in Tahiti a thousand years ago? What about the "righteous Gentile" (Acts 10:22)?
 3. **Live by the light that you have.** Do your best and that's good enough. The road to hell is paved with good intentions, but as long as you have good intentions, that's enough. If you have good intentions, you can't be faulted. This "good intentions" option is really the same as #1. It renders life meaningless. For example, even the tyrant wants peace, peace on his own terms.
 4. **Five variations on the "live by the light you have."**
 - a. Limbo. Based on 1 Peter 3:18-4:6. The spirits in prison. The "harrowing of hell" doesn't appear until the fifth century. Not the same as purgatory. Limbo is now in limbo. The Vatican has dropped limbo as an official teaching of the church. Limbo was always merely for patriarchs and the unbaptized anyway.
 - b. Karma. Many immigrants from India have settled in England. As a result, Hinduism has gained a foothold in England and even been accepted by many in the church. In one survey 40% of Christians professed to embrace karma, a Hindu teaching which contradicts the resurrection (the death of the old and the rebirth of the totally new.)
 - c. Swedenborgianism. You have three weeks after death to make a decision for Jesus.

- d. Mormonism. There is no hell, but there are three heavens or three levels to heaven.
 - e. Jehovah's Witness. JW's are saved; all the rest are annihilated.
5. **Where are we? What do we say and do?**
1. **What do we say? We say: We don't know. We really do not know.** The cross is **God's "no"** to figuring God out. We do not even **infer** that everybody is saved. We do not even **infer** that many are damned. This is what it means to live by faith alone.
 - a. Isa 55:8-9: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord."
 - b. Rom 11:33-36: "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! 'Who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?' 'Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?' For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever. Amen"
 - c. The Lord runs the universe, we don't. His holiness is beyond us.
 2. **What then do we do? What about mission?**
 - a. Mission is proclaiming God in Christ died and rose for you and me.
 1. Mission is the Word and the water, as Matt 28:16-20 states: "Go and make disciples of all nations, **baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.**" Our mission is to preach **no other message** "except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2).
 2. "Making disciples" does not mean soliciting "decisions for Christ" or prodding people to produce "visible transformations" of their lives. The Christian life is hidden. Making disciples means proclaiming the Lordship of Christ and administering his sacraments by which he takes our sins and covers us in his perfect righteousness (2 Cor 2:5).
 - b. Free indeed!
 1. Baptized into his death, we have been set free from captivity to sin, death, and the devil – both now and for eternity.
John 8:36: "If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed."
Rom 8:21: "the glorious freedom of the children of God."
 2. We rejoice in the **certainty** and **freedom** Christ has won for us. Salvation is not our possession, yet our salvation is **sure** because God himself solved the problem of sin and death on the cross. He did it by himself, without our help, and it is finished (John 19:30).
 3. We are free to be his, both in this world and the next.